



City of Robbinsdale

City Council Work Session
Wednesday, May 15, 2024

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner called the meeting to order at 7:08 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Murphy, Parisian, Mayor Blonigan, Mayor Pro Tem Wagner

Absent: None

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Diaa Tahoun, Finance Director; Richard McCoy, City Engineer/Public Works Director; Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

DISCUSSION

A. Consider Schedule for LRT Municipal Consent

Sandvik explained that the goal of the discussion is to narrow down the municipal consent timeline for the Blue Line Light Rail extension project, as well as determine how to collect public feedback. He reminded the Council of their municipal consent options: offer municipal consent, offer municipal consent with caveats, refuse municipal consent, or take no action. He recommended setting a public feedback forum for August and municipal consent for September, so that the Ward 2 seat will be filled. He explained the options of holding either a public hearing or an open house, and recommended an open house.

Member Parisian asked if Council makes individual municipal consent recommendations. Sandvik explained that the Council will make their decision as one body.

Mayor Blonigan agreed that feedback should be collected only once the Ward 2 seat is filled. The Council discussed the pros and cons of public hearings and open houses. Member Murphy and Member Parisian favored an open house, and Mayor Blonigan stated that he would be fine with an open house.

Member Parisian noted that she will miss the first Council meeting and work session in September. Mayor Blonigan suggested September 17, 2024, as the meeting to decide on municipal consent.

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner expressed that he supports an open house, as long as there is structure to the event. The Council discussed that they would be open to a public hearing in addition to an open house. Member Murphy explained that the benefit of a public hearing is that everything is on record. Member Parisian suggested that a public hearing be coupled with other informal ways to capture resident feedback. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner agreed.. Mayor Blonigan emphasized that residents should be aware of any online feedback collection far in advance. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner asked for clarification on whether the Council wants to do a formal open house and a public hearing. The Council agreed that an in-person open house, in addition to informal feedback collection, is sufficient.

The Council agreed upon the evening of Wednesday, August 21, 2024 to host the open house. Council put forth Thursday, August 22, 2024, as a backup date. Sandvik inquired if Council would consider a municipal consent vote at the second Council meeting in September. Council confirmed that date for now.

Sandvik asked Council to identify top priority conditions that Council wants recognized by the project office before moving forward.

Member Murphy asked for an explanation of the benefits that come with elevating the Light Rail. McCoy explained the benefits of elevating the Light Rail for both pedestrians and traffic. Member Murphy and Mayor Blonigan confirmed that elevation is a key condition for providing municipal consent. Member Murphy asked if the Council must be in consensus on each condition. Sandvik explained that the Council must agree on all conditions as one body and stated that there needs to be a majority vote for the action that Council takes.

Member Parisian explained that she would not provide consent without an anti-displacement policy. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner agreed. The Council summarized that the conditions of elevation, anti-displacement, road turnover, property acquisition, safety measures, and bus garage considerations are all top priorities. Mayor Blonigan suggested a Work Session to solidify priority conditions from each council member.

Member Murphy asked for clarification on the difference between voting no and voting yes with conditions. Sandvik explained that voting no is unprecedented, and that the Council should be prepared with a firm reason if they say no. Sandvik explained that there are benefits to voting yes to municipal consent with conditions. He offered to get a formal memo from the City attorney to better explain Council's options for municipal consent.

Mayor Blonigan emphasized that he would like more input from the Police and Fire departments on the public safety elements of the Light Rail project.

Sandvik explained that the next step is for the council members to identify their priority conditions to bring to the June work session. The Council agreed that they will sort the conditions into three categories consisting of deal breaker condition, desired condition, or a condition that they do not feel strongly about.

B. Assessment Policy Discussion

Sandvik introduced the discussion by stating that last week's decision was an example of bad governance. He stressed that he should have been aware that the option of not ordering work was on the table. He explained that the goal of this discussion is to determine next steps, since the project docket will need to be reexamined.

Sandvik recalled that the 41st Avenue project is no longer approved, and that work on Lowry Avenue planned for this summer is now pending. He explained that both of these projects need to be clarified for bond issuance this year, and Finance assumed the projects would be ordered. He discussed how next year's projects, such as Oakdale Avenue, York Avenue, Shoreline Avenue, and Chowen Avenue, will be impacted. He explained that the first option is to go forward with the work on 41st Avenue, with Council reexamining the assessment policy after the project. A second option is to order the work on 41st Avenue and reexamine the assessment policy in

tandem. A third option is to return to work on the assessment policy in 2025.

McCoy provided the opinion that Council should order the work, and then look at the assessment policy as a side issue. McCoy pointed out that projects that are done this summer can be assessed in the future. Reworking the assessment policy will be a slow process with many options, such as a levy increase over 5 to 10 years.

Tahoun stressed that issuing bonds is tedious, and not ordering work delays that process. He has numbers allocated for specific years already, and delaying a street improvement makes bond issuance not worth the process. Tahoun brought up the concern that if the special assessment rate is lowered, residents who have already paid their special assessment off might be upset.

Member Murphy provided his opinion that special assessment costs are far too high, and that most residents cannot afford a \$10,000 payment. He stated that he supports spreading costs between all residents for services like roads, sewer, and water that everyone uses. He agreed with McCoy's idea of reducing special assessment rates over time, as well as moving away from assessment rates being based on property size. He cited Crystal as a neighbor that has eliminated assessments. He agreed that street projects can move forward while the assessment is reworked.

Mayor Blongian expressed a willingness to discuss the assessment policy, but he suggested that lowering it would increase taxes too much. Member Parisian supported the work moving forward.

Member Parisian expressed a need to improve communication to residents to ensure that they have time to prepare for assessment costs. She suggested that the time period to pay off loans with no interest should be extended as well. She did not support a short-term move away from assessments, but she was open to a gradual shift away from assessments. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner agreed with Member Parisian.

McCoy emphasized that there are many options for how to rework the assessment policy. He pointed out that side street frontages usually come with big price tags, and that side streets could have assessment costs limited without fully changing the policy.

Sandvik confirmed that Council supports ordering work, and that he can let residents know that the assessment policy is being examined, possibly starting this summer. He questioned whether giving residents a longer notice about their special assessment would qualify as a pending assessment. Member Murphy expressed the desire to see three options modeled: eliminating the assessment policy all together, reducing it by 25%, and reducing it by 50%. Sandvik confirmed that staff will work on project modeling to showcase assessment policy and levy cost projections. McCoy confirmed that the improvement work can be pushed forward. He explained that he plans to inform residents that the improvement would be discussed at a June meeting, and that the assessment is on hold for now.

C. Joint Powers Agreement(s) - Basset Creek Watershed Mgmt Commission, Shingle Creek Watershed Mgmt Organization

McCoy explained that by the end of the year, the City of Robbinsdale needs to enter new Joint Powers Agreements (JPAs) with both watersheds. The two watersheds have reviewed the current JPAs and made proposed changes. The proposed changes from Shingle Creek Watershed look good. The Council should be aware of issues with the proposed changes from Bassett Creek Watershed.

McCoy stated that Shingle Creek Watershed proposed a 30-year agreement. Bassett Creek Watershed proposed a 12-year agreement, which is short. McCoy expressed concern about proposed

changes from Bassett Creek that would allow the board to set compensation rates and per-diem compensation for commissioners. The current rule allows the City Council to decide if commissioners are paid. McCoy provided his opinion that payment authorization should remain with the City, not the watershed. McCoy explained that he will bring these JPAs to Council for approval. McCoy provided the recommendation that certain sections from the Bassett Creek Watershed agreement be struck before being approved. McCoy clarified that all cities in the watershed have to agree to the same agreement.

The Council concurred with McCoy's recommendation.

D. Limited Use Agreement - Orchard Ave

Sandvik explained that staff received a code enforcement complaint about a resident's lights on their trees. He stated that this conversation can remain about general considerations, but if it gets into a specific limited-used agreement, Member Murphy should recuse himself from the discussion. The resident's tree lights are in the right of way, which is a violation since there cannot be obstruction without a license. Sandvik emphasized that if Council goes forward with providing a license and there are more complaints about tree lights in the future, then Council will have to do licensing of all trees with lights on them in the right of way. He informed Council that this specific license could be brought forward as early as next week.

Member Murphy stated that he does not think there would be more complaints against others who have these kinds of lights on trees. He clarified that the code enforcement issue is that there is an extension cord in the right of way, and that a license would allow the extension cord to remain. McCoy explained that in any code enforcement case, public safety is considered, and the City is liable for anything in the right of way. A license puts responsibility on the homeowner instead of the City.

Mayor Blonigan expressed an interest in reading the ordinance, and Member Parisian agreed. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner stated that he wants a license agreement issued instead of reworking policies.

Sandvik provided council members with a draft of the license.

STAFF UPDATES

E. Housekeeping items

Sandvik asked if the Council would like to meet on July 2, 2024, and council members agreed to not meet. Council decided that they will meet on July 16, 2024, and can schedule further meetings in July if the need arises.

Sandvik discussed how Council has recently suggested resuming 25-mph speed limit conversations and inquired what Council needs to continue the discussion. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner stated that he would support a speed reduction on residential roads City-wide. Member Murphy agreed but has concerns about enforcement and costs. Sandvik stressed that the speed limit should not be changed for optics, due to the amount of work it would cause for staff. Sandvik explained that the data from Zenith Avenue between 36th Avenue and 38th Avenue showed that 85% of people drove under 25 mph, and 90% of people drove under 30 mph. He suggested giving staff time to collect more data. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner supported lowering the limit to 25 mph if most people are already going that speed. Member Parisian supported reducing the speed limit for proactive public safety purposes. Mayor Blonigan stated that he would vote in favor of lowering the limit to 25 mph if the public supports it. Mayor Blonigan suggested the idea of using solar-powered flashing speed limit signs. Member Murphy agreed that lowering the speed limit would lead to positive changes, even if it slows a couple cars down. The Council agreed that they are in support of lowering the speed limit, but also agreed that it is not a top priority.

Sandvik explained that THC updates will be coming at the June work session.

Sandvik updated the Council that Rick Pearson is having a farewell lunch on May 31, 2024.

Sandvik updated the Council that the Public Works crew has kicked off the project with Oertel for a space needs analysis at the Public Works facility.

Sandvik explained that the Parks Master Plan is about to go live with a survey in next week or two.

Sandvik stated that the City has registered to table at the Golden Valley Pride event on June 8, 2024, from 12 PM-6PM.

Sandvik updated the Council that Lakeview Terrace Farmer's Market opens this weekend on May 18, 2024.

Sandvik informed Council that there is a meeting to discuss the JPA with Sochacki on May 21, 2024, at 9 AM, and shared that there is a vacancy on the JPA.

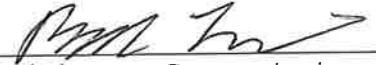
Sandvik asked Council to complete materials for the annual City Manager review. Sandvik and Council will go into a closed session to discuss materials next week.

COUNCIL UPDATES

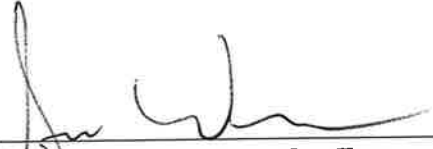
Mayor Blonigan expressed that he would like to vote on renaming Sanborn Park before the end of his term.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner adjourned the meeting at 9:21 p.m.



Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator



Aaron Wagner, Mayor Pro Tem