

City of North Saint Paul
August 17, 2021
Approved Regular City Council Meeting Minutes

North St. Paul City Hall – Council Chambers
2400 Margaret Street

I. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Furlong called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

II. THE PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

All present recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

III. ROLL CALL

Present: Council Member Thorsen
Council Member Petersen
Council Member Cole
Mayor Furlong

Absent: Council Member Wong

Staff: Acting City Manager Brian Frandle, Communications Staff Kari Erpenbach, City Attorney Soren Mattick, Deputy Clerk Jennie Kloos.

IV. ADOPT AGENDA

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Thorsen, with all present voting aye (4-0), motion carried to approve the agenda as submitted.

V. PRESENTATIONS

A. Proclamation in Recognition of Sunisa “Suni” Lee

Mayor Furlong read in full a Proclamation proclaiming Tuesday August 17, 2021 as Sunisa “Suni” Lee Day in the City of North St. Paul.

VI. APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

On motion by Council Member Petersen, seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (4-0), motion carried to approve the consent agenda, Resolution No. 2021-075 consisting of:

- A. July 20, 2021 workshop meeting minutes.
- B. July 20, 2021 regular meeting minutes.
- C. July 20, 2021 HRA meeting minutes.
- D. August 3, 2021 Special Council meeting.
- E. General Claims: \$803,651.19

- F. HRA General Claims: \$1,263.43
- G. EDA General Claims: \$1,050.46
- H. Approve Change Order No. 3 for CSAH 68 (McKnight Road) Intersection Improvements Project
- I. Street Maintenance Overlay Eldridge, 2nd Street and Amy Circle
- J. Restructuring of Public Works Management Positions
- K. Application for Special Event Permit – POW/MIA Walk September 16, 2021
- L. Application for Special Event – Church of St. Peter Fall Festival September 26, 2021
- M. Approve Renewal of On-Sale Intoxicating Liquor and Sunday Intoxicating Liquor License for the Hmong House. Resolution No. 2021-078
- N. Resolution Approving Appointments to the Arts and Culture Commission. Resolution No. 2021-079
- O. Resolution Approving Acceptance of Donations Received July 2021. Resolution No. 080
- P. Monthly Building Permit Report – July 2021
- Q. Park Signage
- R. Declaration of Equipment Surplus

VII. MEETING OPEN TO PUBLIC

R.T. Luczak, Kokoro Volleyball Center, provided an update on the summer league season and upcoming fall league, as well as the regular season into 2022. He added the Center provided support for the North High School Volleyball Program’s recent fundraiser, at which over \$11,000 was raised for their program.

Mr. Luczak stated, with regard to the facility, there have been water leaks, and the elevator is making a significant noise. He added there was a security issue this week when a door behind the kitchen was found ajar, and the Police Department was called to check it out. He noted the only people who have keys to the building are himself and Public Works.

John Schmahl, 2750 Chisholm Avenue, stated he has contacted Communications Staff Kari Erpenbach regarding the OpenGov online City meeting agendas, on which the Facebook and Twitter icons are displayed. He asked why they are there. He added, when he tries to enlarge the agenda on his cell phone, the icons get larger, and it is very frustrating to try and follow along with the agenda. He noted Ms. Erpenbach indicated that she contacted OpenGov, and they do not know what to do with it, so he believes this is a valid complaint.

Mr. Schmahl stated, at a recent City Council meeting, Council Member Cole brought up the issue of the open space next to Casey Lake, and complaints about a homeless encampment. He added he can see the area from his house, and there have not been any encampments there for over 3 years. He noted residents should contact Mike Goodnature if they have any questions or comments about that area.

Shaun Rivet, 2483 2nd Avenue E. stated it has been 10 years since he started coming to the City Council meetings about his property. He expressed his frustration that 3rd Street is a new road, and he has been trying to get the City to fix his street for years. He added he did not see 3rd Street on the City’s plans for street reconstruction. He noted he immediately called his realtor to sell his house, and received a market analysis with fair market values, which he presented to the City Council.

Mr. Rivet stated he needs something to be done about this situation, and he never hears from anyone except Council Member Thorsen. He added it is not fair to sell his house because it is a civil engineering issue. He reiterated his frustration about seeing the new road on 3rd Street.

Mr. Rivet stated he would like to get his paperwork and pictures from City Staff, as it is important and valuable information, and he needs it back.

Mayor Furlong stated he saw the papers and photos, but he did not realize Mr. Rivet did not get it back.

Acting City Manager Brian Frandle stated he believes he knows where the papers are and can check the City offices after this meeting.

VIII. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no scheduled hearings.

IX. CITY BUSINESS ACTION ITEMS & RECOMMENDATIONS

-None.

X. REPORTS OF CITY MANAGER AND DEPARTMENTS

Mr. Frandle stated construction of the new Kwik Trip is moving very fast, with the new transformer set in place this week. He added the Centennial development is also getting power soon, with their concrete transformer pad to be poured tomorrow and set on Monday, August 21, 2021.

XI. REPORTS OF COUNCIL, COMMISSIONS & COMMITTEES

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission met on July 28, 2021. He added residents expressed concern about the appearance of Casey Lake, including green algae and vegetation, as well as the water levels. He noted the Ramsey County Watershed is hosting a Zoom-only informational meeting on September 1, 2021, at 9:00 a.m. regarding Casey Lake conditions that will be open to the public.

Council Member Cole stated, with regard to Casey Lake, there has been a lot of concern at the Parks & Recreation meetings from residents regarding carp, the water level and other nearby lakes. He thanked the residents who continue to come to the Parks & Recreation meetings to bring this issue to the forefront.

Council Member Cole stated the Parks & Recreation Commission's next meeting is scheduled for August 25, 2021, at Northwood Park at 6:00 p.m. He added this will be the last outdoor meeting of the season.

Council Member Cole stated the Economic Development Authority (EDA) met earlier that day. He added a joint Commission is being formed to review the City's Redevelopment Master Plan, and will include representatives from the EDA, Planning Commission and City Council. He noted the EDA's next meeting is scheduled for September 14, 2021, at 3:00 p.m.

Mayor Furlong stated the City Council representatives to this Commission can be decided at the next City Council meeting, since Council Member Wong is absent.

Council Member Petersen stated she attended the local League of Minnesota Cities revenue policy meeting, at which the issues of housing, racial equity and homelessness were discussed. She added Commissioner a from the State of Minnesota was present. She noted redevelopment in North St. Paul was discussed at the meeting.

Council Member Petersen stated she attended the Ramsey County League of Local Government annual picnic last week. She added the League will be hosting a Zoom panel discussion regarding mental illness on September 10, 2021, with mental health advocate Mindy Greiling.

Council Member Petersen stated she attended the Business Association's picnic last week, with pizza from Pizza Factory. She added the Association will resume their meetings at the legion on September 14, 2021.

XII. GENERAL BUSINESS

Council Member Petersen thanked everyone who sponsored National Night Out events. She added it was fun to be out with people again. She noted the Fire Department showed up with their watering tank, and also held their own Open House which was very well-attended by City Staff and the general public.

Council Member Thorsen stated he would like to follow up on his question from the last City Council meeting regarding when Council Chambers will be restored back to normal. He added the consensus from the City Council was that it was not an issue, but now there is concern. He asked whether the City Council should have a vote on this issue. He requested clarification and direction.

Mayor Furlong stated the direction from City Staff is that Covid is on the rise again, and the Acting City Manager determined that there would be a return to distancing in the Council Chambers.

Mr. Frandle confirmed that there are community concerns related to Covid. He added the City Council can discuss this issue as one voice and provide direction.

Mayor Furlong stated Council Member Wong expressed concern. He added distancing can be kept in place on a temporary basis until things return to normal. He requested input from the City Attorney.

City Attorney Soren Mattick stated cities are responding to the renewed risks related to Covid on varying levels, with some City Halls going back to masks and distancing. He added there is no executive order, so cities are relying on CDC recommendations, which are evolving weekly. He noted there is no one path forward, and cities are doing it differently. He noted the City Council can decide what they want to do.

Mayor Furlong stated distancing is a good middle way to do it, and a Council Member expressed concerned about it, although he does not want to speak for her. He added he is supportive of distancing until there is a mandate from the State or County.

Council Member Thorsen stated there should be criteria based on a decision of the City Council, rather than basing the policy off of a single Council Member's opinion. He added the whole Council Chambers should also be set up for distancing if that is the decision of the City Council. He noted accommodations can be made for people who have concerns.

Council Member Thorsen stated, when this all started, the City Council decided to do distancing for two weeks, and then the Executive Order lasted for 18 months.

Mayor Furlong stated it's a pandemic, and the community is experiencing an increase in cases again. He added he is unsure of whether the City Council should go back to masks, or if distancing is sufficient. He added he supports what the City Council is doing right now as an appropriate response until more information is available.

Council Member Thorsen stated the City Council should send a clear message. He added it is confusing when the Council Chambers is full of residents, but the City Council is distancing. He noted it is impossible to know how many people are going to show up. He stressed the importance of being consistent.

Mayor Furlong stated there has not been a situation when Council Chambers are full. He added, if that is the case, meeting attendees can be moved into the hall or downstairs.

Council Member Thorsen stated Council Chambers was full at the June 15, 2021 meeting. He added he understands a Council Member has an issue, but there has never been an official vote. He noted there was consensus to return Council Chambers to normal.

Council Member Cole stated he does not believe there was a consensus of the City Council to go back to normal. He added, when this issue was discussed, the City Council requested that the City Manager have a plan in place by the next meeting. He noted he does not recall a consensus.

Mayor Furlong stated the City Council can continue to monitor the situation and react and adjust as needed.

Mayor Furlong stated he would like to give a response related to the newspaper article regarding former City Manager Scott Duddeck. He added the article stated, "the Mayor had discussions with Public Works staff who stated they have been trying to bring to the Mayor's attention areas of concern, but he dismisses it and does not want to talk about it."

Mayor Furlong stated he never received a response from the Public Works Department about the situation with City Manager Duddeck, and never dismissed anything that was said. He added the article stated, "There seems to be a desire by the Mayor and City Council to cover this up and not discuss it." He noted this issue was discussed by the City Council.

Mayor Furlong reiterated that he would like to go on record stating that he does not recollect anything that was said to him by Public Works and that he did not dismiss any comments.

Mayor Furlong stated the City Council will be going into recess to hold the HRA meeting, and then return to the City Council meeting for adjournment.

XIII. RECESS

On motion by Council Member Petersen, Seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (4-0), the meeting went into recess at 7:05 p.m to go into the HRA meeting.

XIV. CLOSED SESSION

On motion by Council Member Thorsen and Seconded by Council Member Petersen, with all present voting aye (4-0), the meeting was reconvened and went into closed session at 7:19 p.m.

The meeting was closed as permitted by the attorney-client privilege, section 13D.05, subdivision 3(b), to discuss the threat of litigation and claim submitted to the City. The Council discussed the threat of litigation and provided the City Attorney with guidance. No action was taken during the closed session.

XV. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, on motion by Council Member Thorsen, Seconded by Council Member Cole, with all present voting aye (4-0), Mayor Furlong adjourned the meeting at 8:01 p.m.

/s/ Terrence J. Furlong, Mayor

Attest: /s/ Brian Frandle, Interim City Manager/ Clerk