



MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner called the meeting to order at 7:42 PM.

ROLL CALL

Present: Member Greenberg, Member Blackledge, Mayor Sutton, Member Parisian, Mayor Pro Tem Wagner

Absent: None

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Heather Rand, Community Development Director; Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

DISCUSSION

A. Discussion on Retail Cannabis Ordinance Creation

Rand recalled that in May of 2023, Governor Walz signed legislation that allows adult-use cannabis in the state of Minnesota, and that the state has been creating an Office of Cannabis Management (OCM). She explained that the OCM has been created, and their set of rules are expected to be adopted around the end of March, with licenses potentially being issued in May or June. Rand emphasized that OCM has control of licensing and enforcement, but that there are a few decisions that the City will need to make.

Rand shared that the City is able to establish three things: zoning and land use rules for cannabis businesses, the maximum hours of operation, and buffers within a certain distance from youth-oriented facilities. She shared that City staff will bring proposed ordinance updates to the Planning Commission on February 20, and to the City Council for 1st and 2nd ordinance readings on March 4 and March 18 respectively.

Rand shared that staff are of the mindset to treat cannabis in a similar manner to tobacco and liquor businesses. City staff recommended that cannabis retailers be zoned in the downtown districts (DD1, DD2) and limited community business districts (B2, B3, and B4). She shared that she would appreciate Council's input on whether they would like to establish a maximum number of dispensaries in Robbinsdale, since Robbinsdale must allow for two based on population.

Rand shared a map showing a 1000-foot buffer zone from cannabis sellers to youth-oriented establishments and explained that a 1000-foot buffer would limit any cannabis development downtown. Rand shared that her recommendation is to decrease the buffer zone down to 300 feet and limit the facility type to only schools to allow for more development opportunities. Rand explained that Council could delegate the registration of Cannabis businesses to the County, but that the Police Chief recommends that the City retain the authority to manage registrations.

Member Greenberg asked about economic benefits for Robbinsdale if the City does not create a municipal cannabis store. Rand shared that the primary economic benefit would be the new businesses attracting people from elsewhere to Robbinsdale. Sandvik shared that the City could have a municipal store, but that it would not count towards the two businesses that the City needs to allow.

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner expressed that he likes the idea of treating Cannabis retailers similarly to tobacco and liquor retailers, and he asked about the buffer zones and the maximum number of retailers we have set for

those groups. Sandvik shared that liquor stores are not allowed within 100 ft of a school or church in City Code.

Member Parisian shared that she would like to start by not limiting the number of cannabis businesses allowed and then adjust as needed going forward. She shared that she supports the proposed 300-foot buffer zone and a wider range of hours of operation.

Member Greenberg disagreed and expressed that he wants to start by limiting the number of cannabis businesses allowed, since he would like to hear more from the state first. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner expressed support for not limiting the number of cannabis businesses allowed, since he does not want to be in a situation where the City favors one private store owner over another. He added that he also supports 300-ft buffer zones and a wider range of hours of operation.

Mayor Sutton expressed concern about being lenient on hours of operation, since it would be difficult to cut those hours down once they are set. He shared the idea that the City could set hours based upon the liquor store's hours. He expressed that he is in favor of limiting the number of cannabis stores allowed in town to two, since more than two would be a high number of dispensaries for Robbinsdale.

Member Parisian circled back to supporting no limit on the number of cannabis businesses allowed, and shared that she would not want to restrict development opportunities for vacant storefronts by setting a limit. Member Blackledge asked how many current open spaces there would be for cannabis businesses based on zoning and the current status of Robbinsdale properties. Rand shared that there is currently very limited space, but that staff could put together a list of potential sites.

Member Blackledge expressed support for not limiting the number of allowed cannabis businesses since it would give the City more flexibility as more rules from the State are shared. Member Greenberg expressed concern that many stores would come to Robbinsdale if our neighboring communities limit the number of cannabis stores that they will allow. Mayor Sutton agreed. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner shared concern about limiting the number of cannabis businesses since that would favor well-financed and informed businesses without giving opportunities to others.

Rand shared that City staff will draft ordinance changes for a Public Hearing for the Planning Commission meeting on February 20. Sandvik confirmed that City staff will draw up some zoning maps with a more limited buffer, continue to work with the State on licensing limits, plan to set hours of operation similar to hours at the Municipal Liquor Store, and continue to work with partners to propose fees for registration and violations.

B. Council Assignments - 2025

Sandvik explained that each year, it is necessary to appoint a Mayor Pro Tem and appoint council members to a variety of legislative bodies. He emphasized that the most important role to establish is the Mayor Pro Tem, since that member will lead the Work Session and step in if the Mayor is ever absent. Sandvik walked through other opportunities for Council which include the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC), National League of Cities (NLC), Metro Cities, School District 281 Government Advisory Council, Suburban Rate Authority, NW Suburbs Cable Communications Commission, CCX Media Board of Directors, and the Corridor Management Committee (CMC).

Sandvik noted that William Blonigan, Robbinsdale resident and former Mayor, is chair of the Board of the NW Suburbs Cable Communications Commission, and Sandvik recommended that Blonigan continue serving on that commission. Sandvik shared that he is the treasurer of the CCX Media Board of Directors and that there is an opportunity for an additional Councilmember to join.

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner supported keeping former Mayor Blonigan as the civilian member of the NW Suburbs Cable Communications Commission and expressed that he would like to remain on the commission as well. Member Parisian shared that she is interested in the League of MN Cities and the National League of Cities. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner shared that he would like to stay on the Corridor Management Committee as well. Member Blackledge shared interest in the League of MN Cities and the School District. Member Greenberg expressed interest in Metro Cities and National League of Cities. Mayor Sutton shared that he would be a CMC alternate and wants to look over the list more before deciding.

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner shared that he would be happy to pass on the role of Mayor Pro Tem to another Councilmember. Member Parisian asked if Member Blackledge would be interested in being Mayor Pro Tem. Member Blackledge confirmed that he is willing to take on the role.

C. 2025 Commission(s) Make-up

Sandvik explained that all City commissioner terms are currently up. He shared that City staff liaisons reached out to all commission members on the Senior, Planning, Human Rights (HRC), and Parks, Recreation, and Forestry (PRFC) Commissions to gauge interest in returning to their commissions for another term. He noted that the Charter Commission would not be discussed at this meeting. He clarified that Commission members are appointed by the Mayor with the advice and consent of the Council.

Sandvik shared the names of those who are returning to the Planning Commission, PRFC, and the HRC. He shared that there is one opening on the Planning Commission for an At-Large member, and he thanked Julie Ralston Aoki for her years of service. He stated that the PRFC will be recruiting members from both Ward 1 and Ward 4 going forward. Mayor Sutton shared that Robbinsdale resident, David Ulbrich, is interested in serving as the at-large member of the Planning Commission.

Mayor Sutton expressed concerns about a member of the Human Rights Commission seeking reappointment due to meeting disruption and social media interactions. Member Parisian asked if the social media policy had been directly violated and asked Council to make an objective decision. Sandvik shared that Council oversees the commissions, so it is fully up to the Council to determine if a commissioner should not be reappointed. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner expressed that he would remain objective and trust the Mayor's judgment for what he thinks is best for the HRC. Mayor Sutton asked if he would have the option to reappoint the member in question at any time since there are vacancies on the HRC, and staff confirmed.

Mayor Sutton stated that he wants to temporarily hold off on the individual's reappointment and potentially reappoint them in the future after having more conversations. Sandvik added that staff liaisons have shared out information on social media and general expectations with their commission members.

Sandvik shared that the list of commissioners, minus the individual on the HRC that was discussed, will be brought to Council next week for reappointment. He also informed Council that staff will start to solicit to fill openings on various commissions.

D. 2025 Legislative Priorities

Sandvik explained that early each year, the City of Robbinsdale likes to establish some key legislative priorities.

Sandvik discussed rental license requirements for group homes, and explained that cities can no longer establish their own rental licenses. He emphasized that staff do not agree with this decision, since City staff are the most immediate contact for folks in group homes who may need help. He summarized that the City is urging for reconsideration of recent legislation that removed licensing authority from cities.

Sandvik shared information on Local Government Aid (LGA) and how funds are decided based on a formula

that considers total housing units, commercial industrial utility percentage, pre-1940 housing units, tax effort rate, and unmet need. He explained that Robbinsdale will continue to support current formulas for both LGA and Fiscal Disparities.

Sandvik touched on Light Rail Transit and mentioned that the City is asking for broad support in relation to the project.

Sandvik discussed the issue of public safety, and shared that the legislature established some direct funding for public safety a few years ago. Sandvik explained that as we continue to ask Police and Fire for more, the City is asking legislators to consider more funding at the local level.

Sandvik shared information on housing and expressed that removing jurisdictional authority on zoning housing complexes like triplexes does not work for Robbinsdale. He emphasized that the City supports their efforts around housing in terms of sustainability, higher density housing, and more, but that the State should incentivize those good things and keep local authority in place.

Sandvik discussed a local sales tax option. He shared that the wear and tear that visitors have on our town should be able to be addressed by adding a local sales tax option. He emphasized that if the legislature moves forward, then the City is hoping that they will include Public Works facilities.

Sandvik shared the City's opinion on franchising broadband internet service providers. He explained that as a society, we now recognize internet access as a requirement for life, and that Broadband Franchising would make broadband more accessible to everyone. He shared that the City supports the use of franchise fees on broadband, since there is declining funding from PEG fees as more people switch to internet-based streaming instead of cable.

Sandvik shared that the Department of Health recently came out with regulations on PFAS. He emphasized that if PFAS standards are required, then the City will ask that those standards come with some kind of funding.

E. Council Meeting Schedule

Sandvik shared guidelines from the League of Minnesota Cities for establishing remote options for City Council meetings. He explained that in order for Councilmembers to attend meetings virtually, they would have to establish a policy. Mayor Sutton shared that he has moved to a new job since running for Mayor, and that he will need to periodically travel and miss some City Council meetings. He advocated for establishing a policy for setting up remote meetings for Councilmembers.

Mayor Sutton shared that one of the rules requires Councilmembers to meet in a public place when taking virtual meetings, instead of a private area. Rand added that the City would have to post the address to the public place online as well.

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner expressed support for creating a remote policy if it is used as sparingly as possible. Member Greenberg agreed. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner asked if the City has the capability to get Council set up with all the appropriate technology for meetings, and Sandvik confirmed. Member Parisian and Member Blackledge also expressed support for creating a policy.

Member Parisian asked if there are any limitations to traveling outside the country and taking a meeting virtually. Sandvik stated that he will need to investigate that question, but that he would have concerns with getting a secure internet connection.

Member Greenberg asked if Council would ever consider options for residents to virtually attend meetings as well. Sandvik shared that some cities do this allow public participation remotely, but that they limit remote participation to events like public hearings. Mayor Pro Tem Wagner provided the viewpoint that there are other ways to share feedback with Council not in person, such as email and phone, so remote meeting participation may not be necessary. Staff agreed to move forward with creating a policy and looking into all options.

F. First-ever Native Plant Kit Sale through Minnesota Native Landscape's (MNL) Community Habitat Partnership Program

Sandvik explained that there is a new program being proposed by the City Forester that is similar to the Tree Sale. He shared that a native plant sale supports many of the sustainability goals of the City and that the kits are made specifically for the needs of Robbinsdale. He stated that there are a variety of plant mixes that folks can buy for different kinds of landscapes and plots.

The Council expressed excitement about the idea.

STAFF UPDATES

Sandvik shared updates on the Shoreline Dr construction project and explained that the intention is to bring the feasibility study to Council in February.

Sandvik stated that the Multicultural Advisory Committee (MAC) put together an event with the HRC in recognition of MLK DAY that will be hosted at Elim Lutheran Church. He shared that an Ice Fishing for Kids event is happening at Crystal Lake next Monday, and Fire & Ice is coming up in the first week of February.

Sandvik shared that staff continue to work on the implementation of the new waste hauler.

Leen shared that a redesign of the City website will launch on Thursday, January 16. She explained that the new website will be easier to navigate, and will feature language translation, accessibility, chatbot, news, and calendar tools. She shared that the new primary website domain will be www.robinsdalemn.gov, but that www.robinsdalemn.com will still redirect residents to the correct website too.

Sandvik explained that the Parks Master Plan is nearing completion, and that Matt Bazyk will bring the final plan to Council in February.

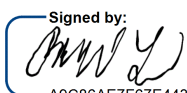
COUNCIL UPDATES

Mayor Sutton asked for an update on the water tower lighting. Sandvik shared that as soon as there is more information, he will bring it back to Council. He noted that the lights will toggle on and off over the next few weeks as staff learn the new controls.

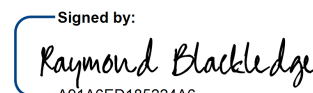
Member Greenberg shared that he is planning to attend the MLK event at Elim Lutheran Church.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Wagner adjourned the meeting at 10:05 PM.

Signed by:

A9C86AE7F67E443...

Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

Signed by:

A91A6ED186224A6...

Raymond Blackledge, Mayor Pro Tem