



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
City Hall—Council Chambers, 590 40th Ave NE
Monday, May 01, 2023
6:00 PM

Mayor
Amáda 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 6:40pm pm on Monday, May 8, in the Public Safety Training Room 825 41st Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Márquez Simula called the meeting to order at 6:40pm

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

Also Present: Renee Dougherty, Library Director; Jim Hauth; Kevin Hansen, Interim City Manager; Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary; Joe Kloiber, Finance Director; Ben Sandell, Communications Coordinator

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. Update Regarding Cable Franchise Agreement Renewal Process.

Communications Coordinator Ben Sandell gave an update on the Cable Franchise renewal process and the status of where we are in the negotiation of this agreement. There will be a draft ordinance to update the agreement at an upcoming meeting that will need to be approved by the Council.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired as to how the fee is calculated. She was concerned about losing the communications coordinator position funding.

Finance Director Kloiber stated that this funding was a direct reflection of the subscribers. Overall, there may be a discussion of streaming vs. broadcasting and reviewing how we are serving customer bases.

Mayor Márquez Simula clarified that this discussion is just about the status of the negotiations, and that there will be more information in the future.

Councilmember Jacobs clarified that this is not going to impact us in the next year.

Communications Coordinator Sandell and Finance Director Kloiber stated that it will impact the amount of equipment that is needed in the next several years.

2. 2024 Residential Water Meter Replacement Program.

Interim Public Works Director Jim Hauth led the presentation of information on this item. There is a 42 / 48-week lead time to order the meters and radios and we need to enter debt service to purchase these items at approximately three million dollars. All the

properties in the City would not be alerted at the same time, it would be rolled out slowly, and in a targeted way.

Director Kloiber stated that we have about \$700,000 saved, and it would be nice to not have to do a debt service of longer than 15 years (any longer than the warranty on the meters).

Councilmember Buesgens inquired about the accuracy of the new meters. She wanted to know how this could impact community members to be more mindful of their water usage.

Director Hauth stated that there would be improved customer service by residents being able to see their water usage more accurately.

Councilmember Jacobs is looking forward to this update and would like to see online forms, utilizing online scheduling and translation capabilities.

3. Updated Sustainability Commission Draft Interview Questions.

Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen gave an overview on this item. The council approved the interview questions and was ready to move forward with this item.

4. Confirm Meeting Time and Date for Sustainability Commission and Discuss Dates for Sustainability Commission Applications and Interviews.

Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen gave an overview on this item. The Council was in support of using the application that was in the meeting packet.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that she tries to keep the third week of the month less busy, as many of the Councilmembers are working multiple jobs. She would prefer to have this Commission meet on the second Tuesday of the Month.

There was further discussion of the time and date of the meeting, and it was determined that it would be scheduled the second Tuesday of the month at 6pm and the Commission could determine if the date and time needed to be changed based on the members needs.

The Council discussed having interviews on June 26th: from 4-5:30 and 27th from 3 -6pm (discussion regarding appointments after the interviews).

5. Discussion on One-Way Street and Bump Out on 7th Street Between 52nd and 53rd Avenues.

Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen gave an overview on this item. This street did not always exist as a one way, and Council was in favor of having a hearing to get public input on removing the bump out and making this a two-way street again.

6. Amend the Library Meeting Room Usage Policy (Referred from 4/24/2023 Council Meeting).

Discussion of topic lead by Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen and Library Director Renee Dougherty after the item was tabled from the previous Council Meeting.

Councilmember Buesgens felt that this was a waste of taxpayer money to have separated the meeting room from the library if we do not allow after-hours usage.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired if staff is inspecting the usage of the room when it is being used. What if we have a trial of having the room open on only Thursday nights, and the party renting the room must be there when Staff is there to open the room.

Councilmember James stated that it would be odd to have a City Room without staffing.

Councilmember Jacobs wants to have someone from the Library Staff available to check the room. She would love to have the room open longer, there is a liability to the staff who maybe coming into the building.

