



MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Chase Peterson-Etem, Assistant City Manager; Heather Rand, Community Development Director; Richard McCoy, City Engineer/Public Works Director; Patrick Foley, Police Chief; Chris Woodhall, Police Sergeant; Jeff Lenarz, License Center Manager; Joanna Brookes, Human Resources & Risk Management Manager; Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

DISCUSSION

A. Introduction

Mayor Sutton opened the meeting by welcoming residents and discussing the importance of community engagement and participation in local government. He shared that attending a City Council meeting years ago in another City showed him how residents can make an impact by voicing concerns and participating in their community.

City Manager Sandvik noted that staff members were available to answer questions and encouraged residents to participate in City commissions and committees if interested. He also highlighted recent efforts to strengthen City communications, including expanded annual reports from all City departments.

Group Home & Neighborhood Concerns:

Several residents raised concerns regarding the group home located at 3940 46th Ave. N. Concerns included frequent police calls to the property, noise, behavioral issues, property maintenance concerns, and safety concerns for nearby families and children. Residents also expressed concern for the wellbeing of individuals living at the facility.

Mayor Sutton asked about legislative efforts to provide cities with greater authority regarding congregate care homes. Sandvik noted frustrations with limited communication and oversight authority related to group homes, and that congregate care was a top priority for the City as the legislative session this year.

Additional neighborhood concerns included speeding along Grimes Avenue, with residents requesting traffic calming measures such as speed bumps due to vehicles using the street as a shortcut route. Concerns were also raised regarding early morning garbage pickup times following Republic Services taking over collection service.

Robbinsdale Police Department & Metro Surge:

Residents asked about efforts to rebuild trust between the Robbinsdale Police Department (RPD) and the community following Metro Surge operations. Chief Foley discussed ongoing engagement efforts through the Joint Community Police Partnership (JCPP) and the Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC), noting that the

department continues working to strengthen relationships and communication with residents.

Chief Foley explained that Metro Surge presented unprecedented challenges and acknowledged that communication during the operation was difficult due to limited information from federal agencies. He stated that the department was not supportive of how ICE operations were conducted and acknowledged that lessons were learned regarding preventative communication and community engagement.

Several residents expressed appreciation for the Police Department and shared positive experiences with officers and response times. Other residents expressed disappointment and concerns regarding trust, communication, and the impact Metro Surge had on vulnerable community members.

Residents and Council members discussed:

- The importance of improving communication and transparency
- Concerns from residents who may feel hesitant to engage with government or law enforcement
- The possibility of expanding community engagement efforts such as Coffee with a Cop
- Opportunities for deeper community conversations moving forward

Council members acknowledged the complexity of the situation and emphasized the importance of continued dialogue, learning, and relationship-building within the community.

Community Engagement and Advisory Groups:

Residents discussed opportunities to strengthen community involvement and participation in City organizations and advisory groups. Discussion included:

- Potential creation of a citizen police advisory committee
- The role of the Human Rights Commission (HRC)
- Collaboration opportunities between the HRC and RPD
- Encouraging greater participation in commissions and community meetings

Council members noted that commissions serve in an advisory capacity and encouraged residents to continue participating in local government processes. Several residents emphasized the importance of face-to-face community conversations and relationship-building rather than relying primarily on social media discussions.

Public Safety Staffing:

Residents expressed support for police and fire personnel and asked about staffing levels, wages, and recruitment efforts. Sandvik noted that the City recently completed labor negotiations and that wages remain competitive. Discussion also included pension considerations for the Fire Department.

Chief Foley discussed the City's Cadet Program, which partners with schools and universities to recruit and train future officers. He noted that the program has been successful in developing future full-time officers and that six police officer vacancies currently remain open.

New Public Works Facility:

Residents asked questions regarding the proposed Public Works facility and the estimated project cost. Public Works Director McCoy explained that:

- The estimate includes significant contingencies common during early design phases
- The current Public Works facility no longer adequately supports City operations or vehicle maintenance needs

- Staff are reviewing comparable facilities and refining project estimates
- Funding sources for the project are still being explored

Staff also noted that the City received approximately \$3.3 million in state bonding support for the project. Additional discussion included recent tours of City facilities and infrastructure projects, including the Water Treatment Plant.

Sanborn Park Renaming:

Residents discussed the ongoing park renaming process and concerns regarding how community feedback was being incorporated into the decision-making process. Discussion included:

- Survey feedback and naming suggestions
- Consideration of Dakota naming options
- Questions regarding whether residents would have a direct vote on the final name
- The role of Council versus advisory input during the process

Council members clarified that the survey was intended to gather community feedback rather than serve as a binding vote. Several members emphasized the importance of continuing discussions while considering community input and the historical context surrounding the park's current name.

Blue Line Extension and Transit:

Residents asked for updates regarding the Blue Line Extension project, future development opportunities, and transit planning. Sandvik shared that project plans are approximately 90% complete, federal funding discussions are ongoing, and that the City continues providing feedback on project design and planning

Residents also discussed:

- Potential redevelopment opportunities within the City
- Interest in bus rapid transit alternatives
- How residents can stay informed about future project updates

Council members noted that the City continues working with project partners and reviewing opportunities for future development.

Parks and Neighborhood Concerns:

A resident raised concerns regarding activity levels and noise at Manor Park during summer months, including large gatherings, parking congestion, and late-night disturbances. Suggestions included requiring reservations or deposits for large gatherings. Staff noted that reservation systems already exist for certain park facilities and encouraged residents to contact the non-emergency police line when issues arise.

Additional resident suggestions included ideas for water tower lighting improvements and continued traffic safety discussions.

City Commissions and Staff Time:

Residents asked about the amount of staff time dedicated to supporting City commissions and committees, as well as how recommendations from commissions influence Council decisions. Sandvik noted that commission support represents a significant staff responsibility, though exact staff hours are difficult to quantify. Council members discussed the importance of community participation and volunteer involvement in City commissions

and advisory groups.

Residents also emphasized the importance of increasing public participation and awareness of community meetings and engagement opportunities.

Additional Discussion:

Residents also discussed:

- Political endorsements in nonpartisan local government
- Development opportunities at the former U.S. Bank site
- The importance of continued community dialogue and transparency

Council members reiterated their commitment to community engagement and thanked residents for attending and participating in the discussion. Mayor Sutton invited residents to continue informal conversations with Council members and staff following adjournment of the meeting.

STAFF UPDATES

COUNCIL UPDATES

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Sutton adjourned the meeting at 8:39 PM.

Signed by:



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Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

Signed by:



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Raymond Blackledge, Mayor Pro Tem