



MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor pro tem Blackledge called the meeting to order at 7:28

ROLL CALL

Present: Blackledge, Sutton, Caceres Aranda, Greenberg

Absent: Parisian

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Heather Rand, Community Development Director; Matt Bazyk, Recreation Services Manager, Richard McCoy, Public Works Director/City Engineer; Chase Peterson-Etem, Assistant City Manager

DISCUSSION

A. Pedestrian and Cycling Planning Discussion

Sandvik provided a brief overview, noting that the goal of the session was for the Council to review and gain confidence in the plans developed by staff.

Bazyk provided a high-level summary of the project timeline, acknowledging the contributions of staff, commission members, residents, and outside organizations. He stated that the full plan would be presented to the Council later this year, pending tonight's direction.

Key points included:

- Benefits: Improvements to wayfinding, safety, and accessibility via increased walking and biking paths.
- Regional Impact: Potential for the city's plan to influence neighboring jurisdictions.
- Next Steps: Creation of a full draft plan, public engagement, and subsequent reviews by the PRF Commission and City Council.

Brenda Remus (Resident): Inquired about e-bikes. Bazyk noted that while speed limits would be suggested, enforcement is challenging; he intends to discuss regional standards with other jurisdictions.

Greg Salyers (Resident): Inquired about current speed limits. It was noted that the city does not currently have a dedicated speed limit for bike paths.

Resident Comment: Expressed support for physical infrastructure over painted roadways to improve accessibility.

McCoy addressed technical aspects of the Shoreline Drive project, noting challenges such as drainage at raised intersections and the utility of flashing beacons in difficult areas. He also made mention of the regional bike trails, regarding:

- Alignment: Staff proposes an off-street trail on the north side of Shoreline Drive. While some residents have requested it remain on the south side, McCoy noted the north side reduces safety conflicts in this high-traffic area.
- Timeline: McCoy emphasized the need for firm direction tonight, as shifting the path alignment later

would delay the project by months.

- Design Details: The proposed trail would run to 41st Street, directing traffic toward the parkway. To address speeding, a center median is proposed at the Chowen curve in lieu of a roundabout.
- Impacts: Addressing resident concerns, McCoy noted the trail would be 10 feet wide and remain within the right-of-way, though some tree removal and encroachment near property lines would occur.

Member Greenberg noted broad support for pedestrian and bike connectivity. He highlighted resident "pain points" regarding benches and crosswalks and sought clarification on the connection to County Rd. 81. McCoy clarified that "tight spots" near County Rd. 81 would require mitigation regardless of which side the path is on.

Member Caceres Aranda expressed support for the north side alignment, citing staff recommendations and practicality.

Mayor Sutton questioned the impact on residents and parking. McCoy noted that parking would be relocated to the south side. Regarding safety, Bazyk added that a south-side path would require users to cross Shoreline Drive twice, increasing hazard risks.

Member Greenberg reaffirmed that the north side is logical for safety and noted that tree removal would likely be necessary regardless of the path's location.

Nick Hied (Resident): Discussed the philosophy of road design, suggesting a shift in mindset to better accommodate pedestrians and cyclists within existing spaces.

Greg Salyers (Resident): Emphasized the importance of continued resident engagement and expressed support for the north side alignment. He also raised concerns regarding speed limits; McCoy noted current speeds are 30 mph, with some recommendations suggesting a reduction to 25 mph.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge requested clarification on exactly what staff needs to move forward. McCoy reiterated that while an additional information session could be held, a firm decision on the path alignment is vital to keep underground infrastructure planning on schedule.

Member Greenberg suggested that recent updates to the plan provide enough material for a productive public meeting. The Council reached a consensus to hold an informational session for further resident input before finalizing the direction.

B. Annual Goals and Priorities

Sandvik provided an overview of the item, noting that the City Council and leadership met earlier this year to establish strategic goals and priorities for the upcoming year. He clarified that while the Council will formally adopt these goals at the next regular meeting, this session served as an opportunity for final discussion and revisions.

Member Greenberg inquired regarding the planned staffing study, specifically whether the Council should provide a defined outline of desired outcomes beforehand or wait to react to the study's findings.

Sandvik explained that this project was originally part of the 2025 goals but had been delayed. He noted the intent is to conduct a thorough and transparent evaluation, which would allow the city to address certain needs immediately while remaining strategic about long-term adjustments.

A discussion ensued regarding a goal specifically listing the "Tree Lighting Event"

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge expressed concern that naming only the tree lighting might imply it is the only event the city intends to expand or partner on with local businesses.

Member Greenberg suggested that the goal could be framed more broadly to encompass general community and business connectivity, noting that the city is already performing this work but could elevate it.

Mayor Sutton cautioned against broadening the language too much, noting that the tree lighting is a significant tradition that ties into "Small Business Saturday." He emphasized the importance of maintaining a targeted focus to ensure the goal remains actionable.

Member Caceres Aranda commented that the goal-setting session was productive and that the current list provides a balanced mix of actionable items and aspirational objectives.

Sandvik suggested a compromise to frame the goal with a broad statement regarding community events while specifically citing the tree lighting as a primary example.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge and the Council expressed agreement with this approach, noting it captures the broader intent of community partnership without losing the specific focus on the tree lighting event. The Council directed staff to incorporate the discussed revisions into the final document for formal adoption at the next City Council meeting.

C. May 18th Town Hall Planning

Sandvik provided a high-level overview, noting that the Council previously directed staff to continue hosting town hall meetings to increase community involvement. Staff requested specific parameters and topic suggestions from the Council to guide the structure of future meetings.

Mayor Sutton proposed a smaller version of a "State of the City" presentation followed by a staff Q&A. His recommendations included implementing a four-minute time limit for public speakers during the formal portion, and providing an informal period following the meeting for residents to speak directly with Council members and staff.

Member Greenberg concurred with the "State of the City" format, emphasizing that the event should be marketed as a primary venue for residents to provide feedback on city concerns. He also suggested clearly identifying which staff members (e.g., Police Chief vs. Captain) would be in attendance to manage expectations.

Member Caceres Aranda emphasized that having the Police Chief and department leadership present is vital for building community trust, noting that scheduling conflicts prevented their attendance at the previous town hall.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge suggested that policing and the impacts of regional operations, such as "Operation Metro Surge," would likely be focal points. He expressed a desire for "educational and interactive" sessions, such as one-on-one breakouts, but cautioned that the environment must remain productive and respectful. He also noted the importance of recognizing diverse perspectives and providing various communication methods to help the city grow inclusively.

Greg Salyers (Resident): Noted the "Separation Ordinance" as a positive step and expressed support for the town hall as a way to demonstrate that resident voices are heard.

Resident Comment: Appreciated the city acknowledging the community impact of "Operation Metro Surge." She noted that the absence of law enforcement at the last meeting sent an unintentional message and urged the PD to participate in future sessions to bridge gaps.

Julie Ralston Aoki (Resident): Highlighted that not all residents have had positive experiences with law enforcement. She suggested using a professional facilitator to make the meeting more accessible and "friendly," ensuring conversations lead to meaningful change.

Member Caceres Aranda noted that the significant resident input regarding the Separation Ordinance at the last town hall directly influenced the planning for the upcoming meeting.

Member Greenberg acknowledged the overwhelming support for the ordinance while noting that total consensus on every topic is rare.

Sandvik recapped the Council's consensus, noting the need for a multifaceted approach that allows residents to provide feedback in whatever capacity they feel most comfortable (formal testimony, Q&A, or informal breakout sessions). He stated staff will proceed with planning a town hall featuring a simplified "State of the City" address, structured Q&A, and ensure the presence of city leadership and law enforcement.

STAFF UPDATES

A. Sanborn Park Renaming

Bazyk provided an update on the park renaming process, noting the Council's previously expressed interest in collaborating with the Dakota people to help in the naming process. He identified several key contacts who are assisting staff in navigating the cultural and procedural elements of the naming process. He emphasized that the framework is still evolving and will take further shape as consultations continue.

Mayor Sutton inquired if a "co-naming" (dual name) option was still being considered. Bazyk explained that a dual name could present logistical challenges, specifically regarding emergency response and the potential for confusion when identifying the park's location.

Sandvik clarified the history of the project, stating that current direction is focused on investigating the formal process for selecting a Dakota name, though the Council maintains the flexibility to adjust this direction.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge raised the topic of land acknowledgments, inquiring how such a statement might relate to the park specifically or to the City Council's broader formal procedures.

Bazyk discussed the land acknowledgment process and its potential impact on the city's relationship with the Dakota people. He noted that the procedural steps required for an authentic Dakota name would be necessary regardless of whether the city chooses a single or dual name.

Mayor Sutton referenced prior resident feedback, noting that many other suggestions that were submitted.

Brenda Remus (Resident): Requested that the Council revisit the original list of resident suggestions.

Resident Comment: Expressed appreciation for the research conducted and emphasized that Indigenous history is a vital part of Robbinsdale's heritage, encouraging the Council to prioritize a Dakota name.

Greg Salyers (Resident): Suggested a compromise, such as a dual-naming convention, to satisfy various community interests.

Sandvik recommended moving forward with the current investigative process to determine the specific requirements for a Dakota name, as this work is foundational to either a single or dual-name outcome.

Mayor Sutton requested clarity on the final vision before authorizing further staff resources. Bazyk reiterated that the consulting group is open to a co-naming option, but emphasized that the cultural consultation process remains a necessary next step for either path.

B. Performance Measurement Annual Survey

Sandvik provided a high-level overview of the benchmarking survey, noting that it has been a consistent tool used by the city to track resident sentiment over time.

Mayor Sutton expressed a desire to enrich the resident profile by adding targeted questions to the existing survey. He identified several key areas for data collection, including, public safety, civic awareness, and demographics.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge and Member Caceres Aranda voiced support for gathering more robust data, provided the city has a clear plan for how to utilize the findings.

Member Greenberg cautioned against "survey fatigue," noting that a long list of questions might discourage participation. He questioned whether these deeper inquiries should be integrated into the current benchmarking tool or treated as an entirely separate survey effort.

Sandvik advised the Council on the logistical aspects of a more robust survey. He noted utilizing professional consultants for a deeper dive would require additional funding and also prompted the Council to consider how they would act on the results, noting that the city must be realistic about its resources when attempting to implement outcomes from the data.

Julie Ralston Aoki (Resident) inquired about the survey methodology, specifically asking which demographics are currently being reached and which are being missed.

Sandvik noted that demographic questions (age, homeownership, etc.) are intended to help the city identify these gaps. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge added that enhancing the survey could serve as a transitional step toward improving how the city solicits community input in the future.

Member Greenberg asked if existing questions must remain static or if they can be updated. Sandvik noted that the deadline for the upcoming survey is approaching quickly and presented two options. Either to expedite the addition of questions to the current survey or maintain the current benchmarking survey and develop a separate, more comprehensive survey later.

The Council discussed the potential impacts of delaying the enhancements versus moving forward with an expanded version immediately and reached a consensus to table this item to allow for a more comprehensive discussion on survey goals and methodology at a future meeting.

C. City Manager Annual Review

Sandvik noted the process of the City Manager's review and that information would be forthcoming.

D. City Proclamations - Quick Review

Sandvik asked if the Council was comfortable creating a proclamation for an upcoming event for the 100-year Robbinsdale Historic society celebration. The Council was supportive of the proclamation.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Member Greenberg thanked residents for coming to meetings and work sessions.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge acknowledged the 100-year history of Robbinsdale and that it could be nice to

mention at the Town Meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge adjourned the meeting at 10:28 p.m.

Signed by:



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Chase Peterson-Etem, Assistant City Manager

Signed by:



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Raymond Blackledge, Mayor Pro Tem