

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Present: Murphy, Greenberg, Parisian, Wagner, Blonigan

Absent:

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk; Diaa Tahoun, Finance Director; Richard McCoy, Public Works Director/City Engineer; Heather Rand, Community Development Director

MICROPHONE CHECK

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

Brenda Remus, 3614 Abbott Ave. N., wished everyone a Happy Constitution Day and read the U.S. Constitution Preamble.

Lisa Crocket, 4204 Zenith Ave N., noted she was against the Blue Line Extension, and stated she believes other communities are against it too. She hoped the Council would do as much as they can to make it as good as it can be.

APPROVAL OF THE SEPTEMBER 17, 2024 MEETING AGENDA

Peterson-Etem noted the addition of the Voucher Disbursement Report for Other Business Item A.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Parisian to approve the September 17, 2024, City Council agenda.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Murphy to amend the motion to remove Old Business Item 9A from the agenda.

Member Wager noted several developments had come up during the past week, and he is hoping the Council can have two more weeks to see what changes were proposed by the project office.

Mayor Blonigan stated he may be okay tabling the item later but is not sure that he would want to completely remove it from the agenda.

Member Murphy asked if there was something specific that Member Wagner was looking for. Member Wagner stated he wanted staff to have more time to address the Council's concerns and this would provide that.

A roll call was taken on the amended motion.

Ayes: Wagner

Nays: Murphy, Greenberg, Parisian, Blonigan

That motion failed.

A vote was taken on the original motion. That motion passed 4-1 (Wagner).

CONSENT AGENDA

Member Murphy removed Consent Item A for further discussion.

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

A. Acknowledge Northwest Jaycee's Donation to Badges and Bobbers Event

Member Murphy noted he removed this item to recognize and acknowledge the donation and thanked Northwest Jaycee for their donation.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Wagner to Accept Northwest Jaycee's Donation to Badges And Bobbers Event. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

B. Scheduling the date for the Truth-in-Taxation Budget Meeting

C. Approval of Geotechnical Work

D. Approval of Licenses

PRESENTATIONS

A. 2025 Proposed General Fund budget

Sandvik introduced the item and stated the budget discussion starts in the Spring, where the Council and Staff prepare top goals and priorities. He mentioned the Council would be taking action on these items later in tonight's meeting.

Tahoun presented the Proposed 2025 General Fund Budget and highlighted several areas:

- Definitions
- 2025 Budget Features
- Quick Overview
- 2025 Budget Requests
- General Fund Revenue Highlights
- Property Tax Levies 2025
- General Fund Expenditures Highlights
- General Fund Reserves
- Tax Impact
- Conclusion

Sandvik noted the Council will take action on the budget items listed under New Business on the Agenda.

Mayor Blonigan reiterated the Council will not be able to increase the levy amount once they set the preliminary levy, but they can decrease it. Sandvik noted that was correct, and stated that it can be referred to as a not to exceed number, and the final levy would be approved in December.

Member Wagner asked about Local Government Aid (LGA) and how that is calculated. Sandvik stated there is an algorithm in state statute that calculates this. Member Wagner asked if the amount listed was an estimate. Tahoun noted that it was the actual amount that would be provided.

Member Murphy asked about the three potential new positions and asked staff to bring more information on those for the next budget discussion.

Member Greenberg noted a 12% levy increase was originally brought to the Council, but the Council asked staff to lower the preliminary levy to 10%.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Consider Applications to rename Sanborn Park

Sandvik presented the item and noted the Human Rights Commission asked the Council if they could look into creating a Parks and Facilities Naming Policy last year, as the city did not have one in place. He stated the Council approved the policy in April 2024 and since then two Submissions to rename Sanborn Park have been received. He continued that a public hearing is required, but the Council does not have to make a decision tonight, and recommended the Council have staff create a formal resolution that can be recorded.

Member Wagner thanked all parties involved for making this policy happen.

Mayor Blonigan stated there are two applications looking to change the name of Sanborn Park. The first is to change the name to Shoreline Park and the second is to change the name to Castile Park.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing.

Valerie Castile, 5638 102nd Ct. N., thanked the Council for the consideration of Castile Park and noted the work that the Philando Castile Foundation has done in the community.

Rita Fox, 4041 Perry Ave. N., noted the work that Philando Castile did during his life and asked the council to rename Sanborn Park to Castile Park. She read a letter of support which will be attached to these minutes.

Ben Hansen, 3927 Noble Ave. N., noted his support for renaming Sanborn Park to Castile Park and provided his reasoning, highlighting the work Philando Castile did in the School District.

Patrick Nailon, 5820 42nd Ave. N., noted racial covenants are exclusionary and that the Sanborn family supported racial covenants. He noted we have an opportunity to change Sanborn Park and provided his support to change it to Castile Park.

Brenda Remus, 3614 Abbott Ave. N., noted she is aware of the tragic loss of Philando Castile, but questioned the initiative of the Park Naming Policy. She noted her concern is with the process of renaming parks and that the process was flawed. She noted she was in favor of Shoreline.

Kristyn Lee, 3638 Orchard Ave. N., noted the Human Rights Commission helped create the policy and have been open and honest about wanting to name the park in honor of Philando Castile. She agreed the policy could use some more revisions and pointed out some areas.

Helen Bassett, Robbinsdale School Board, noted she didn't know that Philando Castile was from Robbinsdale and provided her support for naming the park Castile Park.

Dave Vos, 4528 Drew Ave. N., stated he supports the name Shoreline Park

Lois Silgander, 1301 Scott Ave., noted she preferred Shoreline Park.

Jonathan Hansen, 3927 Noble Ave. N., provided some information on the Sanborn Family and noted they supported racially restrictive covenants in Robbinsdale. He stated his support for Castile Park and how changing the name to Castile Park shows that an effort is being made to make Robbinsdale inclusive for all.

Courtney, 3955 Vera Cruz Ave. N., stated she didn't think Shoreline Park was the right name and stated she wanted a name that represents inclusion for all.

George Ross, 4023 Hubbard Ave. N., noted the city is diverse and didn't think race should be included when thinking about naming a park. Rather, parks could be named after people who have made a positive impact in the community.

Chris, 40th and Zenith, noted her support for Shoreline Park and was concerned about the controversy about naming parks.

Rosemarie Clark, 4261 Ewing Ave. N., noted her support for Shoreline Park and that it avoids controversy.

Sharon Newbrooks, 3823 Lake Drive, noted her support for Castile Park and that what happened to him was controversial, not him. She noted he represented joy and happiness and that is what we want.

Deborah Gillis, 4201 40th Ave. N., noted her support for Shoreline Park.

Julia Ralston Aoki, 3615 Abbott Ave. N., stated she is a member of the HRC and was part of the group who submitted the request to change the name to Castile Park. She reinforced her support for Castile Park and noted it could help to show change in the community and help to repair the past. She asked that Mayor Blonigan and Member Murphy recuse themselves from voting on the name they submitted.

Scott Schneider, 4343 France Ave. N., stated his support for Shoreline Park and noted the neighborhood has evolved.

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

Member Wagner thanked people for their public comments and noted he supports renaming Sanborn Park to Castile Park for the reasons that were mentioned by the residents who were also in support of renaming it to Castile Park.

Member Parisian thanked community members for their remarks. She stated a concern of hers was how this could affect people who were close to Philando Castile and was glad that Valerie Castile was here and able to speak about it. She recognized the HRC and the work that was put into the policy as well as the members that spoke tonight and noted her support for renaming the park to Castile Park.

Member Murphy stated Philando Castile's legacy is very strong, but the Council isn't voting on someone's legacy. He noted he would actually be in favor of tabling this and thinks the community hasn't had enough input on the process and policy. He also mentioned everyone he has talked to realizes the name should be changed and that is not what this discussion is about.

Member Greenberg stated he has heard several people support both names that have been proposed but has also heard the process happened too quickly and not enough community input was taken into consideration. He

noted progress is being made because people do want the name to change. He stated he is not ready to vote on this tonight.

Member Blonigan reiterated the history of his efforts in changing the name of the park after learning about the Sanborn history. He noted the policy wasn't created with the name Castile Park in mind, and that Shoreline Park was the first submission. He also stated he wasn't aware of how much Philando Castile was connected to Robbinsdale, and he could see why that name was selected. He noted he would be open to renaming the park to other names and wanted to hear more from the community on this.

Sandvik noted the options the Council could take to move forward with this item.

Member Murphy and Greenberg reiterated they would prefer to bring this to a work session for further discussion.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to craft a resolution changing the name of Sanborn Park to Castile Park and shall include the history of racial covenants in Robbinsdale and highlight Philando Castile's commitment to all children.

Mayor Blonigan MOVED to change the name of Sanborn Park to Harriet Tubman Park. The motion was not seconded and failed.

Mayor Blonigan said he is uncomfortable voting in favor of Castile Park tonight but could be open to it in the future and would like to know more about Philando Castile's impact on the community.

Greenberg noted he would be voting against this, not because of lack of merit, but because he wants to have more conversation and community involvement.

A roll call was taken on member Wagner's motions.

Ayes: Parisian, Wagner

Nays: Murphy, Greenberg, Blonigan.

That motion failed.

The Council asked staff if they have enough direction to move forward with what has been discussed tonight. Sandvik stated he would be comfortable with the Council's direction.

OLD BUSINESS

A. Consider Municipal Consent for Blue Line Extension Light Rail

Sandvik provided an overview of the item. He noted that tonight is for the Council to have a discussion and stated the Council has received a lot of feedback over the last few months and years and highlighted the public hearing that took place at the last Council meeting as well as the most recent work session discussion. He went over the process of municipal consent and stated the Council has three options for municipal consent: taking no action, which results in a yes vote, voting yes, and voting no with concerns as to why. He highlighted major areas of discussion the Council has had in past meetings and that a "no" draft resolution had been crafted. He noted that on Friday, September 13, 2024, the project office provided an additional letter addressing some of the concerns that were included in the "no" draft resolution. He stated October 10, 2024, is the deadline to reply and that the Council could table this item, but it is non-debatable, and they must be certain before they make that motion.

Member Wagner asked about tabling versus suspension of this item and stated he is open to pushing this item back to the first meeting in October. He noted he is in alignment with what the project office provided but would want other Council members to have the additional time to discuss.

Member Parisian noted the Council has been a part of many discussions and heard a lot of community input and thanked everyone for their involvement. She mentioned this is a milestone in the project and that municipal consent has been discussed a lot. She noted municipal consent is not whether we want the project to happen or not, nor is it a means to polarize support for or against light rail. She also noted the Council and staff have done a great job in outlining project feedback under the shared goal of safety and accessibility. She stated she wants the project to be a success and has supported anti-displacement funding and will continue to advocate for Robbinsdale. She stated Robbinsdale deserves the very best from this project, including environmental sustainability, equitable access to transportation, and economic growth. Parisian mentioned this is a collaborative effort, and it's vital to maintain a positive long-term partnership, noting she does not want Robbinsdale to be sidelined. She noted that due to the new information that was provided, she does not think it's responsible to support the current draft resolution in its current form. She noted she would prefer to table the vote and work with the Council and Staff to see what can be done in the next couple of weeks.

Member Murphy noted he cares about the residents and business owners and is thinking about what is in their best interest for this project. He mentioned his support for mass transit, but noted ridership was down and this might be the time to rethink what is necessary. He questioned the alignment of the current route and wanted to make sure the region is considered as well. He noted this is still early in the project and this vote doesn't mean it's the end, and he encouraged continued engagement in the community. He also noted he would be comfortable voting tonight.

Member Greenberg noted he did a lot of door knocking and talking with residents while campaigning and noted that no matter if folks were for or against the project, they all had concerns as to how this could impact Robbinsdale. He noted he appreciates the project office working with the Council and staff, and the new information from the project office does address some of the concerns that were brought up. He noted those commitments from the project office were vague and needed more detail. He stated a "no" vote on municipal consent doesn't necessarily mean they don't want the project to happen, but that there are concerns. He stated based on the three options for municipal consent, in order to provide conditions or concerns, the Council would have to vote no.

Mayor Blonigan noted he supported the old alignment as well but understands that it is no longer a possibility. He noted the Council has heard from a lot of people that are opposed to the project but wondered about the people that may be for the project, but haven't been heard from, like people who rent housing. He noted light rail could improve access for many who don't own cars, as well as be environmentally positive. He noted the new route is good for Minneapolis as it puts the rails where the people are but feels as though Robbinsdale isn't being considered by the project office as much. He stated he feels the other cities will approve of this and doesn't want to vote no, but it could be the only way we get what we are asking for. He stated his concerns for safety, but noted the Hennepin County Board will vote yes to this, and he believes this project will move forward no matter what Robbinsdale does. He stated he thinks the Council should table this as well, so they can discuss this more.

Member Greenberg wanted to address the Metro Transit police substation and wanted to hear more details and feedback.

Mayor Blonigan reiterated the safety concern that the Council and the residents have, but that safety isn't necessarily a design flaw.

Member Wagner asked Member Greenberg about what detail he was originally looking for. Member Greenberg noted the 42nd pedestrian and vehicle plan.

Member Wagner mentioned the Lowry station and stated more information, and details need to be provided for that, including exactly where it's going to be located. He would also like to know the exact number of spots for the park-and-ride.

Sandvik noted the Council could schedule a special work session before the next Council meeting to give the project office more time to provide information and could redraft resolutions to include updated information from the project office. He recommended if the Council wants to table the item, they should make a motion to do so, and similarly, if wanted, the Council should motion to schedule a Special Work Session.

Mayor Blonigan noted he wants to make sure more information is known about the Lowry Station as it was never discussed with Robbinsdale that it would be moved into Minneapolis, and he wanted equal input into the station's development.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to table the Consideration of Municipal Consent for Blue Line Extension Light Rail. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Wagner to schedule a Special Work Session on Tuesday, October 1, 2024, at 5:00 p.m. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Proposed 2025 General Fund and Debt Service Property Tax Levies

Sandvik mentioned this item relates to the presentation that was given to the Council earlier today and the Council is being asked to make a motion approving the Proposed 2025 General Fund and Debt Service Property Tax Levies.

Member Greenberg asked about expanding debt to reduce the levy. Sandvik noted additional debt reserves could be considered if the Council directed staff to look into lowering the levy.

Mayor Blonigan noted he would like to eventually lower the tax levy, but this would be preliminary, and the Council could lower this number later. He asked about the number of police officers, noting we weren't fully staffed, and asked how much additional funds that could provide. Sandvik noted a projection of about \$800,000, but is hesitant as that number can be reduced by other costs.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Parisian to Approve Proposed 2025 General Fund and Debt Service Property Tax Levies. The vote was unanimous and the motion Passed.

B. Proposed 2025 HRA Property Tax Levy

Tahoun provided an overview of the item and noted this levy can help invest in the community more.

Member Greenberg MOVED, seconded by Wagner to Approve Proposed 2025 HRA Property Tax Levy. The vote was unanimous and the motion Passed.

C. Enterprise Funds Budget, Capital Project Funds Budget, and CIP Plan Work Sessions

Tahoun presented the item and noted the city is required to have a 5-year Capital Improvement Plan, but the city opts for a 10-year plan. He noted several potential dates as to when the Council could discuss this more at a Work Session.

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Blonigan to schedule a Special Work Session for November 12, 2024, at 6:00 p.m. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Voucher Requests Pending Approval for Disbursement

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to Approve Voucher Requests Pending Approval For Disbursement. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Peterson-Etem noted early voting starts on Friday, September 20 at Robbinsdale City Hall and that more information can be found on the city website.

Sandvik thanked all who came to the Chamber of Commerce Meet and Greet last week and noted the upcoming Birdtown Boo Bash. He noted the annual tree sale is happening now. There will be a Vehicle Fair at the Crystal Community Center on Saturday, September 21, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to noon. He noted fence construction at Spanjers Park. There will be a paper shredding event on Saturday, September 28, 2024, from 10:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at the public works facility.

COUNCIL GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Member Greenberg thanked all who came out tonight. He stated he had an energy audit today and encouraged folks to schedule one for themselves.

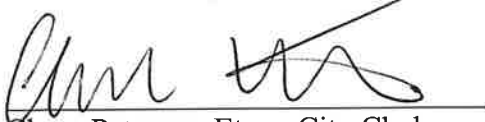
Member Parisian also thanked everyone for their engagement. She noted the HRC is hosting two events looking for feedback on a policy proposal to address racism and support racial and health equity for all. The first event will be at the Sanborn Park Building on Thursday, September 19, at 6:00 pm and the second will be on Saturday, September 21, 2024, at 1:00 p.m. at the Manor Park Building.

Member Wagner expressed his thanks to everyone who came and participated in tonight's meeting. He also thanked the many hours staff put into preparing for these meetings and acknowledged the other Council members.

Mayor Blonigan noted the collaboration between Council members and thanked them for that. He thanked the community members for coming in tonight and for being respectful, as well as recognizing the staff for the work they do. He mentioned the Chamber of Commerce Meet and Greet and thanked all who came out.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Parisian to adjourn the meeting at 10:05 p.m. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed.



Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk



William A. Blonigan, Mayor

Robbinsdale City Council
Public Hearing Regarding Park Naming
September 17, 2024

Rita Fox, 4041 Perry Ave. N., Robbinsdale, MN.

Mayor. Council. Staff. Good evening.

I am here to speak on behalf of a park name application, of which I co-signed, to rename Robbinsdale's Sanborn Park as Castile Park. This proposal is to honor the late Philando Castile, someone who, to quote the subtitle of a 2023 article in The Wake magazine is, "The legacy of a man who wouldn't let kids go hungry." I will tell you why I and my co-signers on the Robbinsdale Human Rights Commission support this proposed name, along with a few observations.

First, who was Robbinsdale's Philando Castile? In short, he was a good man, whose good deeds are an inspiration, first in our community, then to our state, and now our country; a ripple effect for acts of kindness, that began right here in Robbinsdale.

Philando, as a school cafeteria manager, arrived early for work so he could help kids with disabilities safely exit their buses. Out of his own pocket, Mr. Phil routinely paid for the lunches of kids who were in lunch debt. Because he paid for these lunches humbly, without fanfare or seeking recognition, Mr. Phil's actions only became fully known after his untimely death in 2016.

Philando's legacy of kindness became the genesis for the Philando Castile Foundation. Robbinsdale's Cooper High School approached the foundation, requesting it pay for students in lunch debt who could not graduate until the debt was paid. The Foundation paid the \$8,000 debt, and the students graduated. People Magazine and National Public Radio quoted the Robbinsdale School District Superintendent at the time saying, "This was a huge humanitarian act in our community." But it didn't stop there. The Foundation paid for students in other districts, to date totaling approximately \$300,000 paid towards lunch debt and other student needs.

But, again, it didn't stop there. Last year Minnesota passed a law to fund free breakfast and lunch for all students, regardless of income. On the day the bill passed, and the day it was signed into law, lawmakers credited the inspiration of Philando Castile for making it a reality.

Once again, it didn't stop there. This year, nationally, the issue of child hunger and student lunch shaming has been raised anew, with Minnesota being cited as an example of humanity in action. Last month the British newspaper The Guardian, USA edition, attributes the national conversation on universal lunches to the inspiration of Castile. And the New York Times reports, "Most Americans support providing all students with meals, regardless of their income..."

While the nation recognizes the impact and legacy of Philando Castile, sadly many people in his hometown of Robbinsdale have trouble even saying his name.

Why? Why the hesitancy to honor the 'Johnny Appleseed' of student lunches? Why the vitriol and anger expressed on social media? Does it have something to do with the manner in which he was killed? Or because of who killed him? I've heard perplexing arguments to justify the reluctance to honor Mr. Phil. The first argument is 'well, we just shouldn't name parks after people.' It is striking how this newfound concern only came up now. Only for Philando Castile. Second reason, 'he didn't really have enough community service, or enough impact on our community.' Really? His legacy leading to \$300,000 distributed isn't enough? Next comes the justification, 'he and his family may have lived here, but they didn't have a strong enough connection to Robbinsdale and I don't even think he lived here when he died.' To this I would ask, have you ever read his obituary? It says Robbinsdale, and neither you or I or any random resident gets to tell his family where he called home. His hometown was Robbinsdale. How long residing in Robbinsdale is required for a strong enough connection, two, three generations? Just a couple generations ago, our restrictive covenants prove the Castile family may not have even been welcome here. The final argument to discard this application is, 'it would be too divisive for Robbinsdale, we just want this to quietly go away.' While I am dumbfounded as to why honoring a good man who did good deeds is divisive, if that is the Council's fear, you need to know this, rejecting this application will not make any divide go away, it will simply tell the people of Robbinsdale which side of the divide you are on.

I am not a betting person, but if I were to make a wager on the Council's action on the proposed name Castile Park, it would be this; you on the Council will listen to us tonight, politely as you always do. Then, you may take action on the competing name proposal, Shoreline Park. Why do I surmise this? Because a park name application requires 5 sponsors. The sponsors of Shoreline Park? Two Council members, a spouse, a relative, and her spouse. And here you are tonight, voting on your own application. Duly noted.

So, should you vote to reject the name Castile Park, also please make note of this; our nation will continue to say the name Philando Castile. His name will keep inspiring others to do good deeds. Here in Robbinsdale, there will be other parks to rename. And, there will be other Council members. We will continue to say his name, until the day we have a Council that proudly does so as well.

Sanborn. A park name that should be replaced by a name that should be remembered. Philando Castile, the legacy of a man who wouldn't let kids go hungry. Thank you.