



**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**  
**Public Safety Bldg—Training Room, 825 41st Ave NE**  
**Monday, June 05, 2023**  
**6:00 PM**

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

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**MINUTES**

The following are the minutes for the Work Session Meeting of the City Council held at 6:00pm on Monday, June 5, in the Public Safety Training Room 825 41<sup>st</sup> Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Márquez Simula called the meeting to order at 6:08pm

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

Also Present: Lenny Austin, Police Chief; Andrew Boucher, City Planner; Aaron Chirpich, Community Development Director/Assistant City Manager; Mitchell Forney, Community Development Coordinator; Liam Genter, City Forrester, Library Director; Jim Hauth; Kevin Hansen, Interim City Manager; Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary; LS Black Management Team.

**WORK SESSION ITEMS**

**1. Medtronic Development Proposal from LS Black.**

Introduction of item by Community Development Director / Assistant City Manager Aaron Chirpich related to the Medtronic Site on 53<sup>rd</sup> Avenue related to Medtronic exiting the City. This site is commercially zoned and would need to be rezoned if there were to be redeveloped if there were large scale redevelopment of the site. Presentation of information related to the letter of intent and a potential purchase agreement was led by LS Black Management Team. There would be almost 600 units with three phases of development, with Tax Increment Financing to achieve the final results with some market rate and some income banded housing. LS Black started three years ago, and are a local development group and have two projects that have just closed and.

Councilmember Buesgens had a series of questions for LS Black. She inquired about the longevity of the company; she is very concerned about the sales pitch and inquired as to why they are coming to Columbia Heights and not Edina? She feels that Columbia Heights has met the affordable housing goal, and wants to take care of the existing affordable housing we currently do have. Overall she is not concerned with the property sitting vacant for the right developer. She inquired if they knew the total value of the property and amount of tax income that the City would be earning from this project.

Councilmember Jacobs would like to see this property as a business property. She feels the community does not want more income capped housing. She does not feel that we should jump on the first proposal that comes through. She has concerns with the impact of adding

600 additional housing units to the 700 units that are also being added at Central Avenue as well.

Councilmember James inquired how long a TIF District would last. She would like to see this plan move forward. She likes the mixed income component, and she is in favor of the development and would like to see this move from 2% to 5% ADA units. Overall there is agreement that this site is likely going to be a housing site, and it will need to have some TIF for remediation of the site.

Councilmember Spriggs has mixed opinions on this project, he sees TIF funding and projects shortchanging us in the long run. He thinks we are providing Fridley with a huge benefit on our dime.

Mayor Márquez Simula feels that this design is not taking into consideration what a special place Sullivan Lake is. This is a really wonderful location for a market rate townhomes or homes. She stated that this project feels very basic, and acknowledged that this is a first round of drafts. She would like to see a project on this site more spaced out with consideration of the lake, the trail.

Mayor Márquez Simula would like to see revisions and would not provide TIF in the current format.

Councilmembers Spriggs and Jacobs asked about the time frame for completion of the two phases.

Chirpich inquired about mixed density and townhomes near the lake. Redevelopment in the area has been a mix of condos, single family and apartments. The Council has expectations that exceed what are being offered. He stated that we are pushing the envelope in other areas in the City, and we need to do that on this site as well. There will be TIF in this conversation no matter who the developer of the site is, we need to have that conversation related to infrastructure. The City is the gatekeeper on the Zoning component.

Councilmember James clarified that we do not get to choose who is purchasing the property. We only control the TIF and rezoning component.

Mayor Márquez Simula thanked LS Black for the presentation this evening.

**2. Police Department Budget Update.**

Police Chief Austin led an update on the concerns occurring with Silver Lake Beach. At this time, it is recommended to rent a camera trailer for \$7,000 for the next two months and continue to increase enforcement. Overall, it would be best to purchase our own camera trailer, at a cost estimate is \$75,000. There would be funds for this to be purchased in the 2023 police operating budget. In addition to the camera use at Silver Lake Beach, there will be updates and improvements to the park to improve sight lines and overall visibility.

Chief Austin then led a conversation related to the police budget and staffing to bring the department to thirty sworn officers.

Councilmember Buesgens clarified that this officer total was also in addition to adding the two full time Social Workers. Chief Austin confirmed that this was in addition to those positions.

Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen noted that if the Council does approve this it requires a 4/5 vote as it is amending the budget.

**3. Emerald Ash Borer on Private Property Update.**

City Forrester Liam Genter gave a review of the EAB program and Interim Public Works Director Jim Hauth provided additional details on the process for the City to assist residents. Trees that need to be removed will be marked, and homeowners will be notified that they need to be removed. If homeowners can not take care of removal the City will take action, and the property will be assessed for the removal.

**4. Adoption of Optional Appendices of the State Fire Code.**

Fire Chief Thompson and Captain Picard gave a review of the updates that are needed to the fire code in the City, the readoption needs to occur because of the lettering changes. The City needs to make sure that we have an easily communicated and standard code. This item will be on the next Consent Agenda for approval.

