



MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL TOWN HALL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Sutton called the meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Member Blackledge, Member Parisian, Member Caceres Aranda, Mayor Sutton, Member Greenberg

Absent: None

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

DISCUSSION

A. Robbinsdale City Council Town Hall Session

Mayor Sutton opened the meeting by acknowledging the difficult events the community has experienced in recent months. He stated that the purpose of the town hall was to foster open dialogue and hear from residents, either in person or in writing. Comments were limited to four minutes unless otherwise noted, and staff would follow up on any questions that could not be answered during the meeting. He emphasized the importance of honest conversation and reiterated that the Robbinsdale Police Department (RPD) and the City do not work with ICE in any capacity. He also noted that the City has been considering a separation ordinance for some time.

City Manager Sandvik provided a brief update on recent immigration-related matters. He noted the City's focus on communication, including sharing know-your-rights materials and business resources through outside organizations. He stated that the separation ordinance will be discussed at the March 10 Work Session, with a potential second reading on March 17. He also noted that the City joined the Coalition for Safe and Stable Communities when eligible. He added that RPD has had three encounters with ICE in Robbinsdale, all stemming from 911 calls.

The Council then opened the floor to community members:

- Patrick Nailon shared his involvement in organizing protests and protest walks, as well as gathering food and clothing for residents. While he described recent months as a “nightmare,” he emphasized that his work continues to focus on helping build better lives and restoring hope within the community.
- Carissa Wyant urged Council to pass the separation ordinance. She acknowledged her privilege and clarified she was speaking personally, but noted that she started a Change.org petition approximately 48 hours prior that had already gathered more than 168 signatures. She referenced the incident in which a woman involved in a car crash sought refuge inside City Hall and called on Council to act quickly to demonstrate governmental support that matches the community's efforts. In her view, it is beyond time for action.
- Michelle Connealy described organizing grocery deliveries for families staying home. With significant support from Golden Age Design, the effort—called BeGood—has grown to 75 volunteers serving more than 250 families, raising over \$40,000 along with substantial in-kind donations. She shared a written note from Molly Beahan, who stated that while the work has been meaningful, it is far from over. The note described the impact of ICE activity in Minnesota as catastrophic and long-lasting, shared stories of hardship, and also highlighted the inspiration drawn from volunteers and local

businesses. Michelle asked Council to consider converting the space at 4161 Hubbard into a community food shelf to support residents in need.

- Sam Sant requested a no-mask ordinance for federal agents and encouraged local police to arrest ICE agents detaining U.S. citizens. He also raised concerns about water softness levels at the Water Treatment Plant and asked Council to review testing to ensure adequate softening.
- Maggie Arbeiter, a five-year resident, spoke to her frustration and desire for political efficacy. She believes residents have clearly expressed support for a separation ordinance and that patience is wearing thin. While she understands procedural requirements, she considers this an emergency and believes passing the ordinance is a necessary step.
- Julie Lapointe, a Robbinsdale resident of over 30 years and a board member of the League of Women Voters in New Hope, shared that she has always felt safe in the community and wants that same sense of safety for every black and brown resident. She read a statement from the League affirming that democracy is built by the people and condemning unwarranted immigration deployments in Minnesota or elsewhere.
- Matt Murphy reflected on losing a coworker when Alex Pretti was killed, sharing how such an event permanently changes perspective. While acknowledging differing viewpoints, he emphasized the need to move forward together and described those attending as heroes for supporting their neighbors.
- Heaven Keane, a two-year resident, shared that she has witnessed significant community solidarity through school pickups, responses to detentions, and mutual aid efforts. Referencing the phrase “Who keeps us safe? We keep us safe,” she asked Council to use every available tool to support the community, including passing a separation ordinance.
- Kara Kurth, owner of Golden Age Design in Robbinsdale, described the City’s growth over the past 12 years and her efforts to draw visitors to downtown. Over the past six to eight weeks, her business has collected substantial food donations and partnered with BeGood to distribute supplies to anyone in need. She noted the strain on small businesses following the pandemic and current events, specifically mentioning that Marnas is struggling. She stated that business owners chose Robbinsdale because of its community and want to feel valued. Golden Age plans to continue operating its food pantry and hopes to eventually establish a permanent space in partnership with the City.
- Lindsay Grady referenced the City’s resource webpage and suggested highlighting more hyperlocal mutual aid organizations to help donors direct limited financial resources effectively.
- Jess Lewis, a Golden Valley resident seeking to represent Robbinsdale in the State House, thanked the community for its mutual aid efforts and acknowledged Council’s consideration of financial impacts related to the ordinance. She invited audience members who support moving forward with the separation ordinance to stand; most attendees did so.
- Laurie Blais stated she attended to listen and learn. She observed widespread frustration but also unity across political lines and expressed appreciation for the various mutual aid efforts underway. She emphasized that residents are prepared to support necessary action.
- Julie Ralston-Aoki noted that the Human Rights Commission presents hero awards and said many in the room would qualify. She spoke about participating in mutual aid efforts she never anticipated and addressed longstanding mistrust between communities of color and law enforcement. She urged

continued dialogue and expressed hope that future town halls would include police department participation to help develop a plan moving forward.

- Jackie Schluter Johnson responded to concerns about the cost of the separation ordinance, stating that community members have personally contributed funds to support neighbors and that the City should likewise identify resources.
- An unidentified resident expressed concern that Council has suggested many elements of the ordinance already exist in City policy. She reported difficulty locating certain police policies online and suggested clearer language regarding policy on immigration activity. Mayor Sutton asked about state-level policy requirements, and Sandvik responded that many police policies reflect state law and statutory duties but agreed that additional discussion would be beneficial.
- Claire, a resident, expressed support for the separation ordinance and frustration that the City appears concerned about risk management while individuals are taking personal risks to support neighbors. She asked for stronger visible support from the City.
- Carlos Smith, a member of the Human Rights Commission, clarified that his views align with the HRC's formal position but spoke personally as a Black immigrant. He thanked attendees for their empathy and emphasized that empathy is foundational to public policy. He described this as a historic moment requiring extraordinary action and cautioned against normalizing the erosion of public decency. He urged Council to pass the ordinance as a meaningful policy step that matches the community's efforts.
- Erin, a resident, said she wants elected officials to publicly stand with the community. She noted she has not seen City officials at recent protests or the monthly vigil held at RPD since the murder of George Floyd and asked them to show up, engage directly with residents, and demonstrate support.

Mayor Sutton then invited Council comments. All Council members thanked residents for attending and sharing their perspectives, acknowledged the emotion in the room, and expressed appreciation for the community's mutual aid efforts and business support. Council members noted that ordinance adoption requires adherence to City Charter and statutory processes, even in urgent situations, and that March 17 is the earliest possible date for action based on prior Council direction. Council also expressed interest in additional community engagement opportunities moving forward, including more informal gatherings like this town hall. Mayor Sutton closed by thanking residents for their participation and affirming that their voices matter.

STAFF UPDATES

None.

COUNCIL UPDATES

None.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Sutton adjourned the meeting at 7:24 PM.

Signed by:



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Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

Signed by:



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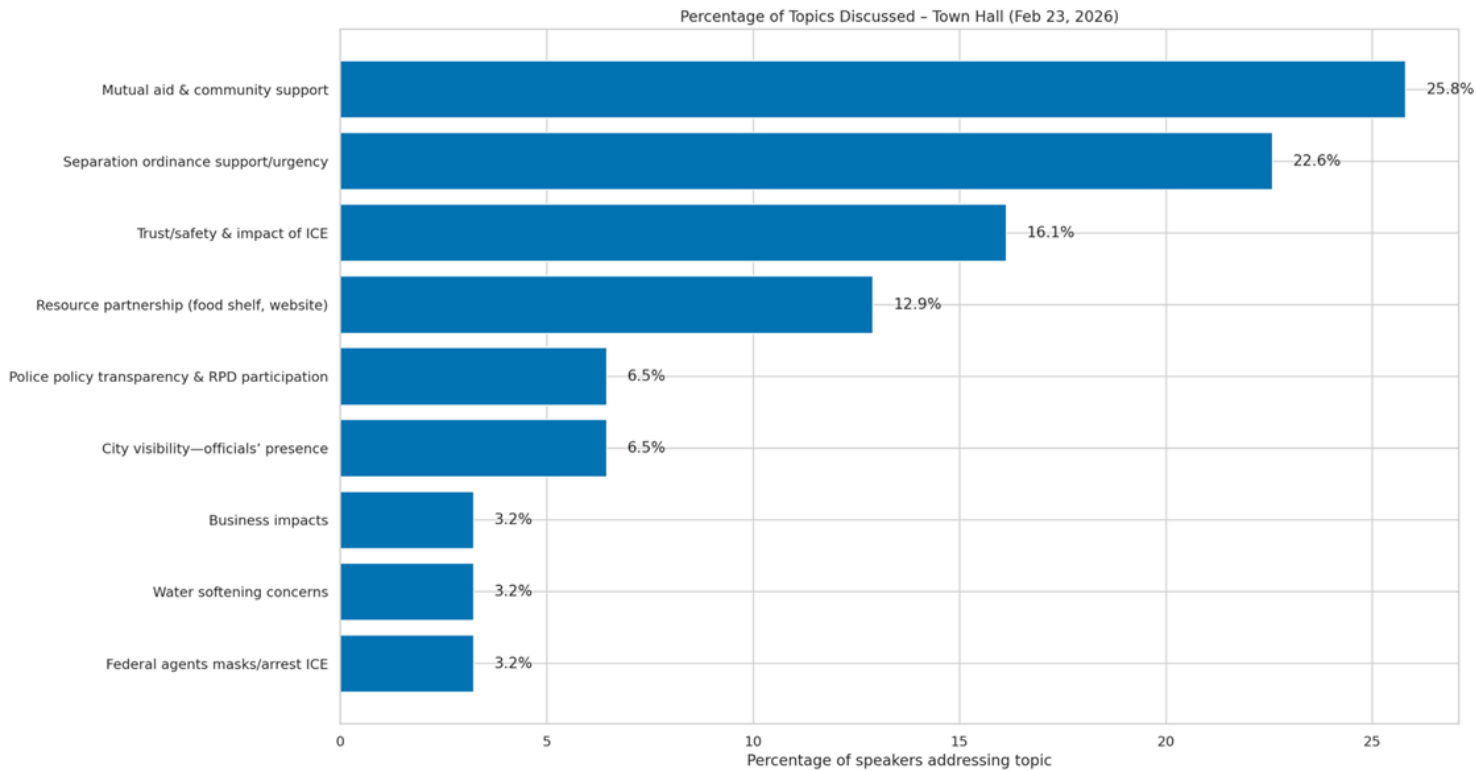
Raymond Blackledge, Mayor Pro Tem

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Top Themes in the Meeting Minutes from 18 total community speakers:

- **Strong community support for a separation ordinance** — Most speakers urged the City to pass the ordinance quickly and clearly define limits on cooperation with immigration enforcement.
- **Widespread mutual aid efforts** — Residents and businesses detailed large-scale volunteer work, food distribution, and support networks formed in response to recent ICE activity.
- **Desire for stronger public support from City leadership** — Many asked Council members to be more visibly present at community events, vigils, and protests.
- **Concerns about trust and safety** — Speakers emphasized fear within immigrant communities, historical mistrust of law enforcement, and the need for clear, accessible policy communication.
- **Requests for City partnership on resources** — Suggestions included creating a community food shelf, highlighting local aid groups on the City website, and supporting small businesses affected by recent events.
- **Urgency and frustration over process timelines** — Many residents expressed that while they understand procedural requirements, they see the current situation as an emergency.
- **Interest in ongoing community engagement** — Calls for continued town halls, more informal conversations, and future participation from RPD to build trust and transparency.



Source: Robbinsdale Town Hall Meeting Minutes (Feb 23, 2026)