Councilmember Spriggs wanted to clarify why we are not directing people to utilize Murzyn Hall instead of the library. If we can budget for Staff to be available to supervise the room, then he would feel more comfortable.

Interim City Manager Hansen suggested that we monitor the requests for the room to see what the volume is.

Councilmember James inquired if “we take no action now” what occurs. She would be interested in potentially having one night that is available after hours.

City Manager Hansen is going to follow up with the City of Fridley to find out what the City of Fridley’s Fireside room policy is.

Director Dougherty will bring an extension of the hours back to the Library Board for review based on the Council’s recommendations.

7. City Council Topics.

Muralists and New City Hall Art.

Councilmember James stated that Golden Valley has a great art policy. There should also be a policy for the installation, maintenance and eventually replacement.

Councilmember Spriggs wants to make sure that the art that is chosen contributes and promotes the history of the City not restricting it to only community members. He also inquired how much a large mural cost. He also mentioned that it would be nice to memorialize Medtronic by having public art with the theme of “Hearts of Heights”.

Interim City Manager Hansen stated that we should investigate starting a City Art Fund, and clarified that a large mural can cost anywhere from \$15,000 to \$30,000.

Councilmember Buesgens would like to start a City Art Fund to start saving money and also start an Arts Commission.

Councilmember Jacobs would like to have the artists displayed in City Hall be exclusively from the City of Columbia Heights.

Council Compensation

Mayor Márquez Simula started the discussion on this topic by stating that she would like to set up a schedule for when and how Council Compensation will be discussed.

Councilmember James would like to set a policy for when the Council reviews compensation and that she will forward the policy she found from other cities to Interim City Manager Hansen. She would like to see a policy of a standard two to four years to review the compensation for Council.

Councilmember Spriggs stated that it would make sense if it were every four to five years.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that it would be negligent to not discuss this. She had a discussion with the Mayor of Rochester and what the compensation was for the Council there. Within the last year they did an increase for the Mayor of the average median income and ten percent less than the average median income for the Council.

Councilmember James stated If there were to be any compensation increase it would be approximately five percent. She would not expect to see the Council position as a half-time position.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that the Council engagement level has increased. She also feels that there is an increase in inflation, and the buying level is different.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that the engagement level has not changed, but the means of engagement have changed. She does not see this job as something that she is going to make money from, this is a form of public service for her.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that she does not feel that the work level has increased.

Councilmember James does not want to wait to have consensus to make a move on this, she wants to keep the charter the same. She would like to have a policy related to salary review, and not update the charter. She does not know what will happen in the future. She feels that the work of the Council was valued at a certain level in 2008.

Councilmember Buesgens wanted to know what exactly Councilmember James wants from a pay increase. She is concerned that this will impact on the benefits that the Council receives.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated that with the amount of money the Council makes they could apply for health benefits from the State.

Councilmember James stated that she is bringing this up now because she feels that incremental change.

Councilmember Spriggs stated that this would need to be a \$30,000 to \$40,000 job for someone to be able to afford to be able to do this job. Incremental increase would be a change in the right direction if someone was cutting back in their job from full time to part time to attend meetings.

Interim City Manager Hansen clarified that there will need to be both a conversation for the cost of living increase for the Council for 2025, and consideration of a policy. Hansen stated that he will need to have a conversation with the City Attorney related to the policy and will also review this topic with the League.

Councilmember Spriggs asked if there was way to have the increase staggered based on the reelection.

Interim City Manager clarified that the Council votes as a whole for their salary and this can not be staggered.

Mayor Márquez Simula would like to complete the increase this year with the City’s best interest at heart and put it to a vote soon, so it is not on the agenda for next year.

The Council consensus was around a cost-of-living increase. Interim City Manager Hansen will speak with the City Attorney to work on the process for what would be needed for a cost-of-living adjustment.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Márquez Simula adjourned the meeting at 8:50pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary