



CITY COUNCIL MEETING
City Hall—Council Chambers, 590 40th Ave NE
Monday, November 8, 2021
7:00 PM

Mayor
Amáda Márquez Simula
Councilmembers
John Murzyn, Jr.
Connie Buesgens
Nick Novitsky
Kt Jacobs
City Manager
Kelli Bourgeois

MINUTES

The following are the minutes for the Meeting of the City Council held at 7:00 pm on Monday, November 8, 2021 in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 590 40th Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, this hybrid meeting was held both virtually and in-person.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Márquez Simula called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

Present: Mayor Márquez Simula; Councilmember Buesgens; Councilmember Jacobs; Councilmember Murzyn, Jr.; Councilmember Novitsky.

Also Present: Kelli Bourgeois, City Manager; Miriam Eyal; Jim Hoeft, City Attorney; Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary; Rachel James; Fatima Molas; Kaha Mursal.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

MISSION STATEMENT

Our mission is to provide the highest quality public services. Services will be provided in a fair, respectful and professional manner that effectively addresses changing citizen and community needs in a fiscally-responsible and customer-friendly manner.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

PROCLAMATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, RECOGNITION, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GUESTS

Mayor Márquez Simula announced that November is “Native American Heritage Month” and there will be a proclamation at the November 22 City Council meeting announcing “Native American Heritage Day,” which will be November 26. She referred “those interested in finding ways to celebrate, support and remember the histories of the Dakota, Ojibwe and Anishinaabe people and other tribes who lived and live in our area as well as the rest of the State” to [Minneapolis.org/calendar/holidays/native-american-heritage-month](https://www.minneapolis.org/calendar/holidays/native-american-heritage-month).

CONSENT AGENDA

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

- 1. Approve October 25, 2021 City Council Meeting Minutes.**
MOTION: Move to approve the City Council Meeting minutes of October 25, 2021.
- 2. Approve November 1, 2021 Special Executive Session City Council Meeting Minutes.**
MOTION: Move to approve the Special Executive Session City Council Meeting minutes of November 1, 2021.
- 3. Approve November 1, 2021 City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes.**
MOTION: Move to approve the City Council Work Session Meeting minutes of November 1, 2021.
- 4. Accept July 15, 2021 Charter Commission Meeting Minutes.**
MOTION: Move to accept the Charter Commission Meeting minutes of July 15, 2021.
- 5. Capital Equipment Replacement Of Unit #456: Recreation Department Passenger Van.**
MOTION: Move to authorize the replacement of Unit #456 and purchase one (1) new 2022 Ford Transport T350 XLT from Ford of Hibbing in the amount of \$46,487.81, which includes tax, freight and license off the State of Minnesota purchasing contract.
- 6. Authorize Agreement with Canvas Health for a Collaborative Crisis Intervention Response Program.**
MOTION: Authorize the Mayor and City Manager to enter into an agreement with Canvas Health for a Collaborative Crisis Intervention Response Program for a two-year period commencing November 1, 2021.
- 7. Adopt Resolution 2021-90, Approving the Demolition and Environmental Remediation Contract for 3930 University Avenue NE (Root Property).**
MOTION: Move to waive the reading of Resolution 2021-90, there being ample copies available to the public.
MOTION: Move to adopt Resolution 2021-90, a resolution of the City of Columbia Heights, Minnesota, approving contract with Veit for environmental remediation and demolition of site improvements for the property located at 3930 University Avenue NE.
- 8. Extension of GIS Range Rider Contract.**
MOTION: Move to approve a one-year extension to the GIS Joint Powers Agreement in the amount of \$32,844.00; and, authorize the Mayor and City Manager to enter into an agreement for the same.

- 9. Final Payment for Silver Lake Boat Landing and Site Improvement, City Project 1912.**
MOTION: Move accept the work for Silver Lake Boat Landing and Site Improvements, City Project 1912, and authorize final payment of \$16,558.24 to Lametti & Sons, Inc. of Hugo, Minnesota.
- 10. Addition of Pierce and Lincoln Streets to the 2022 Water Main Program, Project 2203.**
MOTION: Move to authorize the addition of water main segments located in Pierce and Lincoln Streets, north of 37th Avenue to the cul-de-sac(s), to the 2022 Water Main Structural Lining program, with project funding from the Federal ARPA funds.
- 11. Resolution 2021-89, Accepting Feasibility Study for 2022 Water Main Improvements, Project 2203.**
MOTION: Move to waive the reading of Resolution 2021-89, there being ample copies available for the public.
MOTION: Move to adopt Resolution 2021-89, which accepts the Feasibility Report for the repair/replacement of inoperable or inaccessible stop boxes on 37th Avenue from Central Avenue to Lincoln Street; Pierce Street from 37th Avenue to cul-de-sac; and Lincoln Street from 37th Avenue to cul-de-sac.
- 12. Lighting Retrofit and Upgrade for the Van Buren Municipal Parking Ramp.**
MOTION: Move to authorize the purchase and installation by Aid Electric of lighting replacements and upgrades for the interior, exterior, stairwell and exit lights at the Van Buren parking ramp at a cost of \$66,859.00.
- 13. Rental Occupancy Licenses for Approval.**
MOTION: Move to approve the items listed for rental housing license applications for November 8, 2021, in that they have met the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code.
- 14. License Agenda.**
MOTION: Move to approve the items as listed on the business license agenda for November 8, 2021 as presented.
- 15. 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 \$726,734.06.

CITY COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Report of the City Council

Councilmember Buesgens attended the MICAH-Anoka County Housing Zoom bus tour, which included the Hope for Youth facility (gently-used young adult clothing donations can be dropped off there) and Family Promise; checked out the newly-remodeled liquor store, which she said is very nice and looks like a totally new building; attended "Truck or Treat," which was well attended; cleaned out the flower pots at Murzyn Hall for the Beautification Committee with the help of her husband.

They cleaned out five storm drains in her neighborhood and HeightsNEXT adopted storm drains at Lomianki Park, and she encouraged residents to adopt one or more of the Community's 2,000 storm drains at "Adopt-a-Drain MN" on Facebook. She watched a White House webinar focused on providing federal incentives for cities to ease zoning restrictions and reported a shortage of housing increased by 3.8 million units since 2018, which is up 52%; over the last 50 years construction of entry-level housing has fallen from 418,000 to 65,000 units per year nationally; and not having sufficient housing especially in big cities and metro areas actually affects labor forcibility and affects 2% of GDP because people aren't able to live close to where jobs are located, which is important; and the group also mentioned raising wages that would help pay for housing, which she said was a key component and was glad they brought that up. Councilmember Buesgens said she was very excited about the cleanup of the Root Property because, she said, it's taken years to get the funding and then years after that to get the contract signed and ready for future development.

Councilmember Jacobs observed the Traffic Commission meeting; attended the Columbia Heights High School banquet, which she said was very nice and she was lucky to outbid for a wine basket; attended the "Truck or Treat" and said when she arrived parking on Jefferson Street was all the way up to 42nd – and when she left could not see the end of the parked cars on any of the streets – "which really speaks to the success it was"; thanked Will Rottler, Ben Sandell, Parks and Recreation and City staff for planning another great event and gave a shout out to Kiwanis for their contribution of 35 carved pumpkins that was supplied for tables and trucks and was an innovative to educate young youth on composting, because they were given a sucker – and if they brought the stick back and put it in the container so it could be composted, they got another sucker; and facilitated three resident reach-outs.

Councilmember Novitsky attended the "Truck or Treat" and said it was a great event and gets "better and better every year"; attended for the first time the Alumni Dinner, which was very nice, and his old coaches, Pete and John, were the Alumni of Distinction, "so it was nice to see that and realize they have been there for a while"; the Lions' "Costume Dance" went well and will probably be held annually.

Councilmember Murzyn, Jr. attended the Alumni Dinner and "Truck or Treat," which he said had a good turnout with a lot of kids and was a lot of fun.

Mayor Márquez Simula attended the Columbia Heights Public Library meeting; partnered with Mayor's Monarch Pledge; hosted the Book Club discussion over Zoom, which Councilmember Buesgens attended; volunteered at the HeightsNEXT bowling game at "Truck or Treat," which was amazing and had wonderful weather, with great turnout and so many volunteers; with her husband, she stopped at the Lions dance, which was well decorated, had a great turnout, and said the Lions did a great job organizing the event; met with the Fridley School District Superintendent; attended the City Council's special meeting last week and Minnesota Caucus meeting; met with LatinoLEAD, which is a Minnesota 501(C)3 organization that supports the Latinx community, and will explore ways to support Columbia Heights residents; and, though unrelated to Columbia Heights, she attended the Minnesota Orchestra's production of "Black Panther," where the film was shown while they played the film score, and it was fantastic.

In preparing for the evening's meeting, Mayor Márquez Simula said she read the monthly Green Sheet, which is the City's department newsletter, and commended the Fire and Police Departments for the work they do, "as at times they see the worst situations people endure" and thanked the firefighters, officers and support staff for their support and compassion working through these hard events; in the last month there was a fatality, a suicide and other tragedies. She said the Sister City meeting would be held on November 10 to discuss a planning a trip to Poland in September 2022; those interested in joining the group to learn more are welcome to attend a meeting the second Tuesday of the month at 1:00 pm in the Council Chambers.

Report of the City Manager

Manager Bourgeois thanked everyone who made the "Truck or Treat" event a success, where 2,500 to 3,000 participants were served, and reiterated that it was a wonderful sight to see the number of attendees; congratulated the City for winning the "Adopt a Drain" challenge, beating Andover, Fridley and Blaine by far, and the total for all four cities was 421 new drains, 896 drain cleanings and 161 new adopters signed up. The last Centennial activity is "Trivia Night" on November 23, 7:00-9:00 pm at Murzyn Hall; registration may be accessed on the City's website.

Report of the City Attorney

Attorney Hoeft had no update.

COMMUNITY FORUM

Rachel James, City resident, said the recent fatality on Central Avenue is reverberating within the Community, which is on top of the last two fatalities in 2020. She knows the City Council is supportive of finding ways to make Central Avenue safer, citing in particular current lighting and walkway challenges, but said she would like to see a public plan as to how to petition the State and County as to what can be done. Ms. James said she would also like to see "public mourning for those crossing illegally or possibly dying" on Columbia Heights streets, as children heard about the fatality this week and she heard a lot of sadness and questions about what the City is doing about to rectify the situation.

Fatima Molas, City resident, said Councilmember Buesgens invited her to the evening's meeting to speak about an issue that is of great concern to her family and community. She referenced the recent drowning of an autistic child in Edina, "which is an incident that has deeply touched many parents of children with disabilities in our community who are in fear that a similar tragedy could happen so easily in our Community. Just a few shorts weeks after this happened, there was an incident which an autistic child in Burnsville; fortunately, in that case the person survived. But to many of us it feels it's a matter of time before another tragedy grabs the headlines, but it doesn't have to be that way." She said it is important to her because researchers say that autistic children are 106 times more likely to drown than the population of children at large, wandering was one of the most common activities reported that lead to drowning and accounted for 73.9% of incidents, and fatal drownings of children with autism spectrum disorder occur typically in water bodies near the victims' homes. There are numerous areas in the City where there is open water, holding ponds or drainage ditches that are located very close to where children play. In her own community, there is a holding pond directly across the street from a playground with no fencing or signage to warn people about the water hazards.

Many children with disabilities, Ms. Molas said, are attracted to water and do not have the same sense of fear that other children may have, which is part of the disability, and many families live in fear of what could happen. She said there are several ways the City could address the issue, including signage to warn about the danger of water hazards, fencing around open water locations close to children playgrounds and playground renewal should be designated with inclusivity in mind. The playground in Edina was built inclusive for wheelchairs; but disability takes many forms, and mental disabilities must be considered when designing accessible playgrounds as well as partnering with organizations supporting education campaigns about water safety. She is a mother of a nine-year-old autistic son and lives across from the Huset Park playground, which is next to the water pond, and he has escaped many times, including one time when he broke their window to run.

Kaha Mursal reiterated what Ms. Molas said, adding that she is not a mother but aunt of an autistic child, and said it is a very crucial issue that should be addressed. The water pond associated with the two-year-old girl's death in Edina is the same as the pond in Columbia Heights across from a nearby playground. She said all children are curious but it is especially dangerous for autistic children and it is the responsibility of all, not just the parents, to ensure their safety. Ms. Mursal suggested fencing around water locations to prevent children from walking through, as water depth and wildlife habitation for each site is currently unknown. She lives in a neighborhood where there are a lot of autistic children and locking them in their homes is not a solution. She wants them to have the ability to have fun and play and not be prone to running to the water. This is a safety concern and she would like it addressed by the City.


Miriam Eyal, said autism is a serious condition that exists within the Community, particularly in her neighborhood. One suggestion she added, in addition to those already cited above by the other two Open Forum speakers, is for the City to partner with community-based organizations for swimming lessons and water safety education.

ADJOURNMENT

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

Meeting adjourned at 7:27 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary