



MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge called the meeting to order at 7:06 PM.

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None

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

DISCUSSION

A resident near the hospital shared concerns about leaf disposal this fall, noting that Republic Services allows only five bags plus the yard waste cart. She worried that leftover bags could sit in alleys all winter, interfering with snowplows and creating a neighborhood mess.

Sandvik explained that the City has discussed this extensively. The current system was designed to work for most residents, as the previous unlimited service often failed for homes at the back of routes. Yard waste collection, like refuse, must match hauler capacity. While supplemental hauler services are being considered, staff are not recommending them at this time, and residents can work with private haulers independently.

Member Wagner asked if a list of private haulers had been shared or posted online. Sandvik noted that staff have not identified companies willing to take on a larger contract.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge and Member Greenberg commended the resident for raising concerns and noted that neighbors could coordinate among themselves to manage extra yard waste.

A. Zoning Text Amendment: Electric Vehicle Charging and Solar Energy Systems

Kirtz provided background on the proposed zoning text amendments. Over the past six months, Rand, Bucheger, and Kirtz have updated the code based on Robbinsdale's participation in national recognition programs, such as SolSmart and ChargeSmart, which assist local governments in installing solar and EV charging systems. The current code has little language addressing EV charging and minimal guidance for residential solar. The updates strengthen standards for both, keeping Robbinsdale aligned with neighboring cities and supporting Council's sustainability goals.

Kirtz highlighted key components, including definitions for EV charger and solar array, and a new requirement for large developments with parking lots of 50 spaces or more to provide EV charging stations. Design standards for chargers, such as lighting and signage, are included. Requirements are slightly less stringent than neighboring cities and are intended to be conservative given Robbinsdale's smaller scale. These updates also help the City earn points toward national sustainability recognition programs.

Mayor Sutton asked how recognition is awarded. Kirtz explained that cities earn points toward awards (bronze through platinum) demonstrating sustainability commitment. He also asked about incentives for developers;

Rand noted that no direct incentives exist, but installing chargers during construction is less costly than retrofitting later. Requirements for retrofits are conservative to minimize burden.

Member Wagner asked whether the requirements apply only to housing or all buildings. Kirtz clarified that both multi-family and non-residential buildings are included, and retroactive application only affects new or expanded lots exceeding 25 percent of their size. Wagner suggested a more aggressive percentage of chargers per lot, but staff recommended a conservative approach given local demand.

Member Parisian emphasized including language for long-term maintenance, enforcement, and periodic review every 3–5 years. She also noted the need to avoid increasing costs for low-income housing. Resident Jonathan Hansen suggested requiring chargers to be maintained in good working order. Rand explained that compliance would be monitored through permitting, code enforcement, and complaint response, with minimal expected staff workload.

Mayor Sutton noted the market trend toward EV adoption may reduce the need for a mandate, though he would support it if incentives existed. Member Wagner, Member Parisian, and Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge supported the ordinance, emphasizing that it ensures sustainability standards are met and prevents developers from cutting corners.

A resident asked about handicap-accessible EV spaces, which are included. Member Greenberg asked about gas stations, and Rand clarified the requirement applies only to new stations or those expanding more than 25 percent of their lot, with an exemption if costs exceed five percent of the project. Greenberg noted this balances sustainability with development feasibility and highlighted that permitting solar as a use reduces barriers for residents and businesses.

Mayor Sutton reiterated that the City should not manage EV charging if the market naturally drives adoption, while Member Greenberg and Sandvik noted the requirement provides leverage in negotiations with resistant developers.

Sandvik concluded that a first reading of the ordinance will be presented at an upcoming Council meeting, incorporating answers to questions and updated language. Kirtz added that the Planning Commission has reviewed this language twice, and the current draft reflects their feedback.

B. City Commission(s) Code of Respect and Ethics

Sandvik provided background on commissions and committees, highlighting differences in how various commissions operate. Recent questions have arisen regarding the roles and responsibilities of commission members concerning conduct. Brooklyn Center shared their code of conduct as a reference, which was discussed at the August work session before being sent to commissioners for review. Feedback from commissions varied: the Planning Commission and PRFC were largely supportive, the Human Rights Commission submitted suggested edits and grammar corrections, and the Senior and Charter Commissions have not met recently. Feedback from the Sustainability Committee was included in the packet.

Sandvik emphasized that the goal is to finalize a code of conduct that Council is comfortable with, as commissioners fall under Council direction rather than the City Manager. He noted that concerns about limiting speech or First Amendment violations are addressed by framing violations as a reference for Council to interpret. The code does not restrict commissioners' ability to speak but provides accountability. While the Employee Handbook currently defines commissioners as employees, the separate code gives Council a clearer reference for expectations.

Member Wagner expressed support, noting that the policy sets clear expectations and accountability for commissioners who represent the City, especially given past complaints about unproductive or harmful

meeting behavior. Member Parisian supported the language and suggested adding an anti-retaliation clause at the end of the investigation section, which Council agreed to include.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge expressed support, noting that overly detailed rules could become cumbersome. Resident Jonathan Hansen raised concerns that the Brooklyn Center code was developed in retaliation against commissioners and cautioned against tone policing or creating a policy that could make volunteers feel like second-class participants.

Member Wagner asked about overlap with the Employee Handbook, noting that while harassment rules are clear, other conduct language is more ambiguous. The social media policy also provides guidance but is less structured. Wagner emphasized that the code's purpose is reconciliation and empowerment, helping commissioners feel safe and supported. Member Greenberg and Mayor Sutton echoed these sentiments, highlighting that investigations would be thorough and nuanced.

Sandvik clarified that the City Manager has no authority over commissioners; staff liaisons support commissions, and commissioner data is treated similarly to employee data. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge noted that having a reference document could also be helpful for commissioners.

Sandvik concluded that Council largely supports the policy, and it could be ready for approval at the first Council meeting in October.

STAFF UPDATES

A. Planning Updates: Blue Line Extension Cultural Placemaking and Anti-displacement Community Prosperity Program Board

Rand provided updates on the cultural placemaking meetings, which occur on the last Wednesday of each month to gather input on light rail station art. Robbinsdale turnout has been low compared to Minneapolis, and Rand emphasized the importance of capturing local input to ensure the City's identity is represented. Invitations to attend have been shared with the Robbinsdale Historical Society and to the community through City communications.

Member Wagner asked if there is a contact at the project office for virtual feedback. Rand noted a Blue Line webpage that could be promoted in the next Birdtown Brief. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge suggested encouraging 5–10 residents from personal networks to attend.

Resident Jonathan Hansen expressed concern that Minneapolis could dominate the art themes and stressed the importance of participation so that art reflects Robbinsdale history instead. Rand added that project office staff are not excluding Robbinsdale, but resident participation has been limited.

September 24, October 22, and November 19 are the remaining meetings, which include a light dinner for attendees. Member Greenberg noted that some residents feel frustrated that their input is not resulting in visible outcomes. Sandvik acknowledged potential meeting fatigue but emphasized the importance of participation to secure any influence.

Member Greenberg requested periodic updates from the project office. Member Wagner suggested reserving space in each Work Session for Blue Line updates, even if there are none to share. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge emphasized Council's role in mobilizing residents to share historical knowledge. Rand clarified that input is limited to themes and historical points, not full station design.

Resident Jonathan Hansen recommended an online submission tool and suggested sharing visuals from previous meetings to encourage participation. Ben Hansen expressed concern that Robbinsdale stations could

be grouped with Minneapolis. Member Greenberg suggested two Council members attend meetings to ensure Robbinsdale representation, and Council coordinated schedules.

Rand also provided an update on the Anti-Displacement Community Prosperity Board, funded with \$10 million by the legislature, with \$2 million being allocated initially to select groups. The program is largely Minneapolis-focused. Applications must be submitted by NGOs, with individuals later applying through those organizations. The board will review grant requests by year-end, with funds potentially supporting affordable housing acquisition.

Member Greenberg asked about Council or EDA involvement. Rand noted that a foundation may be a better fit than the EDA.

B. Miscellaneous Items

Domestic Animal License: Staff received a request to issue a permit specifically for quails, like existing permits for ducks and chickens. The application process will take a few months and is expected to be available in spring. Member Wagner asked if quails are noisier than chickens; Sandvik confirmed they are not. Member Greenberg inquired about language for pigeons; Rand noted that none currently exists, but staff can review neighboring communities and add language if appropriate.

Resolution Supporting Funding Request for Public Works: This summer, the City requested inclusion in the governor's budget and federal funding, with support from all three offices. A resolution is needed to identify project priorities, which is easy, since there is only one project from us. State representatives may be invited to visit the site to better understand the facility's needs.

Public Camping Ordinance: Sandvik requested feedback from Council on what should be included in discussion when revisiting the ordinance. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge suggested reflecting on Council priorities and sharing them with staff. Member Greenberg emphasized including the Human Rights Commission (HRC) in the ordinance's creation, supported by Member Parisian. Mayor Sutton highlighted incorporating compassionate elements, focusing on providing help rather than criminalizing behavior. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge added that input from homeless shelters could inform the ordinance and ensure it is detailed and intentional.

Sandvik attended the HRC's recent meeting; they emphasized timely involvement and expressed a desire to advise on the ordinance. Member Wagner noted he is not yet willing to support any version, prefers deferring to the County for certain aspects, and requested clarification on whether the ordinance targets camping generally or specifically unhoused individuals. Member Greenberg noted that while the ordinance focuses on camping, public feedback often relates to unhoused individuals.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge asked about the implications of taking no action. Mayor Sutton explained that without an ordinance, the Police Department cannot intervene until a law is broken, and unchecked encampments pose safety hazards. Council agreed that the next step is to return the draft to the HRC for formal feedback.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Member Greenberg attended Ann Rest's town hall in Golden Valley, which was well attended. Each participating councilmember and mayor gave a five-minute update on their communities. Topics included HCMC's presence, group homes, and questions about ICE and police interactions.

Member Greenberg also shared a Star Tribune article on the rise of short-term rentals like Airbnbs in the Twin Cities and suggested the City could consider reviewing regulations at a future work session.

Mayor Sutton noted he will meet with Mayors Deshler and Elder soon to collaborate and plans to speak at Rep. Omar's town hall on Saturday. Council agreed that engaging with neighboring councils is valuable.

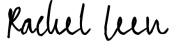
Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge recognized Member Parisian and other Council members for attending recent community events and mentioned plans to explore additional opportunities to strengthen Council collaboration and efficiency.

Resident Jonathan Hansen requested raising the allowed decibel level of a condenser unit in a side yard to accommodate heat pumps.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge adjourned the meeting at 9:59 PM.

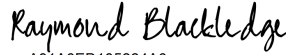
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Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

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Raymond Blackledge, Mayor Pro Tem