



City of Robbinsdale

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Blonigan called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Parisian, Wagner, Murphy, Mayor Blonigan

Absent: None

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk; Diaa Tahoun, Finance Director

OPPORTUNITY FOR THE PUBLIC TO ADDRESS THE CITY COUNCIL ON MATTERS NOT ON THE AGENDA

Lois Siljander, 3801 Scott Ave, wondered why there is a levy on our property taxes, and stated she thought the city's budget was in good standing.

Gary Buysse, 3835 Hubbard Ave N., stated the city should televise the portion of Council meetings that allows the public to address items not on the agenda.

APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 5, 2023 MEETING AGENDA

Peterson-Etem noted there is one addition to tonight's agenda related to Other Business Item A.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Murphy to approve the December 5, 2023, agenda. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Member Murphy requested item C be removed for further consideration.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Wagner to approve the Consent Agenda as revised. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

- A. Approve City Council meeting minutes from November 21, 2023
- B. Receive Park, Recreation, and Forestry Commission meeting minutes from October 24, 2023
- C. Removed
- D. Robbinsdale Wine & Spirits' Monthly Financial Statements
- E. Deputy Registrar's Monthly Financial Statements

- F. Adopt Resolution No. 8071 for a Variance request V23-3 for 3605 France Ave. N.
- G. SECOND READING of an Ordinance amending City Code Sections 520.03 and 521.01 to allow cannabis retailer as a permitted use in the B-2 Limited Community business and DD-1 Downtown districts
- H. Approval of Licenses

CONSENT ITEM REMOVED

- C. Crystal Lions Premises Permit Application

Member Murphy noted in the past the City has received annual reports for how charitable gambling must use their proceeds and noted a percentage has to be used within the trade area. Sandvik stated the applicant is aware of this and annual reports can be made available.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Wagner to adopt Resolution No. 8070 “A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE APPLICATION OF THE LIONS CLUB OF CRYSTAL FOR A PREMISES PERMIT TO OPERATE CHARITABLE GAMBLING AT THE WICKED WORT BREWING COMPANY, 4165 WEST BROADWAY, ROBBINSDALE, MINNESOTA.” This vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

PRESENTATIONS

- A. 2024 Final Levy Presentation

Sandvik noted staff would be giving a presentation related to the 2024 levy, but the Council will be taking formal action on the levy during Old Business Item A, later this evening.

Tahoun presented an overview of the proposed 2024 general fund and debt services levies and noted several items that would be discussed, including, definitions, 2024 budget features, quick overview, 2024 budget requests, general fund revenue highlights, property tax levies 2024, general fund expenditures highlights, general fund reserves, and tax impact.

Mayor Blonigan provided his interpretation of how taxable net capacity and tax increment financing (TIF) districts work and provided an example related to one of the TIF districts in Robbinsdale.

Member Murphy asked what the decrease in our debt service is from. Sandvik explained the general obligation bond we took out this year isn't reflective until 2025, and in the same capacity the debt service Member Murphy is asking about from 2021 and 2022 would be reflected in the years 2019 and 2020. Tahoun also mentioned in 2021 and 2022 the city did not issue any bonds, which is why the debt service decreased.

Mayor Blonigan asked about the 2024 proposed general fund and how it is dedicated to public safety. He compared this number to the information that was sent out with the Birdtown Brief. Sandvik noted the Birdtown Brief reflects the proposed levy, and the graphic in this presentation is reflective of total operations.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Finds on Broadway – Consignment & Second Hand Goods Licenses

Sandvik stated a public hearing is required to consider this license pursuant to City Code and noted this is an annual procedure. He provided a brief overview of the item and noted the Council will open a public hearing, close the public hearing, and take action on the item.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing. No members of the public spoke.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Parisian to close the public hearing. This vote was unanimous and the

motion passed.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Parisian to approve the Finds On Broadway – Consignment & Second Hand Goods Licenses. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

