



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE
Tuesday, January 02, 2024
6:00 PM

Mayor
Amada Márquez Simula
Councilmembers
Connie Buesgens
Kt Jacobs
Rachel James
Justice Spriggs
Interim City Manager
Kevin Hansen

MINUTES

The following are the minutes for the Work Session Meeting of the City Council held at 6:00 pm on Monday, January 2, 2024, in the Shared Vision Room, City Hall, 3989 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order at 6:05pm.

Present: Mayor Márquez Simula; Councilmember Buesgens; Councilmember Jacobs; Councilmember James (electronically via Teams), Councilmember Spriggs

Also Present: Andrew Bouche, City Planner; Aaron Chirpich, Assistant City Manager / Community Development Director; Jesse Hauf, IT Director; Kevin Hansen, Interim City Manager; Sara Ion, City Clerk; Charlie Thompson, Fire Chief.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. Authorize Purchase of Phoenix G-2 Alerting System.

Chief Thompson gave a brief overview of the Pheonix G-2 Alerting System and all the positive impacts that it will have on the Fire Department Team vs. the now outdated pager system that is currently in use.

The Council agreed to move forward with the purchase of the new system and asked that it be added as an item “to be considered” on the next council meeting agenda so that the positive impacts could be shared with the community.

2. Xcel Energy Partners in Energy

City Planner Bouche led the presentation of the positive impacts that Xcel Partners in Energy Program would have on the City of Columbia Heights if it was approved and implemented. Bouche gave a brief overview of the requirements of the program and showcased the process that the City of Coon Rapids used to implement the program.

The Council agreed to move forward with the Partners in Energy program and asked that it be added as an item “to be considered” on the next council meeting agenda so that the positive impacts could be shared with the community.

3. IT Department Update

IT Director Jesse Hauf led a presentation on the recently completed updates and future planned updates for the IT Department and the City as a whole. Hauf gave information on the status of the Sciens Strategic Technology Plan that was approved by the Council and all

the recent updates that have occurred.

Additionally, Hauf updated the Council on Comcast franchise agreement extension (he noted that cable subscribers are down significantly), he is anticipating that the extension will be finalized soon.

Hauf also updated the Council on the availability of USI Internet in the community in the coming years.

4. Lobbyist: Eyes on Session.

Interim City Manager Hansen gave an update on the current status of what the Lobbyist hired to assist the City is working on and future potential projects including: MSC building bonding, City Hall sales tax refund and future potential for park bonding and what the application process would look like.

Hansen asked the Council what items would need to be clarified or lobbied for in the legislature that we could use the assistance of our lobbyist for.

Councilmember James mentioned she would support public building firearms restrictions that the League of MN Cities Lobbyist supports. Additionally she would support lobbying for the State to take over the Massage Therapist Licensing and additional clarification of the SRO (School Resource Officer) position.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired about the timeline for getting bonding for Murzyn Hall.

Hansen stated that the City can not support the share of the bonding for Murzyn Hall until after the completion of the Public Works building.

5. Designation of Legal Newspaper for 2024.

Interim City Manager Hansen led a brief presentation of the requirements for the Council to select a legal newspaper for 2024. He highlighted that our current legal newspaper allows for reasonable publishing costs, and he would suggest continuing on with that.

The council agreed to continue utilizing "Life Newspaper" as the official legal newspaper for 2024 and to have the item placed on the consent agenda for approval.

6. Council Liaison Board and Commission Appointments for 2024.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that she would like to continue with the appointments that were established in 2023.

The Council agreed to continue with the Board and Commission Appointments that were established in 2023 for the year 2024.

7. Select Date for 2024 Local Board of Appeal & Equalization Meeting.

Interim City Manager Hansen introduced the potential dates proposed for the LBAE

meeting to precede the regularly scheduled City Council meetings on April 8th and 22nd at 5:00pm.

The Council agreed to proceed with the proposed dates in April at 5pm prior to the scheduled Council Meetings. There was concern about training that can be completed, and City Clerk Ion will follow up with the County to see when the training link has been refreshed for 2024.

8. Council Corner.

Councilmember James would like to see opportunities to support renters in the community. She would like this item to be discussed at an upcoming work session so that Staff can research what the Council is interested in.

Mayor Márquez Simula voiced her concerns with the parking area at City Hall. She was concerned that one of the EV (Electric Vehicle) Chargers was not working and that there was some garbage in the area. She stated that “she did not want items to come across as piddly”. Additionally, she stated that there should be signs stating that specific parking spots are for EV Charging only. Additionally, she also voiced concerns that workers are parking too close to the doors.

City Manager Hansen clarified that all the Electric Vehicles are working, and that he has used each one of them. He has concerns that designating the EV parking spots as such may lead to concerns for general parking when there are larger meetings. Hansen also clarified that there are some City vehicles that could be relocated, and this will occur once a deep cleaning of the garage can occur, further clarifying that there is a machine to clean the garage floor at public works and they will complete the cleaning at City Hall.

Mayor Márquez Simula would like to have a “Old Business” section added to the Work Session Agenda. This way she could keep track of items like having the parking garage cleaned.

Councilmember Jacobs would like to have residents’ issues addressed during the City Manager Update section. She does not feel that this needs to be during every meeting.

Hansen stated that he would make sure these items are addressed in the City Manager update portion of the meeting.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that she would like to see the achievements of staff highlighted throughout the year. Councilmember Jacobs would like to see specific departments highlighted.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired about the status of who will be taking over the position of City Attorney.

Hansen stated that it is an attorney that has worked for the City / Council previously, and that Scott Lepak is well versed in union contract negotiations for the City, and this is very

important this year as three contracts are up for renewal. There is a need for continuity in this position through this year's negotiations.

9. Review 2024 Council Schedule.

Interim City Manager Hansen led the conversation related to prescheduled council meetings on the first, second and fourth Monday of the month and what days were updated or changed to reflect a holiday or tentative meeting.

City Clerk Ion confirmed that the City's online calendar has been updated to reflect meetings, holidays, and other important events for 2024.

10. Executive Session: Discuss Property Acquisition of PIN: 35-30-24-43-0018.

ATTENDANCE INFORMATION: Move to recess to Closed Session pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.05, subdivision 3(b), members of the public will not be able to attend.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that the meeting will be closed pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05 subdivision 3(b) to discuss the acquisition of property at PIN: 35-30-24-43-0018.

Motion by Councilmember Jacobs, seconded by Councilmember Spriggs to go into closed session. Motion Carried 5-0 (individual roll call vote was taken as James was in attendance virtually) and the meeting was closed at 8:19pm.

Motion by Councilmember Jacobs, seconded by Councilmember Spriggs to reconvene the regular work session meeting. Motion Carried 5-0 (individual roll call vote was taken as James was in attendance virtually) and the meeting was reconvened at 8:43pm.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Márquez Simula adjourned the meeting at 8:45pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary