



CITY COUNCIL MEETING
City Hall—Council Chambers, 3989 Central Ave NE
Monday, July 08, 2024
6:00 PM

Mayor
Amáda Márquez Simula
Councilmembers
Connie Buesgens
Kt Jacobs
Rachel James
Justice Spriggs
City Manager
Aaron Chirpich

MINUTES

The following are the minutes for the Meeting of the City Council held at 6:00 pm on Monday, July 8, 2024, in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3989 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota

WELCOME/CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Márquez Simula called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Present: Mayor Márquez Simula; Councilmember Buesgens; Councilmember Jacobs; Councilmember Spriggs; Councilmember James

Also Present: Andrew Boucher, City Planner; Aaron Chirpich, City Manager; Sara Ion, City Clerk; Scott Lepak, City Attorney; Laurel Deneen, City Resident; Mohamed Mohamed, City Resident.

MISSION STATEMENT

Columbia Heights is a vibrant, healthy and connected City. We are here to actively support the community, deliver equitable services, build and strengthen connections, improve upon our past, and uphold our successes. We strive to be better and ensure Columbia Heights is a great place for everyone, today and in the future.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag: "I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember James, seconded by Councilmember Spriggs, to approve the Agenda as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember Jacobs, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

- 1. Approve the June 24, 2024 City Council Meeting Minutes.**
MOTION: Move to approve the June 24, 2024 City Council Meeting minutes.
- 2. Approve the July 1, 2024 City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes.**
MOTION: Move to approve the July 1, 2024 City Council Work Session Meeting minutes.

- 3. Accept June 3rd, 2024, Regular EDA Meeting Minutes.**
MOTION: Move to accept the June 3rd, 2024 EDA Meeting minutes
- 4. Approve Gambling Permit, Immaculate Conception Church.**
MOTION: Move to direct the City Manager to forward a letter to the State Charitable Gambling Control Board indicating that the City of Columbia Heights has no objection to a gambling permit for Immaculate Conception Church to conduct bingo and a raffle on August 18, 2024 at 4030 Jackson Street NE, Columbia Heights.
- 5. Rental Occupancy Licenses for Approval.**
MOTION: Move to approve the items listed for rental housing license applications for July 8, 2024, in that they have met the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code.
- 6. License Agenda.**
MOTION: Move to approve the items as listed on the business license agenda for July 8th, 2024, as presented.
- 7. Review of Bills.**
MOTION: Move that in accordance with Minnesota Statute 412.271, subd. 8 the City Council has reviewed the enclosed list to claims paid by check and by electronic funds transfer in the amount of \$1,982,504.48.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Ordinances and Resolutions

- 8. Resolution 2024-052, Consideration of a Rental License Exemption for 4129 5th Street NE.**
City Planner Boucher explained on July 3, 2024, the owner of 4129 5th Street NE, reached out to the Community Development Department requesting an exemption from the single-family rental density cap. The property is located on Block 59 with three single family rentals out of 26 total single-family units and an allotment of three single-family rentals. He referenced the letter that Staff received and Section 1 of Ordinance 1685.

City Planner Boucher noted as it is the homeowners' right to appeal to the Council. Staff brought forth the appeal along with supporting documents for discussion and review. If approved, Resolution 2024-052 would grant a temporary rental license exemption to the homeowner with a few additional requirements. The homeowner is required to complete the license application process within three months from the passage of the resolution. This puts a limit on how long they can take to bring the house into rental compliance if needed. The temporary rental license will be valid for one year from the date that the license is approved. This provides the homeowner and tenant the ability to rent the home for a full one-year lease. After the term of the temporary license, the persons requesting a temporary license must make an annual application to the City. No property owner shall hold a temporary rental license for the same property for more than two consecutive years.

Councilmember James mentioned that the agenda packet notes that the homeowner has a job relocation that will last about 12 months and is seeking to rent out the home during that period. She explained that the purpose for the exemption is for situations like this. She added that she has no objections to the exemption.