B. Fly Vintage & Vinyl – Consignment and Second Hand Goods Licenses

Sandvik gave a brief overview of the item and noted the Council will open a public hearing, close the public hearing, and take action on the item.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing. No members of the public spoke.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Wagner to close the public hearing. This vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to approve the Fly Vintage & Vinyl – Consignment and Second Hand Goods Licenses. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

C. Pawn America – Pawnbroker & Second Hand Goods Licenses

Sandvik gave a brief overview of the item and noted the Council will open a public hearing, close the public hearing, and take action on the item.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing. No members of the public spoke.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Wagner to close the public hearing. This vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Murphy to approve the Pawn America - Pawnbroker & Second Hand Goods Licenses. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Adopt Resolutions pertaining to the 2024 Budget and Property Tax Levies.

Tahoun presented the item and noted the Council has held prior meetings to discuss the 2024 budget and adopted the proposed 2024 levy increase in September. He noted the proposed final levy is 6% and provided information about how this will affect taxpayers in 2024.

Mayor Blonigan asked for additional information regarding the levy. Sandvik stated the proposed increase will cover costs for items such as staffing and overall operations. He also explained that the estimated amount of taxes is based on a home's value, and these numbers use a typical home value in Robbinsdale, which is about \$290,000.

Gary Buysse, 3835 Hubbard Ave N., asked about the percentage of taxes coming from residential properties versus commercial/industrial properties and why the commercial/industrial amount is so much lower. Sandvik noted Robbinsdale is a very residential city, and it doesn't have the large commercial/industrial tax base that other surrounding communities have. He noted Robbinsdale is only about 3 square miles, which limits the amount of land that can be developed.

Mayor Blonigan mentioned fiscal disparities, and noted that because of the limited amount of commercial/industrial tax base in Robbinsdale, the city does receive additional funds that help to offset this.

Member Murphy noted that Council has spent a lot of time on this at past Council meetings and Work Sessions,

and many resident concerns have been built into this budget. The Council agreed with member Murphy's comments and reiterated their appreciation to staff.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by member Murphy to adopt Resolution No. 8072 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2024 CITY PROPERTY TAX LEVY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$9,436,519 AND ORDERING ITS CERTIFICATION TO THE HENNEPIN COUNTY AUDITOR." The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by member Murphy to adopt Resolution No. 8073 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2024 FINAL BUDGET AND COMMITTING FUND BALANCE." The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by member Parisian to adopt Resolution No. 8074 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2024 HRA PROPERTY TAX LEVY IN THE AMOUNT OF \$323,129 AND ORDERING ITS CERTIFICATION TO THE HENNEPIN COUNTY AUDITOR." The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

B. Public Hearing on Proposed Water, Sanitary Sewer, Storm Sewer, Solid Waste and Street Light rate increases.

Tahoun provided an overview and stated Robbinsdale has done several utility rate studies in the past, which have helped to determine rates for 2024. He noted several projects that took place in 2023 and provided the proposed rates for 2024.

Mayor Blonigan mentioned organics recycling and stated there is a law that requires that if we offer organics recycling, we must charge everyone. Sandvik further explained that several cities in Hennepin County are navigating this. He continued that cities must offer organics recycling, and because it's being offered, an even charge must be passed onto all residents. He noted this is meant to help eliminate discrimination and to encourage people to participate. He stated notification would be provided via USPS as well as other platforms.

Mayor Blonigan asked what factors have contributed to the rising utility rate increases and wondered if residents of Robbinsdale are paying more, compared to folks in similarly situated cities. Sandvik referenced the packet materials which help to break down the charges and noted that a tiered rate system had been previously adopted, which sets thresholds for rates based on how much water is being used. He also noted much of this is used to pay for infrastructure and that it's important to recognize aging infrastructure as well as look towards future needs. He stated different communities approach these issues differently, and so it's not always a direct comparison.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing. He noted they will compile all the questions and answer them at once.

Melissa Benson, 3915 Noble Ave. N., asked if the organics bins are animal proof and where they get the organics bin from. She also asked how often the utility rates increase. She provided her understanding of how the rates may be affected, but questioned why her usage went from 5 units to 19 units as a single person household. She also asked if the city could provide trends in their utility bills or provide ways to lower utility bills.

Fran Liles, 4401 Robin Ave. N., asked about storm drainage, how that is determined, and if it is the same for everyone.

Katie Troy, 3840 Hubbard Ave. N., asked who is requiring the new organics recycling change. She also mentioned Waste Management and stated her frustrations with trying to contact them. She asked if there are other refuse providers, besides Waste Management. She also asked how the valuation of her house is

determined and who comes up with that.

Randy Voelker, 4040 Grimes Ave. N., stated the City should understand what its fixed costs are and questioned why this continues to increase, and asked what residents are getting for the additional costs. He asked if the costs would drop if North Memorial starts using our water and if that is reflected in the proposed rate increases. He also asked about the increase in street lights.

Maria Amaya, 4028 Grimes Ave. N., noted the increase in valuation of her house as well as the utility rate increases, and asked the Council to consider the overall impact all these rising costs have on residents. She also asked how the community benefits from organics recycling and if residents would have access to the compost that is created from organics recycling.

Ross Nova, 3605 France Ave. N., also asked what happens to the organics recycling materials and who has access to the potential compost that is made.

Gary Buysse, 3835 Hubbard Ave N., noted that he was in opposition to the utility rate increase and stated he thought the utility rates have been too high for a long time and residents would struggle if they continue to increase. He mentioned a survey that had been conducted by AE2S and noted that it had previously been discussed by the Council. He stated past City staff and Council members should have done a better job managing the future infrastructure needs of the city, and feels this shouldn't be put on current residents. He also asked if commercial businesses pay the same rate for water that residential properties pay and if that will change when North Memorial starts using Robbinsdale water.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by member Parisian to close the public hearing. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Sandvik responded to the questions that were asked during the public hearing.

Sandvik noted information about the new organics recycling policy would be provided via USPS and other online platforms, and that residents can contact utility billing to have a cart delivered. He stated the bins are animal proof to the best they can be. He stated individual accounts can be looked at by calling the utility billing line and that the City does issue letters when high usage is detected.

Sandvik went over the second set of questions. He noted all residential properties are charged for storm drainage at the same rate. He stated non-residential properties that are on larger lots do pay more and this is set up as a user fee.

Member Murphy mentioned the storm drainage fees get put into a fund that helps pay for certain infrastructure projects, such as the Hubbard Avenue project. Sandvik noted that is correct and provided examples of how those funds are used.

Sandvik provided information related to the third set of questions. He stated that in the past, Hennepin County implemented a rule that cities were required to offer organics collection. At that time, Robbinsdale decided to offer this through an opt-in service, meaning those who wanted to participate paid the full fee. He continued that this past year the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) issued a ruling to Hennepin County, that based on language in State Statute, if you offer this service to somebody, it can't be at a different rate than everybody else. He noted this ruling was made in an effort to encourage organics recycling and that this is not a city mandate, and not specific to Robbinsdale. He mentioned this is something the City will continue to look into. It was also asked if Waste Management was the only option for refuse collection. Sandvik stated the city does go through a request for proposals process and the last contract was executed in 2020 as a five-year contract. He noted the Council discussed moving away from organized collection, however, the Council decided not to pursue that option and we will continue to explore what those options are. It was also asked if Hennepin County provides the valuation of homes. Sandvik confirmed Hennepin County does provide the

valuation and noted they use aggregate information, and are provided a list of permits that are pulled related to home improvements. Both of which they use to determine property valuations.

Mayor Blonigan noted Robbinsdale used to have a dedicated staff member as our City Assessor, but that has since been moved to Hennepin County. He also noted there are requirements around the percentage of properties that need to be assessed.

Sandvik continued onto the next set of questions. He addressed the question about fixed costs and noted that labor and materials continue to rise and staff take that into account when setting fees and looking into the future. He mentioned the new water tower and water treatment plant and increases have also taken those into consideration. He addressed the question about costs as it relates to North Memorial coming online and that it would be fair to say it will reflect costs once they are connected. He noted the increase in street light fees and again mentioned labor and materials as factors that contribute to rising costs.

Sandvik briefly addressed individual property questions, noting more detail could be looked into outside the Council meeting. He stated the city is not at a point for revenue sharing with organics recycling.

Sandvik provided that increased utility rates and the levy are to help with aging infrastructure that we are trying to get caught up on. He mentioned the AE2S survey and noted not all data may not have been provided in full or fully verified. He noted not all cities can be compared equally, as operations are set up differently and there are different ways to pay for different things. He stated the city tries to be as competitive as possible while managing and maintaining infrastructure needs. He mentioned the City conducts an annual audit to make sure fiduciary needs are met and that franchise fees are split 50/50 with half going to streets and half to the general fund.

Member Murphy stated that staff advised the Council many years ago that something needed to be done about the aging infrastructure and planning for these projects has been happening and is ongoing. He noted the City chose a user-based fee to pay for utilities versus a levy increase, to help keep the levy lower. He recognized that fees are increasing for everything, and the Council is being cognizant of that. He also encouraged community members to let the Council know what specific things they want to see in order for the City to be more transparent.

Member Wagner stated he would like to see large amounts of data be more digestible for residents to help with transparency. He also agreed that community members who use organics recycling should be able to benefit in some way. He explained that he would like to find other ways to offset increasing utility rates and the levy, and noted the use of sales tax and working with our legislators to find relief. He stated support for looking into alternative providers for refuse collection and to see what other options there are.

Member Parisian concurred with the other Council members and thanked residents for being engaged in this process. She also thanked staff for their effort both in the budget process and for working towards making information more accessible.

Mayor Blonigan mentioned how transparency has improved since the City added a dedicated communications staff member. He also noted Robbinsdale is older than other cities, and so we are seeing the need to replace aging infrastructure before others. He stated he agrees with the comments other Council members have said and understands that utility bills are increasing, and he hopes we can find ways to ease the rising costs.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Murphy to adopt Resolution No. 8075 "A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING CITY WATER, SANITARY SEWER, STORM SEWER, SOLID WASTE, AND STREETLIGHT RATES IN THE CITY OF ROBBINSDALE EFFECTIVE FOR ALL USAGE BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2024."

A roll call was taken and the motion passed 4-0.

Ayes: Parisian, Wagner, Murphy, Mayor Blonigan.

Nays: None.

NEW BUSINESS

A. None

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Voucher Requests Pending Approval for Disbursement

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Wagner to approve Voucher Requests Pending Approval for Disbursement. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Sandvik thanked Council and staff for the work they put into the levy and budget process and noted his appreciation over the past several months. He also thanked everyone who attended the Tree Lighting event that took place at City Hall. He mentioned that he and Peterson-Etem were able to attend the first inaugural Race Equity Index survey and more information and discussion would be coming in the future. Lastly, he noted the final meetings of the year.

COUNCIL GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Member Parisian thanks everyone who attended the Tree Lighting, including public works staff for their help.

Member Wagner also thanked residents for showing up to the Tree Lighting and staff for their work. He provided his condolences to the family of Shari Ross, who worked for the City of Robbinsdale.

Mayor Blonigan also provided his sympathies for Shari Ross' family and noted she was a long-time employee of Robbinsdale, who unexpectedly passed away. He thanked all for attending the Tree Lighting and everyone involved. Lastly, he stated he wanted to continue exploring investment options for the City and thanked staff for all their work that goes into the budget process.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by member Murphy to adjourn the meeting at 9:39 p.m. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.


Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk


Aaron Wagner, Mayor Pro Tem