



## MINUTES

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### CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge called the meeting to order at 7:41.

### ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None

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

### DISCUSSION

#### A. Energy Action Plan Addendum

Kirtz introduced the Energy Action Plan, adopted a few years ago through community planning efforts. Recent work has focused on implementation, and Partners and Energy and Kirtz now aim to expand certain project areas through an addendum focused on electric vehicles and beneficial electrification.

Lidet Bayou and Sofia Troutman from Partners in Energy (PiE) presented. Bayou recognized residents who served on the energy action team and outlined the project timeline: planning began in November 2022, Council reviewed the plan from May to July 2023, and implementation ran from August 2023 through early 2025. The team has now entered the “graduate support” phase, with plan review expected in November and another round of implementation through June 2027.

Bayou highlighted key accomplishments: promoting renewable energy programs, forming a volunteer sustainability committee, offering free Home Energy Squad visits, launching an Earth Day renewable energy challenge, and conducting a downtown “business blitz” providing lighting assessments. The updated 40-page draft plan includes topics from June’s community meetings, Robbinsdale-specific data, and two new focus areas—beneficial electrification and electric vehicles.

For beneficial electrification, progress toward 2030 goals will be measured by resident participation in rebate programs. For electric vehicles, the goal is a 30% increase in ownership by 2030. Strategies include outreach, education, resource guides, and fleet analysis.

Member Greenberg raised concerns about federal EV tax credits expiring and emphasized encouraging EV adoption without them. Troutman noted that Xcel Energy continues to offer strong rebates and expects additional state support.

Sutton stressed considering costs to residents when pursuing green initiatives. Sandvik noted the City has benefited from recent funding opportunities such as IRA funds, and that the plan provides guidance rather than financial commitments, positioning Robbinsdale to act when special funding arises. Sutton reiterated the importance of evaluating return on investment for future projects.

Troutman added that PiE programs provide residents with flexible options based on income and preferences, focusing on educational initiatives rather than requirements or mandates.

Member Parisian asked what prompted the addendum. Kirtz said it was part of the graduate support phase and addressed a gap in EV strategy. She noted the addendum includes strong community engagement and storytelling opportunities.

Member Greenberg asked about coordination with nearby communities. Troutman said about 60% of the cities they work with are PiE participants. Greenberg expressed interest in comparing Robbinsdale's data with regional results.

## B. Sanborn Park Renaming Submissions

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge noted that the Sanborn Park renaming process has been ongoing for several months. The Parks, Recreation, and Forestry (PRFC) Commission reviewed community-submitted names to determine which names met established criteria and provided Council with the list of names. Council must now decide next steps. Council discussed options on how to review qualified names, such as a rubric, which was ultimately not used.

Sandvik explained that a previous renaming effort was unsuccessful, but the current Council agreed to revisit it with greater community input. Mayor Sutton raised the question of whether Sanborn Park or Marjorie Green Park deserved special consideration due to high community support. He also questioned whether Shoreline Park should remain excluded, saying he did not find it confusing. Member Greenberg responded that since Council already voted to rename the park, Sanborn should not be reconsidered, but agreed Shoreline Park could be added back into the mix. Sandvik reminded Council that the naming policy adopted last year includes guidelines, such as avoiding confusion, that are subjective. Council can acknowledge these guidelines but still choose a name that falls outside them.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge asked if any names rejected by PRFC should be reconsidered. Bazyk emphasized that PRFC comments often included conditional support, such as "yes, if researched further." He noted that PRFC preferred any Indigenous names to be Dakota, as the Dakota people historically lived on this land.

Member Parisian supported the PRFC's process and shared the opinion that creating a shortlist of names might be effective. Bazyk said PRFC was open to narrowing names down farther, and Sandvik recommended setting clear parameters for the PRFC's next review. Member Parisian suggested each Council member select two or three names for PRFC to review before officially scoring names as a Council.

Mayor Sutton encouraged Council to strongly consider names with broad support, such as Birdtown and Koda, and to reinclude Shoreline Park due to its popularity. A resident commented that the renaming process should reflect the will of Robbinsdale residents. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge stated that changing the name does not erase the park's history, but addresses its exclusionary legacy, and that submissions to keep the name "Sanborn" should not hold weight.

Member Wagner supported adding Unity Park and Blue Ribbon back to the list, agreeing with Sutton on Shoreline Park as well. Council agreed to include Koda on the shortlist and prioritize Dakota names in recognition of the Dakota land. Member Parisian requested that the PRFC look into an additional Dakota name option. Member Parisian also suggested Birdtown, Koda, Unity, Shoreline, and Blue Ribbon for the shortlist of names, clarifying that submissions should not be referred to as "votes" to avoid confusion.

The final shortlist included Birdtown, Koda, Unity, Shoreline, Blue Ribbon, an additional Dakota name to be determined, and Robert Mendenhall Park, which Mayor Sutton proposed. Sandvik stated that staff will prepare a plan for PRFC to review these names under Council's parameters. Parisian asked PRFC to clarify their earlier decision to exclude Shoreline. Bazyk explained that it was due to Hollingsworth Park being located on Shoreline Drive as well, but that PRFC can revisit the name.

## **STAFF UPDATES**

### A. Community Development Information Update

#### **Transportation-Oriented Development Bus Tour:**

Rand requested feedback from Council on the recent bus tour and suggested holding a follow-up meeting to revisit the downtown station plan, as many current staff and Council members were not involved when it was first created.

Member Greenberg said the tour was useful for seeing what other cities are doing, with Wooddale being the most comparable example. However, he noted that some of the other communities visited have greater resources. He expressed frustration that Robbinsdale must accommodate a park-and-ride downtown, limiting opportunities for walkability and public art. Mayor Sutton agreed, saying the park-and-ride location remains a concern. He praised the public art in Hopkins and expressed interest in more community art tied to development. Member Parisian said her feedback was largely positive and asked about the timing of the next tour, likely in January or February. She also suggested exploring whether the park-and-ride could serve as additional downtown parking. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge agreed that the tour was valuable and said the City should adapt ideas that fit Robbinsdale's character and scale. Rand clarified that the winter follow-up meeting would be an indoor session focused on the downtown plan.

#### **Love Local Plan:**

The HRA has made \$220,000 available for storefront improvement grants, allowing cities to apply for up to \$15,000. Rand said several downtown businesses could benefit from upgrades. Grants will range from \$5,000 to \$15,000, with a matching contribution required from participating businesses. If awarded, the City would likely issue an RFP and conduct outreach to promote the opportunity. To strengthen Robbinsdale's application, Rand suggested submitting a Council-signed letter of interest.

She also noted that the Love Local initiative includes a Small Business Saturday event on November 29. Many cities host promotions or sweepstakes that day to drive downtown activity, though Robbinsdale likely lacks time to organize a full event this year. The Chamber of Commerce is supportive but not yet ready to lead the event. Rand recommended at least issuing a Council proclamation recognizing Small Business Saturday.

### B. Budget Updates

Sandvik noted that after the second September meeting and preliminary budget approval, Council requested more context on how Robbinsdale's levy compares to neighboring cities. The figures provided are current but subject to change and should be viewed cautiously since cities differ in structure and tax capacity. The City is still negotiating with all five bargaining groups, and those outcomes will determine cost-of-living adjustments for non-union staff.

He outlined the proposed Deputy Police Chief position, explaining that the Chief and two Captains are stretched thin. While the role adds cost, staff recommend it to meet public safety needs.

A chart comparing Robbinsdale's market value and tax capacity with nearby cities illustrates how Robbinsdale's tax base differs. An informational insert explaining the levy's resident impact will also be mailed.

The preliminary budget is set at an 8% increase, with the final levy vote scheduled for December 2, or at the last December meeting if needed. Sandvik said he is available for questions or a budget work session. He plans

to share more on debt service options and possible funding through special revenue or a local option sales tax for projects like the public works building and Sanborn Park building.

Mayor Sutton asked what cuts would be required to lower the levy from 8% to 6%, which is about \$190,000. Sandvik said staff are already working to reduce the deficit, but reaching 6% would likely require eliminating or consolidating vacant positions. Sutton also asked which projects are “nice to have” versus “need to have,” citing Sanborn as an example. Member Greenberg agreed that lowering the levy should be explored, possibly through position adjustments or other measures. He and Sandvik discussed how delaying capital improvement projects, such as fleet replacements, could affect the general levy. Sandvik said staff continually reassess the CIP to identify possible vehicle deferrals. Member Greenberg said he could support a lower levy if Council clearly understands the tradeoffs. Sandvik said those staffing and operational decisions fall largely to staff but asked for Council’s target percentage.

Mayor Sutton asked how service levels might differ when looking at a 6% and 8% increase, such as plowing and response times. Member Parisian supported keeping the 8% levy, saying deeper cuts now could lead to larger increases later and disrupt service consistency. Member Wagner said he trusts the City Manager to make necessary adjustments but would like to see the difference between a 6% and 8% levy as well. He favors a reduction if feasible to ease the burden on residents. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge summarized that Council supports staff exploring ways to tighten the budget.

C. Domestic Violence Awareness Proclamation

Sandvik shared that the Council approved a domestic violence awareness proclamation in October last year. Staff would be supportive of adding this to next week's agenda to proclaim October as Domestic Violence Awareness month. Council agreed. Member Wagner asked if we could call out a County program or local program to refer folks to as part of the agenda item or proclamation. Staff confirmed.


**COUNCIL UPDATES**

None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge adjourned the meeting at 10:24 PM.

Signed by:  
  
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Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

Signed by:  
  
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Raymond Blackledge, Mayor Pro Tem