

MINUTES

CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION CALLED TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge called the meeting to order at 7:20 PM.

ROLL CALL

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

Absent: None

Staff: Tim Sandvik, City Manager; Heather Rand, Community Development Director; Richard McCoy, City Engineer/Public Works Director; John Elder, Police Captain; Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

DISCUSSION

A. Consider Separation Ordinance

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge started the conversation by thanking community members for attending and acknowledged that this is an emotional topic. He stated that Council is here to listen and that community safety remains a top priority.

Sandvik provided an introduction and shared context that Minneapolis has adopted several iterations of a separation ordinance. Since the packet was published, the City of Minneapolis has officially adopted the ordinance. He noted it is not a one-to-one model for Robbinsdale, but provides ideas and language that Council could draw from. Sandvik walked through the document and the areas it covers, including access to City property, public safety reporting, complaints and discipline, subpoenas or legal obligations, certifications for crime victims, no impact on private rights, and other provisions.

Sandvik noted that Council has received significant resident feedback regarding City operations in relation to federal enforcement. Communications from the City remain fluid and are frequently updated. Legal advice has been obtained and remains private.

Member Parisian shared deep concern about ICE activity in Robbinsdale and surrounding communities, noting the killing of Renee Nicole Good and the detention of U.S. citizens. She stated that Council's collective goal is to keep residents safe and that a separation ordinance is a clear, tangible action within the City's authority. She highlighted regulating access to City-owned property and increasing transparency in reporting in the ordinance. She clarified that the ordinance would not regulate federal agents, but would regulate how City resources may be used by federal agencies, which responds directly to questions about whether RPD assists ICE. She noted that the ordinance would clarify that the City does not engage in those activities, while remaining compliant with state and federal law and honoring judicial warrants.

Member Greenberg shared that he has been speaking with community members and acknowledged that the situation is unprecedented, frightening, and infuriating. He stated that he is supportive of moving forward with a separation ordinance, while also having concerns he would like to discuss with staff and the community. He expressed openness to listening and acknowledged that City actions may not solve every problem.

Mayor Sutton emphasized that his top priority is resident safety and that he does not want to inflame outrage or embolden actions that could lead to harm, particularly given recent severe responses. He expressed concern about potential backlash to a separation ordinance but noted that ICE activity has already occurred in the City.

He expressed support for signing a separation ordinance that reflects what the City can realistically control.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge acknowledged the pain felt by the community and stated that this is an opportunity for Council to help people feel heard and safe. He reiterated that safety is the top concern and encouraged residents to educate themselves on safety, know their rights, and support one another. He stated that RPD has not assisted ICE in immigration enforcement and will not do so. He expressed support for the separation ordinance as a positive step forward.

Mayor Sutton noted that the Human Rights Commission (HRC) has organized a listening session for the following evening and thanked them for their efforts. Julie Ralston-Aoki, chair of the HRC, suggested hearing resident stories before reviewing the ordinance, as those stories could inform how it is viewed. Ralston-Aoki also questioned what threshold would require local law enforcement to intervene and referenced the detention incident at Hy-Vee.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge opened the floor to discussion, and various community members shared stories and comments on the proposed separation ordinance:

- A community member identified herself as a relative of the detainee at Hy-Vee and stated that the RPD statement did not reflect what occurred. She expressed confusion about how community members can feel safe calling law enforcement.
- Another community member thanked attendees for sharing their stories and stated that ICE tactics are creating fear and trauma rather than safety. She shared that students and families in the community are afraid to attend school. She described a friend being detained by ICE and stated that silence allows harm to continue. She urged those in power to hold ICE accountable and change laws to protect families.
- Another community member spoke in strong support of a separation ordinance. She shared positive experiences with RPD and RFD and stated she feels safe with local responders but unsafe during ICE interactions. She recounted a frightening incident where ICE vehicles followed her home. She emphasized that a separation ordinance would help maintain community trust in RPD.
- A resident noted that the ordinance could be a starting point but should be part of a broader set of future actions.
- A resident expressed support for adopting a separation ordinance, describing recent events as horrific. He noted strong community rapport with RPD and encouraged continued separation from immigration enforcement.

Council then discussed the ordinance, beginning with section 19.10, Purpose and Policy Statement. Member Greenberg asked how the ordinance differs from current practice, given that ICE does not inform the City of its actions. Sandvik stated that existing federal law and RPD policy already limit involvement, and this ordinance would codify those practices in City Code. Elder stated that RPD has no authority to enforce federal immigration law and expressed concern that residents may be afraid to call 911. He shared that ICE has requested use of City property for staging, which RPD has denied. Council agreed on the language of section 19.10.

Member Greenberg asked whether the ordinance would provide authority to remove ICE from City property. Sandvik referenced Minneapolis' experience with public park parking lots and noted ongoing challenges with enforcement in public spaces. A resident asked about restricting masks in public parking lots, and staff noted concerns about unintended impacts on religious or medical face coverings.

A resident asked about police surveillance and body camera footage during ICE interactions. Elder explained that officers may respond to calls without knowing ICE is involved and that body camera data is retained. He stated that footage is generally not releasable except in limited circumstances, but individuals captured on video may request copies, sometimes for a fee.

Council discussed section 19.20, General City Services. Member Parisian asked about license plate recognition data and federal access. Elder stated that RPD would not share data with federal agencies. Flock cameras were discussed, with Elder clarifying that the data is controlled by RPD and only captures public roadways.

Council discussed section 19.25 and agreed to make no changes. Council discussed section 19.30 and made minor wording changes.

Council discussed section 19.40, Public Safety Reporting. Member Greenberg asked about recourse if officers witness illegal actions by federal agents. Elder explained that officers may escalate concerns through DHS channels and reiterated that RPD would intervene in cases of harm, regardless of the agency involved. He emphasized that officers often lack full context during these encounters.

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge asked about warrants. Elder stated that ICE does not need to present warrants during public arrests but must have a judicial warrant to enter a home. Member Parisian asked whether RPD could help residents verify warrants. Elder stated that officers are not trained in federal warrant types but can verify identity. Sandvik reiterated that the City cannot provide legal advice but shares resources. Mayor Sutton asked about training officers on federal warrants, and Sandvik noted capacity concerns.

Member Parisian asked about RPD communications and community education. Elder shared that Know Your Rights resources are posted online and that a potential event is being discussed.

A resident asked whether officers could announce that they are observing and recording ICE activity. Council, staff, and community members discussed the role of police as observers and whether further internal discussion is needed.

Council approved draft sections 19.50, 19.60, 19.70, 19.80, and 19.90. Sandvik summarized that he will incorporate minor edits and return with a revised version, noting logistical and capacity concerns and potential litigation risk.

A resident asked whether the ordinance would have changed the outcome of the Hy-Vee incident. Elder stated that the situation could be a learning opportunity and emphasized RPD's willingness to improve and be accountable.

Member Parisian shared that she has multilingual Know Your Rights cards as a personal resource if anyone needs cards. She thanked residents, staff, Council, and RPD for their efforts and asked whether Council would support a unified statement at the next meeting to reassure the community. Council and staff discussed options for public comment and statements at the next Council meeting.

B. Hennepin County Planning Grant Opportunity Focused on Downtown Vitality

Rand introduced a potential opportunity to secure planning funds from Hennepin County through a competitive grant application opening in February. She provided background that a downtown station area plan was finalized in 2023, and Rand suggested revisiting the plan through a public process to continue downtown revitalization. She proposed using a task force model that could include City Council Members, Planning Commissioners, and downtown business and property owners. Potential funded work could include a parking strategy and survey, leveraging downtown properties to highest and best use, and aligning downtown

investments with the Capital Improvement Plan.

Rand discussed the concept with Bolton & Menk, a well-established planning consultant that has previously worked with the City. The estimated cost is approximately \$50,000, with Hennepin County potentially funding up to half. The City would need to provide a local match, and Rand asked whether Council is interested in pursuing the grant. She emphasized the importance of advancing this work to maintain a viable downtown, especially with the potential light rail extension.

