



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE
Monday, October 07, 2024
6:30 PM

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

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Márquez Simula at 6:50pm.

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

Also Present: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager; Renee Dougherty, Library Director; Kevin Hansen, Public Works Director; Jesse Hauf, IT Director; Sara Ion, City Clerk; Erik Johnston, Police Captain; Joe Kloiber, Finance Director; Matt Markham, Police Chief; Dan O'Brien, Assistant Fire Chief; Kristin Peterson, Fire Department Admin Assistant; Charlie Thompson, Fire Department Chief; Keith Windschitl, Recreation Director.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. 2025 Budget Presentations by Division.

Recreation

Recreation Director Keith Windschitl gave an overview of the 2024 Recreation Budget. The information will be available online on the Finance page on the City website.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired if the City was currently working the grant money that we lost into the budget. She would prefer that we continue to work on getting these funds in the budget.

Director Windschitl clarified that he is moving some budget lines to cover the grant that was lost and to cover some of the increased costs.

Mayor Márquez Simula asked about the Sister City allocation for the JPM budget, she would like to make sure that we are more transparent about the costs that are associated with groups using the space. She understands that they are not directly paying for the costs, as civic groups / city affiliated group.

Director Windschitl stated that he would follow up with Mayor Márquez Simula related to the allocations for city associated groups using the space.

Police

Police Chief Matt Markham led the presentation on the Police Department Budget. The information will be available online on the Finance page on the City website.

Councilmember Jacobs inquired about the status of the emotional support dog.

Chief Markham indicated that the process is underway to bring the dog on to the police department team.

Captain Johnston elaborated that the dog is a young Labrador and will be joining the department when its training is complete.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired about the drop in calls that the department is reporting year to date.

Chief Markham stated that the calls can vary from month to month. There was a reduction in calls overall, but the Police Department Staff is very busy. He further clarified that Columbia Heights Officers take more calls for service than any other department in Anoka County.

Councilmember James confirmed that the non-spent 2024 public safety funds are being held outside of the presented budget.

Chief Markham confirmed that there is about half of that money that has not been spent outside of the budget.

Mayor Márquez Simula asked for additional information related to the Youth Outreach Officer and commended the department for being so willing to work with the school district to get a contract that worked for everyone.

Chief Markham stated that the Youth Outreach Officer was approved by ISD 13, and that there is an officer staffed for the position and in place with assistance from the Community Policing Officer.

Councilmember James also confirmed the mayor's appreciation for the process that was put into place to get the Youth Outreach Contract approved.

Information Technology

Information Technology Director Jesse Hauf led the presentation on the IT Budget. The information will be available online on the Finance page on the City website.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired about the conclusion of the five-year comprehensive IT plan. She is very appreciative of the work that the department has been doing.

Director Hauf confirmed that he is now starting his fourth year with the City. Part of the five year plan was hiring an IT Director.

Councilmember Spriggs inquired about when USI will be coming into the City.

Director Hauf stated that he believes that USI should be breaking ground in the southeastern corner of the City in Spring of 2025.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired about the Police Department needing IT support, and if the Fire Department needs that support as well. She also inquired about the installation of the speakers for white noise at the Police Department.

Director Hauf confirmed that the Fire Department was already 100% covered by the IT Department. He also confirmed that the white noise speakers have been implemented at the Police Department and that the Ramsdell Room has been updated to use Teams.

Library

Library Director Renee Dougherty led the presentation on the Library Budget. The information will be available online on the Finance page on the City website.

Councilmember Buesgens confirmed the process for replacing lost grant funds by increasing the budget.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired if there was an update on when the new Library website would be available.

Director Dougherty confirmed that she is working on the budget to replace / recover funds that were grant supported. Additionally, she informed the Council that Will and Kat on the Communications Team have been working hard to get the updated website rolled out by November 1st.

Fire

Fire Chief Charlie Thompson presented information about the 2024 Fire Department budget. The information will be available online on the Finance page on the City website. Chief Thompson also indicated that the Fire Department Admin Assistant, Kristin Peterson will help the incoming Fire Department Chief Dan O'Brien with future budget.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired if there were any additional capital purchases related to vehicle / equipment replacement. She also inquired if the City would be selling the ladder/aerial truck after it is replaced.

Chief Thompson stated that he believes that there will not be any large capital purchases outside of replacement of standard vehicles. He believes that the Council is in good hands with the staff and equipment. When the ariel can be sold it will follow a precise process for selling old/ replaced equipment.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that there is a lot of improvement that has occurred in a very short amount of time with the Departments and thanked Chief Thompson for his hard work. She also inquired about the reduction in calls for not responding to Crestview for falls at the facility.

Councilmember Jacobs also thanked Chief Thompson.

Councilmember James asked about the impact of the pay increase on the paid-on call fire fighters.

Fire Chief Thompson stated that there has been an increase in shifts being filled, and other local cities are also following the example that we have set. He also clarified that the Fire Departments calls for service have increased even with the reduction of calls to Crestview. He is unsure what is causing the increase in calls, and it could drop off when the weather gets cooler.

Assistant Fire Chief O'Brien informed Council that he will review the calls for service and provide the information related to the reduction in calls at Crestview.

Mayor Márquez Simula asked about community education efforts and additional ways to connect with the community. She also inquired as to when the Fire Department training for the Council might be provided again.

Chief Thompson confirmed that there will be increased focus on community engagement over the next several months and that the department can help facilitate on-site training for the Council.

2. Discuss Emotional Resilience Program Training Quote for Public Safety Employees.

**This item was presented out of sequence after the Police Department Budget Presentation.*

Police Chief Markham led the presentation on the need for an Emotional Resilience Program to the Council. He stated that he has been working with the group specified in the packet related to resiliency training for all Public Safety Staff (both fire and police). This would be a three-day course with assessments and Staff could then utilize this information when meeting to discuss concerns with the Therapy Provider. He stated that the cost of the training is a small amount to further employee retention.

Fire Chief Thompson added that he is fully supportive of this program.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that she is very glad that this will increase retention and keep the public safety team healthy.

Councilmember James stated that she is in support of using the public safety funds for this and feels that this is exactly what the fund were meant for.

Chief Markham indicated that he plans to add this item to the consent agenda and will have additional information available for the Council and Citizens to have the background of the item.

3. Council Corner. (15 Minutes)

Updates from council regarding schedules, information sharing and priorities for continued

education.

Review of Calendar and Events for the Next Month

City Manager Chirpich gave an overview of the upcoming meeting and events.

Anoka County Work Force

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that she would like to see the program utilized in a greater capacity. She was glad to see that this was a topic for an upcoming work session, but she would like to see it utilized when speaking about budgets.

Continued Training

Councilmember James inquired about the March 10-12th 2025 National League of Cities and who would be interested in attending. She would like to discuss attendance in the future.

General Updates

Councilmember Buesgens shared that she has followed up with former City Manager Bourgeois and her community is doing well after Hurricane Helene

Councilmember Buesgens also stated that she has been reviewing potential funds for soccer fields, and there is currently a little over a million dollars in the park improvement fund. She would also like to see a skateboard park as a use for these funds. She would like to see this discussed in 2025 at the goal planning sessions.

Councilmember Buesgens would like to see how much it would cost to do a full staffing study to move forward with staffing for the entire city. Strategic planning could lead to the highest need departments getting the focus that they deserve. She would also like to see if AI will impact department staffing. She hoped to proceed with finding out how much a study would cost.

Proclamations

Councilmember James and Mayor Márquez Simula confirmed that there will be residents at the Monday meeting for Domestic Violence and Breast Cancer Awareness.

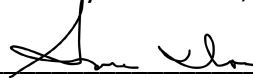
4. Old Business.

There was no old business at this time.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Márquez Simula adjourned the meeting at 8:36pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary