



City of Robbinsdale

City Council Meeting
Tuesday, October 17, 2023
Meeting No. 20

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL MEETING CALLED TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

Present: Parisian, Wagner, Murphy, Mayor Blonigan

Absent:

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk

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

Mayor Blonigan opened the floor to the public. No members of the public spoke.

APPROVAL OF THE OCTOBER 17, 2023 MEETING AGENDA

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Parisian to approve the October 17, 2023, Meeting Agenda. The vote was unanimous and the motion Passed.

CONSENT AGENDA

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Wagner to approve the Consent Agenda. The vote was unanimous and the motion Passed.

- A. Motion to approve City Council meeting minutes from October 3, 2023.
- B. Motion to approve the City Council Work Session meeting minutes of October 10, 2023.
- C. Approve Resolution No. 8060 for the Hennepin County Facilities Grant: National Fitness Campaign Fitness Court
- D. Approve Submission of the Clean Energy Resource Teams Seed Grant Application
- E. Approve Quote for Crack Sealing
- F. Investment Report
- G. Resolution No. 8061 to accept American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) funds from US Treasury
- H. Approval of Licenses

PRESENTATIONS

A. SLR 81 (Stop Light Rail on 81) Group - Presentation

Karen Shull, 3939 Crystal Lake Blvd., representing SLR 81, noted they aren't against public transportation, but that there are alternatives. She noted SLR 81 would have 7 speakers tonight.

Bob Papousek, 3904 Lakeland Ave. N, noted his concern about the open Ward 2 Council seat and stated that leaves about 25% of residents without a voice. He stated this project will impact development and people's desire to live in Robbinsdale. He noted it could change the small town feel of Robbinsdale and the roughly 3,500 people in Ward 2 deserve representation in this critical decision-making time.

Mary Pattock, 2782 Dean Pkwy, provided five examples of why the City should not trust the Met Council. She noted she is on a task force to reform the Met Council and asked the City to beware.

Jerome Johnson, 378 Summit Ave Apt. A., stated he developed a set of proforma time tables based on potential operation configurations that have been proposed. Mayor Blonigan asked Mr. Johnson to provide a curriculum vitae for his work. Mr. Johnson shared his timetables comparing a light rail versus a bus rapid transit system.

Kristel Porter, West Broadway Business and Area Coalition, noted they have been doing engagement around the Blue Line Extension for a couple years and stated the businesses they represent feel they would not survive a project of this magnitude. She stated business owners are concerned that people will avoid the construction areas, even if they are constructed in segments, and this could ultimately lead to patrons not continuing to visit those businesses. She questioned the anti-displacement initiatives and stated they support bus rapid transit.

Tom Slupske, 4748 Edgewood, stated he lives in Crystal, MN and that what happens in Robbinsdale will also affect Crystal, as the communities are interconnected. He noted he attended the Tri-City Police Reform and shared comments from the Chiefs of Police from Robbinsdale, Crystal, and New Hope. He stated his concern for public safety and questioned if there would be tax hikes to fund increased safety concerns.

Ann Tranvik, 4007 Shoreline Dr., stated she is speaking about the potential park-and-ride station that is being proposed at 40th and Bottineau Blvd., and the impact that may have on the city. She noted safety hazards crossing the street and asked about pedestrian and bike traffic. She continued with her concerns about traffic on Shoreline Drive and how that could impact the character of the neighborhood.

Betty Ford, 3846 Lakeland Ave. N, presented her concerns about the new proposed route down County Road 81, including the need for an updated route, how business would be affected, natural environmental concerns, and the infrastructure and traffic flow. She also mentioned safety concerns and noted a study should be done comparing light rail to bus rapid transit.

George Selman., 3953 Zane Ave. N., thanked the presenters and people attending the Council meeting tonight. He noted this decision will impact the City for many years to come and encouraged folks to reach out to their representatives to voice their opinions.

Mayor Blonigan asked for a show of hands for the people who do not want the light rail to go down County Road 81. Approximately 85 people raised their hands. Approximately 16 of those hands were not Robbinsdale residents.

Member Murphy stated he is not in favor of the alignment down County Road 81 and noted residents have been voicing their concerns to him. He also mentioned looking into alternatives and taking a pause on this.

Member Parisian stated her appreciation for the people who are engaged in the process and conversations she had with constituents during her campaign process. She noted she had been a bus commuter for several years and was excited about this project long before she decided to run for office. She recognized several themes that came up tonight, including maintaining the character of Robbinsdale, green space and environmental impact, pedestrian and biker safety, and overall public safety. She noted that she shares those same concerns.

Member Wagner stated his support of the project and the current alignment, noting that is what he ran on. He noted the concerns about pedestrian and cyclist safety and how that is something he takes very seriously. He stated this project should enhance walkability and bikeability. He questioned whether a park-and-ride structure would also be used if there was a bus rapid transit system. He also spoke about the current alignment versus the original alignment and noted this new route avoids sharing it with a freight line, going through a wetland, and also avoids going through peoples' properties. He recognized his concerns about crime and noted efforts are being made. He stated the Council should focus on what they can do and advocate for in Robbinsdale. He mentioned North Memorial, which is the largest employer in Robbinsdale, and it's important to think of their needs as well.

Mayor Blonigan noted this process isn't done and that he wouldn't be deciding yet, as there will still be future input. He noted his skepticism of the Met Council and mentioned his thoughts on municipal consent. He stated his preferred route would be down the rail corridor instead of County Road 81 and stated he is waiting for a study to show ride times for the new route. He expressed his desire to do what is best for Robbinsdale and hopes for an elevated track.

Karen Shull stated she has been to the Met Council meetings and the CMC meetings and noted municipal consent is a factor.

George Selman thanked the Council for their time tonight.

B. Accept Council Member Webb's Resignation

Sandvik noted that staff is asking the Council to accept the letter of resignation, but will not take any formal action, and tonight would be an opportunity to outline potential next steps. He noted the city will need to conduct a special election based on the provisions in the Robbinsdale City Charter, and also emphasized that state statute dictates which days a special election can be held on, including, February, April, May, August, and November. He further described that Hennepin County is recommending that Robbinsdale hold its special election in May, as there is a required 46-day period of absentee voting. He continued that holding an election in February or April would cause absentee voting overlap with the Presidential Nomination Primary held on March 5, 2024, and that overlap would most likely lead to voter confusion and administrative burden. He also stated that if the city has more than two candidates, it would be required that we hold a special primary election and a special general election. No matter if the primary election was held in April or May, the general special election couldn't be held until August, because of the required 46-day absentee voting period. Sandvik reiterated the Council is not being asked to formally declare the vacancy, but to provide feedback, and this will come back to the Council in November.

Mayor Blonigan confirmed the dates of holding a special primary and special general election and noted he would lean towards holding the primary in May.

Member Murphy mentioned the Robbinsdale Charter Commission was asked to look into the process of filing a vacancy on the Council after the last time this took place, and noted they are in the process of doing this now. He also asked if we could tentatively plan for an April election in hopes two or fewer people would file, but change it if there are more candidates. Sandvik stated no, and stated they would set an official schedule when they declare the vacancy, which also sets the filing dates.

Member Wagner asked if this seat would again be open in the fall for the November election and if that would require another filing period. Sandvik stated if there is a special election in August, it could potentially occur on the same date as the primary election for the Ward 2 seat, starting in 2025.

Member Murphy asked if there would be enough time to update the City Charter to avoid holding a special election. Sandvik stated that because of the required timeline that a Charter amendment takes, there would not be enough time to amend the City Charter to avoid calling for a special election.

Member Parisian asked how the date of the election affects the candidate filing window. Peterson-Etem noted the filing period is 56-70 days before the election and would be different depending on if the special election was held in April or May.

Former Council Member Mathias asked for clarification about why the election can't happen in February.

Sandvik noted that Hennepin County provided a statement stating a February special election would overlap with the March 5, 2024, Presidential Nomination Primary, causing significant concerns regarding a high burden of potential voter confusion and significant administrative burden.

It was the consensus of the Council to support staff's recommendation.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Public Hearing - Licenses for Wicked Wort Brewing Company, LLC

Sandvik provided a brief overview of the licenses requested. He noted staff have reviewed the submitted materials and recommend approval. He also noted that since we are close to the end of the year, staff is also recommending that the fees be paid for the remainder of 2023, and also for 2024.

Mayor Blonigan opened the public hearing.

Brenda Remus, 3614 Abbott Ave. N., asked about the entertainment license. Sandvik stated the entertainment license is specific to entertainment being performed within the two buildings. He also noted a separate special event permit would be required for anything else outdoors.

Alex Doring, 3817 Brunswick Ave. N, Crystal, stated he is excited to be part of the community and hopes people find that the space is open to everyone.

Member Wagner MOVED, seconded by Parisian, to close the public hearing. This vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Murphy to approve the issuance of the Taproom and Small Brewer licenses, including Sunday sales, to Alexander Doering, dba Wicked Wort Brewing Company, LLC, 4165 West Broadway, as well as a restaurant license, entertainment license for 4165 West Broadway; and, convenience foods license for Bean There Coffee Shop at 4175 West Broadway, with license fees paid for the remainder of 2023 and through 2024. This vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

OLD BUSINESS

A. None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Consider Resolution Supporting Updates at Sochacki Park

Sandvik provided an overview of the item and noted the City has been working with Golden Valley and Three Rivers Park District. He noted that the City as the land owners are required by resolution to show support for this project, allowing Three Rivers Park District to apply for grant funding.

Member Wagner asked if more than just the Robbinsdale School District could utilize the classroom. Sandvik stated the classroom would be operated by Three Rivers Park District, and programming would be offered by a variety of organizations.

Member Parisian MOVED, seconded by Wagner to approve Resolution No. 8062 "A RESOLUTION SUPPORTING THE EFFORTS OF THREE RIVERS PARKS DISTRICT TO INSTALL THE "SOCHACKI CLASSROOM" AT SOCHACKI PARK." This vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

OTHER BUSINESS

A. Voucher Requests Pending Approval for Disbursement

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Wagner to approve the Voucher Requests pending approval for disbursement. The vote was unanimous and the motion Passed.

ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Sandvik thanked folks for coming to the Birdtown Boo Bash, the event held at Lakeview Terrance Park on October 7, and community members who attended the Water Treatment Plant Grand opening. He noted job openings the City currently has and encouraged people to take a look at the city website. Additionally, he encouraged people to visit the City website as the Police Department is taking part in the Pink Patch Project in an effort to raise funds for breast cancer awareness. Lastly, he thanked Councilmember Webb for her time on the Council and appreciated her welcoming nature and pushing him to be challenged.

COUNCIL GENERAL COMMUNICATIONS

Member Parisian noted how welcoming and kind Councilmember Webb is and valued the viewpoints she brought to the City. She mentioned the Water Treatment Plant tours and thanked staff for their time and effort.

Member Wagner also thanked staff for their work on the Water Treatment Plant. He noted a trash pick-up at South Halifax Park on October 28, 2023, and encouraged people to attend. He extended his thoughts and prayers to the current situation in Israel and Palestine and hopes peace will come quickly.

Member Murphy thanked staff for taking down the trees near EMI. He noted we should include our Met Council representative at future meetings involving light rail. He wished Councilmember Webb all the best moving forward. Lastly, he offered his condolences to Luke Gustafson's family, as he was a former business owner in Robbinsdale and unexpectedly passed away.

Mayor Blonigan echoed the previous comments and noted the Water Treatment Plant is the largest project the City has done and that it will provide treated water for many years to come. He also recognized Councilmember Webb and noted her concern for every human being and was a great advocate for the community members.

ADJOURNMENT

Member Murphy MOVED, seconded by Wagner to adjourn the meeting at 9:04 p.m. This vote was unanimous and the motion passed.

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'Chase Peterson-Etem', written over a horizontal line.

Chase Peterson-Etem, City Clerk

A handwritten signature in dark ink, appearing to read 'William A. Blonigan', written over a horizontal line.

William A. Blonigan, Mayor