Member Parisian stated that a parking survey would be helpful, particularly as additional development proposals come forward.

A resident asked whether Robin Center and other shopping centers would be included. He expressed interest in seeing downtown energy extend to shopping areas. Rand stated that those areas could be included in future planning efforts and welcomed Council input on scope.

A resident raised concerns about the cost of a parking study, noting that the City appears to have ample parking. Member Greenberg stated his understanding that downtown parking is currently insufficient. Rand responded that availability varies by time of day and explained that a district parking study evaluates more than supply, including efficiency, location, and alternatives such as structured parking. Staff and Council discussed parking sustainability and efficient land use. Staff and Council also discussed involving youth in the planning process and creating spaces that appeal to them.

Member Greenberg noted a proposed parking lot associated with the Blue Line project and asked whether the study could explore alternative options. He expressed concern that a park-and-ride in the center of downtown conflicts with planning best practices and supported further discussion. Sandvik cautioned that the Blue Line project office may not be easily influenced by an independent study.

Rand summarized that Council supports pursuing the grant. She will seek additional details on funding amounts, scope, and timelines and return to Council with information on potential matching funds. Member Greenberg suggested engaging community groups to help raise matching funds. Sandvik supported involving downtown businesses and the Chamber, noting that while the City budgets for this type of work, creative funding approaches are encouraged.

STAFF UPDATES

A. Staff Updates

Ward 4 Vacancy: Sandvik shared that the applications for the Ward 4 vacancy have been opened and City Hall has received several inquiries. A special work session is scheduled for Thursday, January 22, at 6:30 p.m. to conduct interviews. Per the City Charter, the appointment must be made at the first meeting in February. Council will receive application materials to review in advance, along with high-level interview questions.

Council Roles and Responsibilities: Sandvik reminded Council to notify staff of any groups they wish to engage in. Council expressed support for Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge continuing in the role. Sandvik explained that staff will recommend that Council appoint two members to the NWSCC. Sandvik recommended appointing Bill Blonigan as the CCX representative and moving himself to a NWSCC board position as well by appointing Rachel Leen to the CCX Board. He noted that the CCX Board meets quarterly and is primarily composed of staff, largely from communications roles, with many cities also having Council representation.

Local Sales Tax: Sandvik explained that advancing the local sales tax option requires multiple steps, beginning with a resolution expressing interest to the Legislature. Up to three dozen cities may apply due to the two-year moratorium, with outcomes uncertain given the political and election-year context. Member Greenberg

expressed strong support. Sandvik clarified this resolution is a preliminary step, not implementation.

PFAS Treatment: McCoy shared that a consultant report on PFAS treatment will be presented to Council, funded by a \$2.8 million grant. Sandvik asked whether additional materials could be prepared. Mayor Sutton requested an overview of all options and the rationale for the recommended approach. Member Greenberg asked for typical cost comparisons. McCoy noted the consultant was selected through an extensive process. Mayor Sutton emphasized the importance of distinguishing required spending from optional spending in and highlighting that the funding is state-provided in presentation materials.

COUNCIL UPDATES

Mayor Sutton shared that he recently spoke with business owners at Travail and Marna's and noted that businesses and residents are struggling. He stated that the impacts of federal enforcement operations extend to employment, dining, and livelihoods, and that local businesses would appreciate support, acknowledgment, and continued conversation during this time.

Member Parisian stated she plans to attend the Human Rights Commission special session the following evening. Member Greenberg and Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge also expressed interest. Sandvik noted that a quorum notice can be posted.

Member Greenberg thanked everyone for the discussion and shared that he has been reaching out to other representatives for mutual support. Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge echoed these remarks, stating he will continue to stay informed and prepared for community conversations. He also thanked City staff for the quick turnaround on meeting materials.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Pro Tem Blackledge adjourned the meeting at 10:17 PM.

Rachel Leen, Communications Coordinator

Raymond Blackledge, Mayor Pro Tem