**5. Parks CIP - Update**

Interim City Manager Hansen led an abbreviated overview of the Park CIP Update, stating that any sort of park improvements does go in front of the park commission. Overall, the parks are improved on a park-by-park basis. The City had been able to focus on and improve 6 parks before losing funding in 2018. The process was suspended in 2020, and the City updated our costs in 2022/2023 with the firm WSB completing an analysis. As a community we want to reevaluate / have public engagement for what is needed for our parks. A smaller debt service is more doable to update smaller projects at parks throughout the City.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that she would really like one soccer field.

Councilmember James is not sure if we have funding for a skate park yet from the funding from the State. She would like to do a smaller park and to show that we are updating and making progress.

Interim City Manager Hansen stated that this conversation will be continued at the July Work Session meeting.

**6. Centerpointe Franchise Agreement.**

Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen led the conversation on this item. The current agreement with Centerpointe ends in 2023. The agreement is very straightforward and there is a lot of statutory components. The agreement itself is based on the template from

the League of MN Cities and Staff and the City Attorney have reviewed and updated it to reflect Columbia Heights Needs.

We are allowed under MN State Law to institute Franchise Fees to everyone who uses the services. These fees can be different from residential to commercial users. With all the things we are discussing it could be important to discuss how these could be utilized in a concurrent manner to pay for things that the City needs.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired if once the fee is set, is it set for the term of the contract.

Interim City Manager Hansen stated that he had completed some initial research on what some Cities do, and there is a 4% surcharge on the bill in Coon Rapids. Edina used the surcharge to build their trails.

Councilmember James and Buesgens were interested in this as an option.

Councilmember Buesgens would like to see how much \$.50 fee would generate for the City.

**7. Council Salary Adjustment.**

Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen clarified that a Council and Mayoral pay increase has been discussed at the past several work session meetings. He clarified that this was reviewed with the City Attorney, and this would need to be approved via Ordinance, and would go into effect after the next municipal election (January 1, 2025). There have been average salaries presented to the Council at the past meetings, and the last Ordinance that has been passed was in 2008. He presented several options for percentage increases.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that she would be ok with the 50<sup>th</sup> percentile increase. She is concerned that they will be challenged on the increase even though it has been 30 years since an increase has occurred.

Councilmember James would like the Council to look at this every two to four years. She would like to see more of an increase for the Mayor. She does not feel that this accurately represents what the Mayor is doing for the City. She would like to see the Mayors salary raised to \$15,000 and the Council to \$10,767.

This will be available for the Council for a first reading on June 26<sup>th</sup>.

**8. City Council.**

**Narcan**

Interim City Manager Kevin Hansen led the initial discussion on this item, with the assistance of Chief Thompson and Captain Picard. Interim City Manager Hansen stated that at this time it would be best that the Fire and Police Department administer this

medication and not have it available at the Library. Chief Thompson gave information on how this information on how Narcan is administered.

Councilmember Spriggs stated that he agrees with this assessment as well.

### **Sister Cities**

Mayor Márquez Simula led the discussion on this item stating that there will be a group from Somalia that will be initiating a second Sister City for Columbia Heights. They will be signing the Documents on July 1<sup>st</sup>, and there will be more information to follow.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired if the existing Sister City group is mentoring them.

Mayor Márquez Simula clarified that there was information exchanged, but she also felt it was good to let the Council know that the City pays the fee's for Sister Cities and allows for City meeting space, etc.

Councilmember James was excited that this was moving forward.

### **Food Truck Fees**

Interim City Manager Keving Hansen clarified that after a meeting with Anoka County the Mayor and Councilmember Buesgens inquired what the process was for licensing food trucks. One of the primary reasons for licensing is to make sure that they have been inspected by Anoka County. If they are a business based out of CH or a resident, we do not charge them and fee for the license, if it is a City sponsored event it is \$10 for the license, and standard fee is \$100.

Mayor Márquez Simula would like to see a reduction in the fee because she feels that this is prohibitive to getting food trucks in the City. She feels that having food trucks is a big draw for the community and we should do everything we can to have more.

Councilmember James would like to see a 12-month period for the license.

### **2023 Metro Cities Policy Committees**

Mayor Márquez Simula wanted to make sure that all Council members had the opportunity to sign up for the 2023 Metro Cities Policy Committees they are interested in.

Councilmember Buesgens stated that she has signed up for Housing and Economic Development.

Clerk Ion will send a follow up email to the Council about the opportunities to attend the Policy Committees.

### **Community Forum**

Mayor Márquez Simula revisited how the Council would like to conduct the Community Forum, she wants it to be accurate in how it reflects our community as it is not a standard

Roberts Rules of Order Item. She has recently reviewed the St. Anthony, Richfield, and Edina guidelines. She reviewed some of the highlights of these Community Forums.

Councilmember Buesgens wants there to be a focus on being respectful.

Councilmember James stated that she thinks the part about being respectful, not using profanity, etc should stay in the wording of our Public Forum.

Councilmember Spriggs stated that he likes having the Community Forum at the end of the meeting. He does not like things that restrict the free speech of the community.

Councilmember Jacobs stated that she did not appreciate what felt like personal attacks that were occurring during the Community Forum.

The consensus of the Council is that the guidelines be updated to reflect the practice that has been occurring at the recent meetings. Mayor Márquez Simula will work with Interim City Manager to update the wording of the Forum.

#### **ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Márquez Simula adjourned the meeting at 9:20pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



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Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary