



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
Public Safety Bldg—Training Room, 825 41st Ave NE
Monday, November 01, 2021
6:30 PM (or Immediately Following EDA)

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

CORRECTED
MINUTES

The following are the minutes for the City Council Work Session held at 6:50 pm on Monday, November 1, 2021 at the Public Safety Building, Training Room, 825 41st 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 6:50 pm.

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

Also Present: Kelli Bourgeois, City Manager; Renee Dougherty, Library Director; Kevin Hansen, Public Works Director; Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary; Joseph Kloiber, Finance Director; Matt Markham, Police Captain; Keith Windschitl, Recreation Director.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

- 1. Capital Equipment Replacement of Unit #456: Recreation Department Passenger Van.**
Recreation Director Keith Windschitl discussed that the current recreation van is at the end of life due to rust and other concerns. Recreation would like to replace with a similar van to what was purchased for the Senior Center. This van would be purchased from Ford of Hibbing.

There were no questions from Council about the purchase.

Councilmember Novitsky believes the kids will be thankful for the new van and new technology.

Director Windschitl is excited for the new van as it will have good air conditioning and heat.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that she is excited for the new van.

- 2. Police Strategic Planning Survey.**
Captain Markham distributed the 2022 strategic plan survey questions to Council and requested that they review the questions and return their answers in a timely manner as they are looking to review the information by the second week in December.

Captain Markham also gave a quick update of the status of the imbedded social worker position. He stated that the second edit of the contract is out for review, and that they are making sure that the needed elements for the federal grant are included. There are follow up interviews scheduled with Canvas Health to fill the position. Contract will need to come to council for approval, and he hopes to have that soon.

City Manager Kelli Bourgeois clarified that the social worker will not be a city employee but instead will be an employee of Canvas Health.

Councilmember Buesgens wanted to confirm that there is a work space dedicated to this new position.

Captain Markham confirmed that there is a work space and that they are still working out the specific details about how the social worker will spend its time in the community.

3. Citywide Survey.

City Manager Kelli Bourgeois stated that Staff has received additional information from Morris Leatherman about how they conduct community surveys. Staff is feeling more comfortable moving forward based on the responses to concerns and information from Morris Leatherman who would be conducting the survey. Morris Leatherman described in detail the process of getting in contact with residents via landline and cell phone. There is a 400 resident sample size (they make sure that this is reflective of the census data and geographical data). Phone surveys can last up to 45 minutes. If they are not able to get in touch with the resident, they leave detailed voice messages with the purpose and importance of the survey and ask that they respond because they are part of a small selected group. Morris Leatherman has translators and survey takers that speak several languages. The city brings forward the topics and questions they would like residents to answer and Morris Leatherman refines them. Ideally they keep the survey to about 60 to 100 questions. Overall feels that this survey would be very beneficial and would like to move forward with feedback from Council.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that this process sounds very smart, and we want to make sure we do all the needed homework. Asking the right questions is important.

Councilmember Murzyn Jr. stated that this sounds like this is a great idea, and that the inclusive nature of the company and different languages is important.

City Manager Kelli Bourgeois discussed that this is the best way to get a **statistically** ~~statically~~ valid sampling. She also inquired with Morris Leatherman how to engage others citizens who want to be included. The City of Crystal does a smaller survey size in addition to allowing members of the community at large to complete a separate survey. The information is not merged due to statistical accuracy concerns but the additional information is helpful.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired about additional costs related to the add-on survey.

City Manager Kelli Bourgeois stated that we would complete the add-on survey in house.

Finance Director Kloiber stated that we could include the in house survey on the back of utility bills or include a link via online building.

Councilmember Jacobs would like to see an article in the media as well.

City Manager Kelli Bourgeois stated that the more we can get the word out, the better the reception and completion of the survey is.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that it will be nice to have the availability for all residents. Also wanted to clarify when the survey would take place.

City Manager Kelli Bourgeois stated that the survey will likely take place in early 2022. Staff would like Council to review additional information and participate in formulating the questions.

Councilmember Buesgens wants to make sure that there are more than two choices for gender selection if that information is collected in the survey.

4. Department Level Review of Proposed 2022 Budget.

Finance Director Kloiber introduced the budget presentation portion of the meeting and stated that the presentations will be available online.

Library Budget Presentation.

Library Director Renee Dougherty led the presentation of the 2022 Library proposed budget. This presentation will be uploaded to the City of Columbia Heights website.

Mayor Márquez Simula thanked Director Dougherty for the presentation.

Councilmember Novitsky inquired about what Anoka County was doing regarding fines.

Library Director Dougherty responded that Anoka County still currently has fine and is exploring the option of going fine free.

Councilmember Jacobs inquired about the process of eliminating the fine for kids and not for adults. Overall she sees the argument in removing fines, but feels that there are different behavioral expectations from adults. Overall the issue of handling a fine needs to be handled discretely. Councilmember Jacobs also inquired about how the home delivery of library materials is occurring.

Library Director Dougherty responded that is hard to assign fines by item, instead it is easier to do the fine by person / library cardholder. Previously there were volunteers that delivered but staff has been delivering to the home bound seniors.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that she often goes back and forth on eliminating fines. Overall feels good that there is still damage / lost book fee.

Library Director Dougherty stated that overall many libraries are going fine free.

Councilmember Novitsky stated that he would prefer to follow what Anoka County is doing regarding fines.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that residents associate Columbia Heights Library with the Anoka County Library.

Finance Director Kloiber stated that if someone pays their fine online, Anoka County is keeping the money. The County needs to figure out how much to give back to the City.

Councilmember Jacobs inquired about the amount of fines that we should expect from Anoka County.

Finance Director Kloiber stated that we might be able to do a records request for information related to fines paid by Columbia Heights cardholders.

Councilmember Murzyn Jr. inquired as to why Anoka County is such a hold out?

Library Director Dougherty stated that there have been four directors in the last eight years. Overall they are collecting a larger amount of fines. The library does collect and make revenue from video rentals, copies, community room rental fees.

Councilmember Jacobs inquired about how many item are being tagged for fines. Of those items being tagged, how many do we ever get back? Will items still be returned if there are no late fines?

Library Director Dougherty stated that the Library is still charging for the replacement of the book.

Councilmember Novitsky inquired about the amount of people who have fines that are over the amount where books can no longer be checked out.

Library Director Dougherty stated that there is a set amount for the maximum fine, and that amount is set by Anoka County. If there are a lot of holds for a book that has not been returned, they do order a replacement prior to the 30 day period where the late fine is incurred.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that she is concerned about people not paying the library fine or the fee to replace the book.

Library Director Dougherty mentioned that text message notifications will be used going forward as a tool to get books returned on time.

Mayor Márquez Simula asked for clarification regarding the process for paying the replacement fee, or the fine.

Councilmember Jacobs would like to know the numbers behind book replacement after 30 days. Concern is that Anoka is not making this move yet to eliminate fines. Curious about communities the size of Columbia Heights, and how they handle this issue.

Library Director Dougherty stated that the library card will have a replacement fee removed as soon as the book is returned. If a cardholder gets to \$75 dollars or more in fines, then it goes to collections.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired about what we need to do to move forward with the budget.

City Manager Bourgeois stated that the current budget does not have a revenue line for late fees. The Council can dictate that this line is / is not included in the budget.

Councilmember Jacobs inquired about what happens if the Council wants to keep it and if it can be removed later.

City Manager Bourgeois stated that is better to not including it as a revenue source, but still need to make a policy choice. This is an item is that is less than one half of one percent of the budget (or approximately \$4,000).

Finance Director Kloiber stated that there is not a concern with the compliance, but administratively it is best to leave this item out, as it is drafted right now. As Director Dougherty mentioned, the Library budget is already using fund balance.

Councilmember Novitsky asked for clarification on what exactly the fund balance is.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that she understands that in regards to the overall budget the fine portion is miniscule. She wants to know if replacement fees are directly reflected in the budget.

Library Director Dougherty stated that she does not have a good breakdown of items not returned / fines.

Finance Director Kloiber stated that he will see if he can gather the specific information related to the breakdown of fines.

Councilmember Novitsky inquired if the fines are affecting the juvenile or adult population more.

Library Director Dougherty stated that there is a pretty equal split, however most fines are adults.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired about situations where adults are using their child's card to check out books.

Library Director Dougherty stated that anyone under 17 needs to have parental approval on their card. She also noted that there are no fines associated with ebooks.

Councilmember Novitsky sought additional information regarding if children's cards are linked to an adult. He also stated that if people do not want fines, then they can get the ebook.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that the person responsible for fines and returning books should be the adult. She does not feel that the fine issue should have been included in the budget presentation; overall we need to focus on the library budget.

Finance Director Kloiber addressed the amount in the fund balance and the accumulation of access funds. The fund balance is over the target, the tax levy is set lower to draw down fund balance back closer to the target.

Councilmember Novitsky wanted to know why we are increasing the budget if there is accumulation of access funds.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired about approving the Library budget and not deciding on the fines.

Finance Director Kloiber stated that staff will provide a resolution for the budget. Council can provide amendments to the budget if needed. As a whole, we want to change any items that are a concern for the budget prior to the resolution being drafted.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired about sending an email about individual questions prior to December meeting.

City Manager Kelli Bourgeois stated that staff can coordinate the data exchanges between Council and Department Heads so that there is one formulated response for the entire council.

Public Works Budget Presentation

Public Works Director Kevin Hansen led the presentation of the 2022 Public Works proposed budget. This presentation will be uploaded to the City of Columbia Heights website.

Public Works Director Hansen stated that there are some additional updates about construction costs and the bidding environment that will evolve past the presentation. The City is looking at using the ARPA funds for Central Avenue reconstruction. Council would need to approve the other additional items that will also be covered. Additionally, refuse

services will be up for contract renewal. Discussion at the beginning of 2022, with contracts reviewed in 2022. Currently also working on a parks survey of Murzyn Hall, with more information to follow.

Mayor Márquez Simula asked for further information regarding the Zone 6 and 7 rehabilitation program.

Public Work Director Hansen discussed the five-year capital plan. City would be returning to street rehab in 2026 in Zone 1 with major street improvements. We want to allow our state aide funds to replenish.

Councilmember Buesgens asked for clarification on what a GIS position entails and stated that Pg. 87 may have a typo (should be \$14,000). She also inquired about concern with electric vehicle in the cold.

Public Work Director Hansen clarified that GIS Stands for: Geographic Information System. We would be moving the mapping system in house instead of as contracted service, as overall it makes more sense to have this staffed in house. He stated that he is unsure if there are continued concerns with electric vehicles in the winter

Finance Director Kloiber stated that the new squads that are hybrid are doing ok in the cold.

Administration Budget Presentation

City Manager Kelli Bourgeois led the presentation of the 2022 Administration Department proposed budget. This presentation will be uploaded to the City of Columbia Heights website.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired about Swagit Productions in the new building.

City Manager Bourgeois stated that there have been meetings with consultants and there will be follow up meeting later this week. Likely Swagit will continue the process of recording. The new chambers will likely have a cable room, but the equipment will look different. Broadcasts will be more professional with the new equipment.

Councilmember Buesgens was curious if the City is still looking at local cable companies. She also thanked City Manager Bourgeois for adding events back into the budget.

City Manager Bourgeois stated that the City is not looking into Cable Providers any longer as we would have had to commit all of our franchise revenue. For what we do and what we need, it is better to keep it the way it is. Broadcasts will have to be paid for without cable revenue, and shifting somethings into the Administration budget to compensate the loss of cable revenue. There will need to be discussions regarding of this loss of revenue and the impact on other departments.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired about the breakdown of the costs for the individual events that are included in the budget.

City Manager Bourgeois addressed that costs entail items like restroom facilities, rental of movie materials, etc. but do not include the staff time for the events. In order to have a successful event a lot of departments and staff are involved. Overall the well-executed event is very positive for the community and the team.

Council Member Jacobs inquired about the need for mayoral admin assistant position.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that she is often working more than 30 hours per week, and need assistance with overflow of emails.

Councilmember Novitsky stated that he is not in support of adding an assistant for the mayor.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that historically known that the Mayoral position is more than 20 hours per week.

Councilmember Murzyn Jr. stated that he is not in support of adding the position.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that things have evolved and changed. Comparing the responsibilities from previous years is apples to oranges with the addition of email, and social media.

Councilmember Jacobs does feel that things have changed, but it has made it easier. Businesses, employees and management teams are more impactful with the addition of new methods of communication.

Councilmember Novitsky stated that if the Mayor had been part of the team, before leading the team, the expectations of what to expect would be different. He is not the only one who has to field calls and emails from people that Mayor has not responded to.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that the position would benefit the community and she would be able to share the admin person if needed.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that if the Mayor needs 5 hours per week of support there will not be help for other people.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that the Mayor is more active than some other Mayors.

Councilmember Novitsky stated that Mayor is equal to Council.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that knowing what she was getting into was not relevant to the request of admin position. She thanked the group for entertaining the idea.

Councilmember Novitsky stated that he likes the idea of recognizing the board and commission members.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that she feels that board and commission recognition is a great thing. Sometimes serving on a board or commission can be a thankless job. She feels that a slide show with information about each commission or board to be presented at the recognition dinner would be helpful. She would like to include partners / spouses if possible.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that this is a good way to meet and learn about each other and would like to have this event in February / March.

Mayor Márquez Simula would also like to include a presentation about what the different boards and commissions do.

City Manager Bourgeois stated that staff could give a presentation about the boards and commissions to recognize them.

Liquor Department Budget Presentation

Finance Director Joe Kloiber led the presentation of the 2022 Liquor proposed budget. This presentation will be uploaded to the City of Columbia Heights website.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired about the profit margins, as well as if Store 3 was fully open.

Finance Director Kloiber addressed that gross profit is often 25% of sales. He also stated that Store 3 is open and that people can stop by and checkout the store.

Councilmember Jacobs inquired if there had been a discussion regarding a Holiday event for grand opening of Store 3.

Finance Director Kloiber stated that there have been concerns with staffing and getting people to work on Saturday night, especially at store three. Hard to advertise a grand opening if there are staffing concerns. Will status with Jason the liquor store manager on plans moving forward.

Additional Budget Concerns / Follow Up

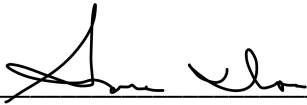
Finance Director Kloiber stated that additional budget edits / concerns will be addressed and presentations combined in a uniform manner to be published to the City website by the Communications Staff. In the third week of November the tax documents from Anoka County will be mailed out to residents. This mailing will also include the information for the final hearings regarding budget. On or around the first Monday in December there will be a check in on the budget information and any needed budget training. The Council meeting on December 13th will be when the final budget vote occurs.

Councilmember Buesgens requested that the Public Works Department numbers be made larger. It was hard to see the presentation.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Márquez Simula adjourned the work session at 9:07 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary