ROBBINSDALE

City Council Meeting
Tuesday, December 3, 2024
Meeting No. 25

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Present:	Greenberg, Parisian, Wagner, Blonigan
Absent:	Murphy
Staff:	Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk; Richard McCoy, Public Works Director/City Engineer; Heather Rand, Community Development Director; Diaa Tahoun, Finance Director; Will Bucheger, Assistant Planner

MICROPHONE CHECK

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

APPROVAL OF THE DECEMBER 3, 2024 MEETING AGENDA

Peterson-Etem noted two updates to the agenda. The first for Public Hearing Item D related to the adjustment of two numbers, which has been updated on the posted agenda packet. The second is the addition of the voucher disbursement report for Other Business Item A.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Wagner to approve the December 3, 2025, meeting agenda. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to approve the consent agenda. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

A. Approve City Council meeting minutes from September 3, 2024

B. Receive Sustainability Committee Meeting minutes from October 16, 2024

C. Approval of Credit Card Charges and Payment – October 2024

D. Approval of Licenses

PRESENTATIONS

A. 2025 Final Levy Presentation

Tahoun presented the item and provided details on definitions, 2025 budget features, quick overview, 2025 budget requests, general fund revenue highlights, property tax levies 2025, general fund expenditures highlights, general fund reserves, and tax impact.

Mayor Blonigan asked about the franchise fees for gas and electricity and why those fees would be projected to go down even though the price of gas and electricity is increasing. Sandvik noted the change is from increased efficiency and general consumption changes.

Mayor Blonigan asked about the transfer of funds from solid waste to engineering for the damage that happens from trucks on the roads. Sandvik stated that practice would continue.

Mayor Blonigan asked if we had planned to have a deficit in our budget. Tahoun stated yes, but instead it appeared there would be a surplus and noted this is from personnel costs.

Member Wagner asked about the tax capacity. Sandvik noted the budget memo includes a chart detailing this, noting it would be at 55.89% if the levy was set at 8%, which is competitive and comparable to surrounding communities.

Member Greenberg asked about tax rates for apartments/commercial spaces and how TIF would affect this. Sandvik noted capturing the increment will take some time, but the tax on apartments and commercial areas has been consistent, and noted redevelopment could help offset some of the residential tax.

Member Wagner asked about property type and how it relates to tax valuations. Sandvik noted that Hennepin County provides those services, which are done at a minimum of every five years for residential properties, and that it's an ongoing process.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Assessment Hearing for the Reconstruction of 41st Avenue between Railroad Avenue and Regent Avenue – City Project 44123

McCoy presented the item and provided background information about the ordering of the work and the proposed property assessments for this project. He noted the Council eventually ordered the work but continued to discuss the assessment policy. Ultimately, the Council decided the current assessment policy was suitable and directed staff to bring the assessment hearing back to the Council. He detailed the cost of the assessments, noting the timeline of payback and the interest rate. McCoy noted an email that was received from Josh and Morgan Campbell and asked the Council to include it in the record.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to receive the letter and include it in the record. The vote was unanimous and the motion passed. The letter will be included in the minutes as Exhibit 1.

Mayor Blonigan wondered how the assessment cost is determined. McCoy stated the cost is based on the construction cost index, which is a third-party index that is reviewed annually and sets an amount per linear foot.

Member Wagner noted this isn't the first time the Council has heard about this and has had several discussions about this particular project.

Member Greenberg asked if there would be ongoing discussions about the assessment policy. Sandvik stated that discussions have been held and that if the policy were to change, a phased-in approach would be recommended. He noted additional discussions could be brought back to the Council in the Spring.

Member Parisian stated she appreciated the extended time offered for folks to pay off the assessment, as well as the adjustment to the interest rate.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing.

Mayor Blonigan noted the letter that was added to the record, which indicated they are opposed to the assessment.

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

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to adopt Resolution No. 8124 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE ASSESSMENT ROLL FOR CITY PROJECT 44123 – 41ST AVENUE BETWEEN RAILROAD AVENUE AND REGENT AVENUE."

A roll call was taken.

Ayes: Greenberg, Parisian, Wagner, Blonigan.

Nays: None.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

B. Public Hearing on Proposed Water, Sanitary Sewer, Storm Sewer, Solid Waste and Street Light rate increases.

Tahoun introduced the item and detailed the proposed rates for the upcoming year.

Mayor Blonigan asked why the price of organics recycling increases when more people use the service. Tahoun noted that the hauler would charge us more as they would be required to use more resources in the way of trucks, drivers, etc.

Member Wagner asked about commercial organics and solid waste collection and what the city's role is. Sandvik stated that organized collection is statutorily limited to mostly residential areas, and that the city could provide education and potential incentives for organics recycling.

Member Wagner asked if commercial water rates were the same as the residential rates. Tahoun stated an evaluation was done to look into commercial rates but that is not deemed appropriate at this time.

Member Parisian asked for additional data on the percentage of homes that use water in each tier. Tahoun stated he could provide that data after this meeting.

Member Parisian asked how residents would be informed about the new charge for using credit cards. Sandvik noted a letter would go out, but also social media and the Birdtown Brief will continue to be used.

Member Greenberg asked if there are any incentive programs if residents make efforts to conserve use of services. Sandvik noted there have been rebate programs for updating to more efficient appliances, and that the city will continue to look for additional opportunities around this.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing.

Nike Heid, 3931 Perry Ave. N., wondered why the connection to North Memorial would be at a different rate.

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

Sandvik noted North Memorial uses a substantial amount of water and the proposed rate would be comparable to what they are charged now, through Minneapolis. He also indicated it would be a benefit to all residents.

Member Wagner noted he thinks rates should be fair for all, but that the rates can always be updated next year. He asked if the storm sewer rate would be the same for North Memorial. Tahoun noted yes.

McCoy noted there are often lower rates for bulk users, which North Memorial is. He also indicated a benefit of them constantly using water is that it will help to keep the water treatment plant running, meaning the water treatment plant won't have to stop and restart, which can stress the equipment.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to adopt Resolution No. 8125 "A RESOLUTION ESTABLISHING CITY WATER, SANITARY SEWER, STORM SEWER, SOLID WASTE, AND STREET LIGHT RATES IN THE CITY OF ROBBINSDALE EFFECTIVE FOR ALL USAGE BEGINNING JANUARY 1, 2025." The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

C. Hold a public hearing to receive comments regarding the City's Street Improvement and Reconstruction Plan and adopt the City's Street Improvement and Reconstruction Plan.

Tahoun introduced the item, noting the city is required to have a street improvement and reconstruction plan to receive certain bonding for this type of work. He stated the minimum requirement is a five-year plan, but Robbinsdale has a ten-year plan for long-range financial planning to prioritize major new capital investments made by the City.

McCoy detailed the ten-year street improvement and reconstruction plan, highlighting several projects and funding implications. He did note that future items are contingent on what happens with the Blue Line Extension.

Member Wagner encouraged the use of sidewalks and asked staff to be proactive in planning those into this work.

Member Greenberg asked if there would be resources that could benefit us with the light rail extension project. McCoy stated there could be potential resources that would benefit the city, but that information is not known yet. Greenberg also asked if there is a point where we reach a level of maintenance, instead of larger reconstruction projects that have high dollar amounts. McCoy noted that as more reconstruction projects are completed, there will be a better balance and could hopefully reach a point where there is a lull in reconstruction projects.

Member Wagner recognized the work being done, especially around ADA compliance, and thanked McCoy.

Mayor Blonigan appreciated that we have a ten-year plan and noted this helps layout future costs and needs.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing.

No one from the public spoke.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to close the public hearing. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to Adopt Resolution No. 8126 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CITY'S STREET IMPROVEMENT AND RECONSTRUCTION PLAN 2025-2034." The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

D. Hold a public hearing to receive comments regarding the City's Capital Improvement Plan 2025-2034 and to adopt the City's Capital Improvement Plan 2025-2034.

Tahoun introduced this item, noting it's similar to the street improvement and reconstruction plan, but includes the entire city's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for the next ten years.

McCoy presented the item, noting he would skip over the street improvement plan, as the Council heard about that in the last item, but will discuss the rest of the CIP. He highlighted upcoming items for the major asset groups, which include Government Buildings, Parks, Traffic and Transportation, Utilities, and Capital Equipment. He also indicated future financial needs for these anticipated projects.

Mayor Blonigan asked about fire trucks and wondered how we could determine what vehicle requirements they need. Sandvik noted an ad hoc committee has been discussed to look into the future needs for a fire truck and fire equipment and potential outside consultants could be brought in if needed.

Member Greenberg asked about electric vehicles and if we would need to get the charging stations before we get the fleet. McCoy noted staff is looking into locations for charging stations, which could determine how electrical vehicles would be utilized in our fleet. He continued that as new city buildings are constructed, that infrastructure can be incorporated to include charging stations from the start. Greenberg asked if charging stations would be for public use as well, or only city vehicles. McCoy stated they could potentially serve both, but that hasn't been decided yet.

Member Wagner asked about Water Tower 2 and if it would allow for antennas on top. McCoy stated yes, noting they would be designed for that. Wagner also noted that he believes the Council should make a decision on the old water tower, so they can budget for those needs in 2026.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing.

Nick Heid, 3931 Perry Ave. N., asked the Council to think about the people of Robbinsdale and how this CIP affects them. He specifically mentioned PFAS, parks improvements, added bike lanes on streets, and electric vehicles and charging stations.

Member Greenberg MOVED, seconded by Parisian to close the public hearing. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to adopt Resolution No. 8127 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE CITY'S CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN 2025-2034."

Mayor Blonigan noted his support for electric vehicles and appreciated the ten-year plan, noting it takes a lot of planning and thought.

Member Wagner stated he feels the city is moving in the right direction with renewable energy and is happy with the CIP.

The Vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

<u>OLD BUSINESS</u>

A. Budget Memo Adopting 2025 Final Levy and Budget

Tahoun presented the item, noting that the Council had set a preliminary levy at 10% and that the Council could not exceed this amount, but could reduce it. He continued that the Council asked staff to lower the final levy to 8%, which is what is being presented tonight.

Mayor Blonigan reiterated that the original levy proposal from staff was 12% and that the Council asked for the preliminary levy to be reduced to 10%. He further mentioned that after the preliminary levy, the Council again asked staff to reduce the levy to 8%, and he is happy that staff were able to accommodate this request.

Member Wagner thanked the Council and staff for their work on the levy, and this meets the dual task of being responsible with taxpayer money but also continuing to improve services for residents.

Member Parisian recognized the levy change from 10% to 8% was a big ask and that she appreciates and thanks staff for their creativity and work on this.

Member Greenberg echoed the previous comments and noted tough choices have to be made, and thanked staff for their work on the budget.

Mayor Blonigan stated our budgeting meets the highest standards for government finance and the city is doing a great job.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to adopt Resolution No. 8128 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 CITY PROPERTY TAX LEVY IN THE AMOUNT OF $10,822,124 AND ORDERING ITS CERTIFICATION TO THE HENNEPIN COUNTY AUDITOR."

A roll call was taken.

Ayes: Greenberg, Parisian, Wagner, Blonigan.

Nays: None.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Greenberg to adopt Resolution No. 8129 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 FINAL BUDGET AND COMMITTING FUND BALANCE." The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Member Greenberg MOVED, seconded by Parisian to adopt Resolution No. 8130 "A RESOLUTION ADOPTING THE 2025 HRA PROPERTY TAX LEVY IN THE AMOUNT OF $334,832 AND ORDERING ITS CERTIFICATION TO THE HENNEPIN COUNTY AUDITOR." The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS

Mayor Blonigan asked that New Business Items be discussed before Public Hearing C and D. The Council agreed.

A. Zoning Text Amendment to Zoning Code Section 515.07, Subd. 4 Conditional Uses

Bucheger presented the item, providing background information and stated the reason for this update is to allow a Private Utility Building. He detailed the current zoning and stated this type of business wouldn't generate much customer traffic, and staff don't see any issues with this type of business in the area.

Member Wagner asked about aesthetic requirements. Bucheger noted part of this building will be in the TOD district, which does have beautification standards that would apply.

Member Greenberg asked if there would be parking. Bucheger stated there would be a few parking spots on the West Broadway side. Greenberg asked if there are other locations that could facilitate this use. Bucheger noted there could be other areas, but they would require us to change the comprehensive plan.

Mayor Blonigan asked if there was a specific reason why this location is being pursued. Tim Martin, US Internet, stated they would like to bring fiber internet into Robbinsdale, which could help spur economic development, and noted this location would essentially serve as a fiber hub, and location is important for that.

Member Greenberg asked if other fiber hubs are in residential areas. Martin stated they have other buildings in both residential and commercial areas, noting both models have been successful. Greenberg asked about noise that could potentially come from the building. Martin stated council members and staff in other communities had toured similar facilities and noticed little to no sound pollution.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian to amend Zoning Code Section 515.07, Subd. 4 Conditional uses to allow the conditional use of a private utility building in the Residential-Business district.

Nike Heid, 3931 Perry Ave. N., wondered about the environmental impacts and if those have been considered. Sandvik noted what is being asked tonight is the zoning text amendments and those impacts would be better considered when a variance or conditional use permit are brought to the Council. Bucheger noted this amendment would allow US Internet to submit an application and, once that is submitted, the Council could address those details at more length.

Member Wagner asked about the use of the building and if there would be a cloud-based service included. Martin stated that is not the intent for the Robbinsdale site, and would be to service the area with fiber. He also noted staff and the Council could tour other locations.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

B. 3819 West Broadway Rezone

Bucheger introduced the item. He provided background on the zoning request, why there is currently split zoning at this property, and that the intention is to construct a private utility building on this property.

Member Greenberg MOVED, seconded by Wagner to approve the rezone request at 3819 West Broadway converting the property into a Residential-Business zoning district.

A roll call was taken.

Ayes: Greenberg, Parisian, Wagner, Blonigan.

Nays: None.

The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Voucher Requests Pending Approval for Disbursement

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Wagner to approve the voucher requests pending approval for disbursement. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Sandvik thanked the Police and Fire departments who have handled some hard situations over the last few days. He thanked everyone who attended the Tree Lighting event tonight and all who volunteered to help. He stated the City Band plays this Thursday, December 5 and on Saturday, December 7, the Tri-City Police Department parade will take place at 5:00 p.m. and the route can be found on the city website. He thanked the Council for their work on the budget, noting the complexity that goes into it. He noted upcoming city meetings and that on

December 17, at 5:00 p.m. there would be an open house to recognize and honor Mayor Blonigan for his time on the Council.

COUNCIL GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Member Greenberg noted there was a meeting earlier tonight at Elim Church for the Blue Line Extension, noting there were several options for the Lowry station design.

Member Parisian thanked all involved with the Tree Lighting and is looking forward to the open house for Mayor Blonigan.

Member Wagner also thanked the Police and Fire Departments and sent his sympathies to the families affected by the events that happened. He thanked all who attended the events today and noted it was great to see people being involved. Lastly, he noted he has heard feedback of yard waste pick-up, asking if the timeline could potentially be extended further into the season.

Mayor Blonigan also thanked those who helped with the Tree Lighting, those who came out tonight, and Police and Fire for their work. He asked about getting fuel from the City of Crystal and if that had started. Sandvik noted that is expected to start within the week. Blonigan noted there was a request from the Cable Commission that he forwarded to the City Manager and asked that it be looked into. He mentioned that Saw Horse might be up for sale, and encouraged staff to keep an eye on it.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Greenberg MOVED, seconded by Parisian to adjourn the meeting at 10:59 p.m. The vote was unanimous and the motion carried.

Signed by:
5C4C4DACAFC74C9...
Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk

Signed by:
Bradley Sutton
E744AB5DFC73409...
Bradley Sutton, Mayor

From: [redacted]
To: Chase Peterson-Etem
Cc: [redacted]
Subject: Opposition to Proposed Special Assessments
Date: Tuesday, December 3, 2024 1:43:33 PM

Hi Chase,

We are submitting the below letter hoping it can be read at the city counsel meeting this evening as we are unable to attend in person:

Dear City Council Members,

I am writing to express my strong opposition to the proposed special assessment for reconstruction of 41st Avenue. This financial burden on residents, coupled with the 6.65% optional interest rate for payment plans, is inequitable and counterproductive to the financial stability of our community.

The median household income in Robbinsdale is $80,125. For a significant portion of households, this assessment represents a substantial financial strain. Residents are being asked to set aside an additional $1,000 a month or potentially drain their savings account to meet the November 2025 deadline. If the deadline is not met we are being asked to be in debt for years to come and pay additional interest.

Moreover, cities of similar size and demographic composition often fund road reconstruction projects through general city revenue or municipal bonds rather than direct special assessments. By spreading costs across the entire tax base or utilizing alternative funding mechanisms, these cities ensure equitable contributions while maintaining critical infrastructure. Robbinsdale should consider adopting such an approach to align with best practices.

At the previous special hearing, it was suggested that abolishing special assessments would be unfair to those who have paid them in the past. However, this argument is flawed. Fairness should focus on current and future residents rather than adhering to a model that penalizes today's citizens to maintain consistency with outdated practices. By this logic, the city would never implement progressive reforms. Equity demands that we adapt policies to meet present needs rather than perpetuating unjust precedents.

I urge the council to reconsider this plan and explore more equitable funding methods for this project. Burdening individual households disproportionately undermines community cohesion and economic stability.

Thank you for considering this perspective.

Sincerely,
Josh and Morgan Campbell
4105 Perry Ave N

Morgan Campbell