Mayor Márquez Simula added that in the letter, the homeowners specifically say that they will be employing a reputable property management service to oversee the property.

Councilmember Jacobs noted her understanding was to base the exemption off hardship. She stated to her, that means it is outside the control of the homeowner and would take the homeowner away from the residence, such as someone who is in the military and is assigned outside of the area. She mentioned that a job relocation feels like a different category.

Motion by Councilmember Spriggs, seconded by Councilmember Buesgens, to waive the reading of Resolution 2024-052, there being ample copies available to the public. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Motion by Councilmember Spriggs, seconded by Councilmember James, to adopt Resolution 2024-052, being a Resolution of the City Council of the City of Columbia Heights approving the single-family rental exemption request for the rental application at 4129 5th Street NE, Columbia Heights, MN 55421. 4 Ayes, 1 Nay, Motion Carried 4-1. Ayes: Márquez Simula, James, Spriggs, Buesgens. Nay: Jacobs

9. First Reading of Ordinance No. 1699, an Ordinance Amending Chapter 3.315 of the City Code Relating to the Youth Commission.

City Manager Chirpich explained that an amendment to Ordinance 1699 provides structural changes to the Youth Commission. On October 25, 2021, the Columbia Heights City Council approved amending the City Code to create a Youth Commission, the first of its kind in Columbia Heights. The purpose of the Columbia Heights Youth Commission was to serve as an advisory body to the Columbia Heights City Council, and other Boards and Commissions as appropriate, inspire and bring to light new ideas from a youth perspective, create an educational environment for youth looking to expand their knowledge of government and leadership functions, and provide experience building opportunities for area youth seeking increased community and government engagement.

City Manager Chirpich mentioned that at the City Council Work Session on May 6, 2024, Youth Commission Staff Liaison Rottler addressed concerns Staff has with maintaining membership on the Youth Commission and sought feedback from the Council. Suggestions were made to amend the code to appoint Youth Commission Members to the Library Board, Park and Recreation Board, Planning Commission, and Sustainability Commission instead of having a dedicated Youth Commission.

City Manager Chirpich stated at the City Council Work Session of July 1, 2024, the Council reviewed draft Ordinance No. 1699. The proposed updates incorporated into Ordinance No. 1699 include: Boards and Commissions would have at least one and no more than two

Youth Commission Member(s) to provide insight and give feedback from Columbia Heights residents who are currently enrolled in high school or a home school program educational program. These appointments would be non-voting positions, would not impact the quorum, and the terms would be one year each from October 1 to May 31 of the following year. Re-appointment would be required for the students if they would like to serve in the program the following year. Preference would be given to previous appointments.

Councilmember Jacobs mentioned that it was a great move because it will provide an opportunity for youth to become more active in the community. Councilmember James agreed and encouraged youth to apply to be appointed since it looks good on college resumes and can really help the community.

Mayor Márquez Simula agreed and thanked the City for taking the opportunity to include youth into the Boards and Commissions. She mentioned that it was difficult to have a quorum to hold a meeting since some youth members were unable to attend due to their schedules.

Motion by Councilmember Jacobs, seconded by Councilmember James, to waive the reading of Ordinance No. 1699, there being ample copies available to the public. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Motion by Councilmember Jacobs, seconded by Councilmember James, to approve first reading and set the second reading of Ordinance No. 1699, being an Ordinance of the City Council of the City of Columbia Heights, amending Chapter 3.315 of the City Code Relating the Youth Commission of the City of Columbia Heights for July 22, 2024. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

CITY COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Report of the City Council

Councilmember Buesgens welcomed new City Manager Chirpich to his first meeting as a City Manager. She added that she attended the League of Cities conference with Mayor Márquez Simula, and the Jamboree parade. She thanked the City and the Lion's Club for putting on the Jamboree fireworks. She stated that she continues to volunteer with the Blooming Sunshine Gardens.

Councilmember James thanked the Columbia Heights Lion's Club and the volunteers who put on the Jamboree and added that she was also in the parade with Councilmember Buesgens. She mentioned that she has heard from many residents to "give it a rest on the fireworks" now that July 4th is done. She noted that she helped with the dunk tank for the Firefighters Association pancake breakfast. She attended the EDA meeting and Council Work Session.

Councilmember Jacobs added to Councilmember James' comments regarding fireworks and noted that there are many residents who have PTSD and can be a troubling time for them. She asked people to be considerate of those people. She stated she attended the Jamboree, the pancake breakfast, the New Brighton Farmers Market, and NDASA meetings where she has learned about federal legislation that is

pending or already been passed. She acknowledged the Fourth of July and hoped everyone enjoyed the holiday. She added that she hoped that the City would offer a proclamation for the Fourth of July like what is done for other countries since it is important to celebrate the Country's victories.

Councilmember Spriggs stated he was able to be in the Jamboree parade. He added that he attended the EDA meeting, the Council Work Session, and the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting. He noted that the Parks and Recreation Commission discussed the sport court that would be coming to Sullivan Lake Park. Mayor Márquez Simula asked if the sport court update could be included in a future Council Work Session meeting.

Mayor Márquez Simula noted that proclamations can be requested on the City website. She stated that she attended the League of Minnesota Cities' conference with Councilmember Buesgens, and the Jamboree parade. She thanked the Lion's Club and City Staff for making the event a success and for helping the surrounding neighborhood to keep their yards clean during and after the event. She added that she attended the firefighter breakfast, the EDA meeting, the Council Work Session, and the Operation Pollination meeting with the Rotary Club. She congratulated the new City Manager for his first meeting as the City Manager. She thanked the Staff for being flexible with all of the positions shifting during the last year and a half.

Report of the City Manager

City Manager Chirpich stated the Music in the Park series begins on July 10, 2024, with the band Tjärnblom. The event is sponsored by Northeast Bank and will take place at Huset Park East from 6:30-8:30 pm. The Big Red Wagon food truck will be in attendance.

City Manager Chirpich explained that residents can register their block party for National Night Out at the City's website. The event takes place on August 6, 2024. The City is in the works of developing a transportation safety action plan which will evaluate safety issues for people driving, walking, biking, rolling, and using transit in the City. With the community's help, the plan will identify potential safety projects and strategies to improve safety in the City. Public feedback is requested by using an interactive comment map that can be found on the City's website.

City Manager Chirpich mentioned that the City's Charter Commission and Parks and Recreation Commission currently each have one open seat. Applications can be found on the City's website, City Hall, or at the library and are due August 1, 2024.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Laurel Deneen, City resident, encouraged the City to see how they are engaging with the community throughout the year. She mentioned that there is a Pride event coming up in September and encouraged community members to attend. She added that there are things that can be done to make the City more accepting and welcoming such as changing the City Code to include gender neutral bathrooms, or creating stickers for businesses to use that indicate that everyone is welcomed in the business. She mentioned that it is important for the City to think about this since it is a smaller town that continues to grow and have a diverse population.

Mohamed Mohamed, City resident, stated he has built two homes in the City with an emphasis on living assistance. He mentioned when he started building the homes in the City, he went to City Hall to see if it was permissible to do so. The City told him he was allowed to build on his property. After completing the build, he was told by the State to get a certificate for living assistance from the City. He was told by the City that he could not get it since there was a living assisted building a block away. He noted that it was disappointing since his family put money into the project. He asked the Council to look into the issue of why he was originally told he could build and now is told that he cannot receive the certificate.

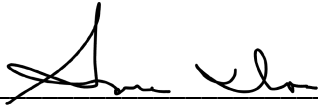
Mayor Márquez Simula replied that they would look into it and contact him.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Jacobs, seconded by Councilmember Spriggs, to adjourn. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:32 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary