

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

Member Parisian called the meeting to order at 8:37 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Member Parisian, Member Greenberg, Member Murphy, Mayor Blonigan

Absent: Mayor Pro Tem Wagner

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Matt Bazyk, Recreation Services Manager; Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

DISCUSSION

A. Currency Exchange License Renewal - SJB Enterprises dba Your Exchange

Sandvik provided background that last year, Council approved a zoning amendment and license application for a new currency exchange business next to the post office for SJB Enterprises dba Your Exchange. He explained that there were some questions about what kind of services they offered, so the City code was updated to make it a permitted use. He shared that this type of license requires Council to approve the renewal application, as well as hold a public hearing to allow for comment and feedback. He explained that City staff received a letter from the Department of Commerce reminding staff about these requirements. Sandvik noted that there have not been any issues so far with the business. Council confirmed that all is good ahead of the public hearing.

B. Robbinsdale Parks Master Plan

Bazyk shared that process of creating the Robbinsdale Parks Master Plan for 2025-2035 started this year. Bazyk thanked Council for allowing the City to invest time and money into this project. He walked through the 2024 timeline of the plan, and outlined phases such as the SWOT (Strengths, Weaknesses, Opportunities, and Threats) analysis, and explained how that process led to the idea of diversifying our park system and creating third spaces in our parks.

Bazyk outlined the community engagement process, which consisted of outreach at Whiz Bang Days about general ideas for all City parks and sharing Sanborn Park concept plans at the Chamber of Commerce Meet and Greet in September. He explained that all of the initial feedback helped staff to compile questions for an online survey that was posted for about three months and received over 500 responses from community members. He emphasized that the draft in front of Council tonight is only a draft, and that he will bring any further feedback back to Bolton & Menk to include in the final Parks Master Plan. He shared that the draft plan will be posted on the website around January 19, 2025, for further community feedback, and then the final plan will be brought to Council to finalize in February.

Member Murphy expressed that he is happy to see concerns about accessibility addressed in the plan, since accessibility improvements have been an ask from the community for a long time. He shared his excitement about seeing a final Sanborn Park plan. He commented on the fact that our partnership with Three Rivers at Sochacki Park has been an extremely beneficial partnership, and he encouraged the Recreation team to explore similar partnerships going forward. Bazyk highlighted that in addition to accessibility, this plan focuses on connectedness and explores how community members are able to maneuver within parks and between parks.

Member Greenberg shared that he is excited about the idea of connectedness and emphasized that he wants to

strengthen interconnectivity between Robbinsdale Parks and other park resources that border the City. Member Greenberg shared that community engagement is great when it comes to a process like the Parks Master plan, and he thinks that people should have more opportunities to share their feedback. Bazyk shared that this project is closely tied to a grant on trails from the National Parks Services group, who is helping the City with pedestrian and bike planning, as well as connectivity and wayfinding. He shared that there will be future opportunities for community engagement.

Member Murphy added that Recreation should work with Engineering on the Chowen/Shoreline/Grimes Reconstruction project to see if the park or trail plans in the area can align with some of that construction work. Bazyk shared that he will be tabling at the Shoreline construction information session on Monday, and that those conversations with Engineering are ongoing.

Member Parisian thanked Bazyk for his work, as well as Bolton & Menk and the Parks Commission. She agreed with the previous discussions on interconnectivity, wayfinding, and connecting the Parks Master Plan with the CIP. She asked what performance indicators will be examined to ensure that this plan is successful. Bazyk emphasized that other cities advised him to make sure that the plan is used, since it is hard to come up with the funds to accomplish all of these plans. He expressed confidence that the ideas in the plan will be implemented. He added that there needs to be internal discussions about what benchmarks we will use to determine the plan's success. She shared that she would like to see more information in the plan about the role of the PRF Commission throughout the planning process.

Mayor Blonigan agreed with the Council. He emphasized that he would like to see grants and opportunities being further explored for funding. He also discussed South Twin Lake and shared that it should be treated like a park since it's widely used for fishing, kayaking, and other water activities. He urged Bazyk to connect with the Light Rail Project Office to see if trail improvements and updates can be made in connection with them.

Member Parisian asked if the City Forester has been kept in the loop with the Parks Master Plan due to his constant work in City parks. Bazyk confirmed that staff will lean on the City Forester for insight on forestry topics as the plan becomes more concrete. She commented that "The Recommendations" section of the plan was interesting, and she wondered what new policies will need to be introduced in the future as new amenities get added to parks, such as pickleball.

Sandvik commented on his excitement about this project and thanked Council for their support. He emphasized that when staff work with LRT, they will pull from the Parks Master Plan and from the National Parks Services trail plan to guide those discussions. He also shared that this plan is a result of goal-setting sessions that happen early in the year, so Council members should start to think about what they want to bring to the 2025 goal-setting session. He explained that the whole City team will continue to look into grant opportunities.

Member Greenberg emphasized his excitement about Sanborn Park after seeing the finalized concept plans.

STAFF UPDATES

Sandvik asked those who are going to be on Council next year if they own 10% or more in an FCC. The Council members shared that they do not.

Sandvik shared that Terrance, our Growth Through Opportunity Cadet from this fall, stopped by today with some cards and treats to thank the City for the program.

Sandvik provided Council with an update that the City will implement non-union adjustments by January 1 from the Class and Comp Study. He shared that there are a few union groups who are still in discussions, and that their wage changes will retroactively go back to January 1 once negotiations are finalized.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Mayor Blonigan asked if the garbage contract will be ready for the Council meeting next week. Sandvik confirmed that he is hopeful an agreement will be ready.

Member Greenberg shared that he has a Community Advisory Committee (CAC) Blue Line Extension meeting tomorrow, and he wondered if Council had any feedback on the Lowry Station to bring to the meeting. Member Greenberg showed Council the seven potential design plans, and shared that he does not like the tunnel plan. Council discussed and concluded that they want to prioritize ambulance and car connectivity.

A. Consider Letter of Opposition for HR 3557

Sandvik shared information about the H.R. 3557 bill and expressed that it is fatally flawed. He explained that City staff will push for a broadband for all act, since broadband has become a utility that everyone needs for school, work, play, and more. He stated that at the federal level, they are continuing to push legislation that limits access to broadband and limits peg fees for cities. He explained that there are no peg fees when people watch the exact same programming on a cell phone instead of a TV, which is not fair. He clarified that the letter of opposition would be sent to members of the Minnesota Congressional Delegation to ask them to oppose H.R. 3557.

Mayor Blonigan explained that private providers want to bypass state and local laws to avoid paying fees, even though they use our right-of-ways. Sandvik explained that at the City-level, staff think that if providers want access to our right-of-ways, they then should be paying for access since we already do that with other utility providers.

Greenberg asked if the bill would allow private providers to use our right-of-way to put in any utilities. Sandvik confirmed. He expressed that he knows the bill will be challenged, but that he has real concerns about it if it passes in any capacity. Sandvik shared that the permitting process would be removed if the bill was passed, since they would have the rights to access our right-of way. He clarified that this bill would not only lead to lost revenue, but also disruption without compensation. Council agreed to put this item on the agenda for next week.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Parisian adjourned the meeting at 9:41 PM.



Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator



Aaron Wagner, Mayor Pro Tem