



CITY COUNCIL CORNER
City Hall—Conference Room 1, 590 40th Ave NE
Wednesday, May 10, 2023
3:00 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 Meeting of the City Council held at 3:00 p.m. on Wednesday, May 10, 2023, in Conference Room 1, City Hall, 590 40th Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Mayor Márquez Simula called the meeting to order at 3:03 p.m.

Present: Mayor Márquez Simula; Councilmember Buesgens (late); Councilmember James; Councilmember Spriggs

Absent: Councilmember Jacobs

Also Present: Aaron Chirpich, Community Development Director/City Manager; Sara Ion, City Clerk.

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. *Public Art– Butterfly Sculpture.*

Mayor Márquez Simula discussed the sculpture project that already has interest and permission from HeightsNext. There is a local arts group that is looking to write a grant for \$15,000 in conjunction with HeightsNext for the butterfly project as a more inclusive sculpture idea. This project will take time from the grant writing, art concept to creation. Lominaki Park would be the first location of the sculpture.

Councilmember James and Spriggs also liked the idea of having these in each of the parks and would like to further discuss having the “Hearts of Heights” related to Medtronics in addition to the butterfly sculptures.

2. *Piano in the Park.*

Councilmember Buesgens clarified that it will cost about \$325 to \$400 to move a piano for the park. She has requested information from Piano Streets.org related to the topic of a piano in a community space. She has sent the information to Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen for review. There needs to be liability coverage for the piano, and it will need to be hosted by the City or Heights Next and an artist will need to be selected to paint it.

Councilmember James stated that The Methodist Church has reached out about donating their piano. Pianos can handle the weather; it would be nice to have it by Kordiac park. It was mentioned that Husset Park West, and the splash pad would be good locations as well.

3. *Why Bad Street Design is Both Costly and Deadly.*

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=DyDRZjgiraY>

Councilmember James is looking forward to the Safe Streets for all initiative.

Mayor Márquez Simula is having conversations with Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen about reducing the speed limit within the City to twenty five miles per hour.

4. *Veterans Banners on Central.*

Mayor Márquez Simula gave information from the update that was presented from Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen to the Sister City Meeting. Because of the length of time the banners are placed the condition of the banners can deteriorate. There will be further discussion of the duration that each type of banner will be placed, with potential of the rotation of the banners for holidays throughout the summer and fall.

5. *37th Avenue Reconstruction Update (Information from Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen).*

Assistant City Manager Chirpich informed the Council that there is a pre-construction meeting at the library this evening, and there will be large traffic interruptions through out the next several months working East to West.

7. *Inequity in Homeownership.*

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired with the City Manager about doing a 3% rent cap increase for senior citizens in the City. This was discussed with Jim Hoelt the City Attorney this morning and further research will be conducted and the topic can be discussed at a future work session. The City Attorney did not feel this was something that could be enacted without impacting all renters in the City. This could potentially impact the rainbow site in a negative manner, and this should be considered with moving this issue forward.

Councilmember Spriggs asked a question to Assistant City Manager Chirpich about the current 4D tax bill at the State level. Chirpich will review the information and follow up with the Council.

Mayor Márquez Simula asked for a TIF follow up presentation at the June Work Session.

Councilmember James gave an update related to potential relief for first time home buyers who are having their homes foreclosed on.

8. *Council Discuss Next Month Schedules and Proclamations.*

Mayor Márquez Simula will be presenting a menstruation proclamation with students and Sandra Feist at the last meeting for the month of May. She would like to consider having a moment of silence at meetings for victims of gun violence and tragedies that are occurring. She has recently joined a Mayors Against Gun Violence Group.

She would like to have a small Memorial Day ceremony; she reached out to the VFW and they are not able to run the Ceremony. She reached out to Councilmember James to see if the Girl Scouts could help. If this isn't something that could be done this year, then maybe it is something that can be done next year.

Councilmember James would like a Gun Violence Awareness proclamation for June. She would also like to have a proclamation for Juneteenth (first meeting of June).

Councilmember Buesgens thought it might be nice to add a closing statement at Council meetings about being kind or peaceful. Councilmember Buesgens would like to have a zero-waste proclamation, this could be created by the Sustainability Commission. She would like to know if we are going to be applying for State Funds for the Climate Change Grant Funds and will follow up with Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen.

Councilmember Spriggs would like to have a Pride Proclamation or Immigrant Heritage Month Proclamation for June.

The Council discussed their schedule for June and will cancel the Council Corner for June and will focus on community engagement and attending the Arts and Information Fair.

9. Other Business.

Mayor Márquez Simula followed up with Earl McCoy regarding Highland Center, and the job posting for part time Facility Supervisor. She will clarify that there will be more open hours coming up at the next Council meeting.

There was a discussion of a second sister city in Somalia and a recent connection to the Somali Community.

Councilmember Buesgens brought up the Bloomberg foundation grant for a mural, and that the topic has been discussed with Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen.

Councilmember Spriggs inquired about moving forward the strip mall at the corner at 40th and 42nd. Assistant City Manager Chiprich stated that if this area were to be redeveloped it would look different in the future.

Mayor Márquez Simula inquired about having a building tour of the new building behind the public safety building, and was not in support of the exterior building color change.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 4:45 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara Ion, City Clerk