



## MINUTES

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### CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge called the meeting to order at 7:05 PM.

### ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None

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

### DISCUSSION

A resident shared her appreciation for living in Robbinsdale, noting how much she enjoyed recent tours of the Flocculation and Water Treatment Plants and a CCX feature on the city's history.

She thanked Council and announced two upcoming community events organized through District 43 and ISIAAH, a coalition that works with the legislature on resident issues. The first is a forum on Tuesday, August 20, from 6:30 to 8:00 PM at 3745 Bassett Creek, with panelists and Senator Rest expected to participate. The second is the "Lighthouse Town Hall" on Monday, September 22, from 7:00 to 8:30 PM at House of Hope Lutheran Church. She encouraged broad community attendance.

#### A. Geothermal Feasibility Study

McCoy introduced geothermal energy, explaining it uses underground heat for heating and cooling. While most common in volcanic areas, it is feasible in the Midwest due to stable groundwater temperatures. The City received an EDA grant for a feasibility study on using geothermal at the new public works facility to meet sustainability goals set under the previous Council and Mayor Blonigan.

The study found geothermal could raise the facility's clean energy use from 30% with solar alone to about 90%. The main challenge is cost, as wells must be drilled. McCoy suggested a single 12-inch well as a reasonable option. A \$100,000 test well would confirm water volume, temperature, and aquifer impacts. Funds are available in the budget, with grant opportunities through 2034.

Mayor Sutton asked about the test wells purpose and success rate. McCoy explained it could be used in the final system if feasible. Sutton also asked about solar deadlines, which McCoy said are tied to grant funding. Sandvik noted geothermal's return on investment is harder to predict than solar, but testing would provide clarity. Funding for the overall facility remains uncertain as the City pursues state and federal bonding.

Residents offered differing views. One preferred geothermal over solar, citing maintenance concerns, while another, Patrick Nailon, said geothermal would show the City's commitment to sustainability.

Council discussion reflected cautious support. Member Greenberg raised questions about success rates, maintenance, and reliance on federal funding but was open if consultants were confident. Member Parisian supported moving forward, citing long-term environmental benefits and efficiency gains. Member Wagner

agreed, noting test well funding is in the budget. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge also expressed support pending consultant input and asked about aquifer safety, which McCoy assured would be closely regulated.

## B. Rules of Decorum/Conduct Policy for Appointed Officials

Sandvik shared that Brooklyn Center has a Commission Code of Respect and Ethics, which Robbinsdale is considering using as a model. He gave an overview of how City commissions are structured: Charter Commissions have strict rules and procedures, commissions like Senior, Parks, and Planning are established by code, and committees such as the Sustainability Committee exist as long as Council maintains them. Council has expressed interest in creating more consistency in commission structures.

Historically, commission and committee members have followed language in the Employee Handbook. Sandvik explained that concerns usually arise not from *what* members do, but *how* they conduct themselves.

Member Parisian said she was impressed by Brooklyn Center's policy and strongly supports exploring a similar approach for Robbinsdale. She suggested adding emphasis on harassment of protected classes, clarifying what constitutes interpersonal disagreements, and possibly including an anonymous reporting tool. Sandvik responded that while definitions can be explicit, the most important outcome is that Council has the confidence and clarity to determine whether a violation has occurred.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge agreed, emphasizing the value of clear language and restorative practices. Resident Patrick Nailon, a Human Rights Commission member, supported adopting such a policy, noting he has seen situations where it would have been useful.

Member Wagner supported Parisian's suggestions and stressed the need to ensure commissioners understand expectations, suggesting the policy be provided when members are appointed. Mayor Sutton said commissioners should be held to standards and that the draft looks strong overall.

Member Greenberg expressed some reservations about overly prescriptive language, particularly regarding interactions with staff. He emphasized that commissioners should be free to offer criticism of the City or staff, provided it is respectful. Mayor Sutton reiterated that the issue lies in *how* disagreements are handled, not whether they occur. Sandvik agreed, noting that a code of conduct provides the City with a framework to support any action taken.

Sandvik outlined next steps: commissions will review the draft policy at their upcoming meetings and provide feedback. Staff will then refine the document and bring it back to Council at a future work session.

## **STAFF UPDATES**

### A. Staff Updates

Sandvik provided an overview of upcoming Council activities. A special work session on the budget is scheduled for Tuesday, August 19, at 6:00 PM, with Diao attending and materials prepared for review.

Council discussed scheduling an LRT bus tour to explore development along the rail corridor, either in St. Paul or Hopkins. Neighbors and representatives from nearby cities may be invited, and Met Council staff will participate, with City staff taking the lead. Sandvik will send a poll with Saturday morning and evening options for Council to select a preferred date.

Council considered Active Shooter and Emergency Operations Control (EOC) training. Sandvik explained the EOC training involves running through scenarios to see department roles, including Police and Fire. Member

Wagner and Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge expressed interest, and Council agreed to proceed, potentially replacing one REDA meeting with the training.

Sandvik noted that Council members may tour City facilities individually if desired.

Regarding the six-month rule for bringing topics back to Council, Member Greenberg emphasized careful use to avoid reopening already-decided issues. The topic arose in reference to the camping on public property ordinance, considered a unique situation since the majority of Council had voted to revisit it.

Council reviewed the remote meeting policy. Sandvik and Member Greenberg noted that without updates, remote meetings must still occur in a public location. Council supported allowing a general six-meeting allowance and removing the public location requirement.

Sandvik provided updates on CCX. The NW Suburban Cable Commission and CCX Board forecasted budget challenges due to declining cable subscriptions and peg fees. Staff reductions may be considered, but details are not finalized, and the budget will be discussed in September. Sandvik emphasized ongoing support for broadband access and explained the historical context of cable franchising in the City.

#### B. Robbinsdale Topics for CCX Media City Videos: August - October 2025

Leen shared that communications staff meet quarterly with CCX Media to develop a list of story ideas highlighting Robbinsdale. She provided Council with the proposed story list for August through October 2025 and asked if any members wished to participate.

Mayor Sutton expressed interest in participating in the budget video, the yard waste piece, and Liquor Store tasting and events coverage. Member Greenberg noted interest in stories on raingardens and the City's charging station. Member Parisian said she is looking forward to her home improvement topic.

### **COUNCIL UPDATES**

Member Greenberg shared that he met with residents who expressed concerns about the frequency and exhaust of helicopters flying over their homes. He asked whether it would be appropriate for North Memorial to present at a City Council meeting or if a one-on-one meeting would be better.

Member Wagner suggested having North Memorial attend a Council meeting to address these concerns and provide updates on other topics, noting that even a letter could be helpful. Sandvik recommended waiting approximately six months to schedule the discussion, allowing time to complete some major ongoing projects with the hospital. Council agreed that hearing from North Memorial as a group would be appropriate.

#### A. Leadership Compass Self-Assessment (Blackledge)

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge introduced a leadership compass self-assessment to help Council understand individual and group leadership styles. He shared that his results leaned southwest, reflecting a balance of empathy and directness, as well as analytical and empathetic traits.

Member Parisian noted that the analytical aspect stood out for her, though she was fairly balanced overall. She appreciated seeing how her introspective and thorough approach manifests in meetings, where she prefers to have information and time to consider decisions carefully. Member Greenberg identified in the northeast section, with vision as his top trait, highlighting a creative and outside-the-box approach. Member Wagner fell

in the southeast section, with empathy most prominent, vision also fairly high, and north low; he was surprised not to rank higher on the analytical scale.

Mayor Sutton shared that he typically lands in the center, able to adapt as needed, though he has low patience for processes that may slow progress. Sandvik noted that he falls slightly west of center.

**B. Yard Waste Collection (Greenberg)**

Sandvik provided background on the City’s transition to Republic Services in the spring. A major change was moving from unlimited yard waste pickup to a system with a yard waste bin plus five additional bags. While the unlimited service had worked well in context, labor shortages and increased yard waste volume had caused missed pickups, particularly for residents at the end of routes. The current system is a compromise that works for most residents, but may leave some with excess yard waste.

The materials presented to Council were the same as those shared in April and included costs for participating in the Maple Grove yard waste site. None of the listed cities provide curbside yard waste services. Republic Services is unavailable in October and November to provide additional pickups, so any extra service would require hiring a contractor or using City staff, which is not currently feasible.

Member Greenberg noted that he understood why the change was necessary but acknowledged residents may feel blindsided. He suggested surveying residents to determine how many need additional services and proposed using public works trucks for a one-time disposal if possible. Member Wagner asked for an estimate for extra services, while Member Parisian suggested a one-time end-of-season pickup for a fee. Members Greenberg and Sutton expressed support for this approach, emphasizing a good-faith effort to help residents.

Council discussed logistics, including whether City staff could handle an end-of-season pickup or if a contractor would be needed, and setting a fee based on participation. Sandvik clarified that November 30 is a hard stop for yard waste service this year, and any one-time service would not be repeated in future years.


Mayor Sutton suggested providing residents with a list of contractor options in the fall, an idea supported by Member Wagner. Residents recommended prioritizing senior citizens and exploring ways for neighbors to pool extra bags. Sandvik noted that while bag-sharing is not a City role, it could be included in public messaging, along with sustainability tips such as mulching or leaving leaves in yards.

Member Wagner asked about a memorandum of understanding to expand services with another hauler, but Sandvik did not support this due to potential competition with Republic Services. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge supported providing a contractor list and encouraging neighbors to coordinate extra bags. A resident suggested reaching out to civic groups, like the Lions Club or Boy Scouts, for assistance. Member Parisian emphasized the importance of clear communications that include all options and highlight sustainability aspects.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge adjourned the meeting at 9:54 PM.

Signed by:  
  
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Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

Signed by:  
  
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Raymond Blackledge, Mayor Pro Tem