

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

St. Francis Area Schools District Office 4115 Ambassador Blvd. NW

August 21, 2023

6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The regular City Council meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Joe Muehlbauer.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Joe Muehlbauer, Councilmembers Robert Bauer, Kevin Robinson, and Sarah Udvig.

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Deputy City Administrator/City Clerk Jenni Wida, Community Development Director Colette Baumgardner, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, Fire Chief Dave Schmidt, Liquor Store Manager John Schmidt, Finance Director Darcy Mulvihill, City Engineer Craig Jochum (Hakanson Associates, Inc.), Police Chief Todd Schwieger

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: UDVIG APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA.

Ayes: Bauer, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. City Council Minutes - August 7, 2023

B. 2023 Appointments

Resolution 2023-43 Appointments for 2023

C. Weber Construction-Liquor Store-Final Payment

D. Separation of Employment

E. Policy Amendment – Police Department

F. Park Commission Appointment

G. Official Signatures

Resolution 2023-44 Official Signatures

H. Voting Operations, Technology, & Election Resources (VOTER) Account

I. Payment of Claims

MOTION BY: BAUER SECOND: UDVIG APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA.

Ayes: Bauer, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Hunter Carlson, 2612 230th Court, came forward and brought statistics of newsletters from cities across Anoka County, including the population of these cities and how many times they publish their newsletter. He noted that cities larger than St. Francis publish a newsletter at least four times a year. He stated that the only city larger than St. Francis that does not do at least four newsletters a year is Lino Lakes; however, they utilize a news alert system instead. He added that the other cities also do a Mayor and City Council message. He stated that it would be good to keep the four newsletters in order to keep in touch with the growing community. He noted that St. Francis is the only city in the area that does not have up-to-date newsletters on their website. He shared that he believes it would be a good idea to keep four newsletters a year as well as adding a more generalized message.

Robinson asked where Mr. Carlson gets his passion for this and what prompted him to do research into this. Mr. Carlson stated that he enjoys the newsletters as they help reach the community better and help them know what is happening within the City. He added that his neighbors also read these newsletters.

Robinson asked if Mr. Carlson uses the City's website often. Mr. Carlson said yes and that he has looked at it for the fire station and Highway 47 project updates.

Robinson explained that the reason they are looking at this is because of cost and the impact. He shared his appreciation for Mr. Carlson's passion and research.

Bauer shared that the website should be the main focus of the newsletter and the website should be up-to-date before the newsletter. He added that they are looking at this due to the cost of doing the newsletter. He noted that they do not get much participation from the newsletters.

Udvig stated that she has checked at the post office right after the newsletters have come out and she has seen the recycling bin full of them. She agreed that the City needs to get information on the website quicker to keep it up to date. She stated that this is a huge cost and takes time; however, the reality is that most residents do not read the newsletter.

6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE

8. OLD BUSINESS - NONE

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Newsletter

City Administrator Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report concerning the City newsletter and reducing the number of mailing from four to three per year.

Bauer shared that a lot of people do not read this newsletter but that they do need to get involved on their website and on Facebook. He stated that it is tough to spend City money on mailings that go out just to end up in the trash. He added that he is in support of reducing the mailings to three times a year. He noted that he would like to revamp this a little bit so that the newsletter goes onto the City website first and then to print to be mailed.

Udvig stated that she is comfortable with reducing the newsletters to three times a year. She added that they could likely coordinate this so that the newsletter is on the website the day of the mailing.

Robinson asked about the cost to send out these newsletters once a quarter. City Clerk Wida explained that they have recently moved to a lower cost printer. She stated that they have a graphic designer that puts this together which costs \$300 and the printing costs around \$1,800, plus postage which is around \$800.

Robinsons shared that he is not opposed to trying three newsletters a year and suggested sending out a survey at the end of the year to see if people are actually reading these newsletters. He stated that they should let the residents have input on the mailers. He agreed that they should post on the website and the Facebook page. He added that he is not opposed to putting in a Councilmember report or message to the newsletter.

Mayor Muehlbauer agreed that they should get the resident's input on the newsletters. He shared the concern that the residents who look at these newsletters tend to be the more elderly residents who are not as technologically savvy who may not be able to easily access the website or Facebook. He added that another issue is that the residents have a perception of not enough transparency from the Council and even when these mailers, like for the City Hall Fire Station communications, are being sent out there are residents who say that they never saw anything about the project updates. He suggested getting some sort of review of this done. He stated that they can put the newsletter on the website and then possibly get a list of residents who would still like to receive the mailings.

Robinson suggested having a dropbox to have residents drop their survey or suggestions in so that they can get feedback.

Mayor Muehlbauer stated that they can always send out a special newsletter if necessary. He shared support for reducing the number of newsletters to three. He also thanked Mr. Carlson for his passion and work.

Robinson added that since it is close to the end of the year they should continue with the four newsletters which will also give them time to get the message out about potentially reducing the newsletter. He stated that they can take another look at this in January to make a decision.

Bauer agreed with Robinson. He asked if they would be able to send the newsletters out on the system that is currently used just for emergencies.

Muehlbauer stated that he could do a Mayor's column in the newsletter or they could alternate this through Council and Staff. He noted that it would be cool for the residents to get to know different Council and Staff members through this.

Udvig stated that this could be a good way for Council to report on the committees that they serve on.

The Council gave direction to Staff.

10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC – NONE

11. REPORTS

A. Fire Department Monthly Report - July

Fire Chief Schmidt reviewed the July Fire Department report, highlighting including an increase in response times to an average of 9 minus and 23 seconds, an increase in calls for service with a total of 67 calls, and an increase in firefighters per response of 6.3 per call. He shared that there were 47 EMS calls and 20 fire calls for the month. He reviewed the variance usage. He noted that there was also an increase in ambulance response times over 20 minutes. He stated that there were no fire inspections in July. He shared that they are functional at the 4020 building.

Robinson asked about the current support being given to Nowthen and Bethel. Schmidt explained that they continue to have discussions with Bethel and they were able to provide their tanker for a parade this weekend which Bethel was very thankful for. He noted that he will continue to work with Thunstrom on documentation that will be helpful to continue to gain traction with Bethel. He stated that there have also been conversations with Nowthen about an extension and there is a meeting scheduled for next week to discuss this.

Robinson asked if there was a deadline for Nowthen. Schmidt explained that he has a budget work session in Nowthen next week where they will hopefully be able to discuss this and get it finalized before the levy needs to be set.

Bauer stated that it was a good report and the numbers look good. He is glad that the new building is working out well. Schmidt added that there have been a few things that they have had to work through but they have adjusted.

Udvig said it was a great report. She added that it is hard seeing the response times over 20 minutes.

Mayor Muehlbauer stated it was a good report and shared that he was able to go over and see the new building. He asked if there has been any luck with people hanging out in the lounge area in the new building. Schmidt shared that they have had a few people hanging out but they are trying to make this building more comfortable and functional.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked if this has affected the response times. Schmidt explained that it is too early to tell. He noted that there have been quite a few overlapping calls in the last few weeks. He stated that they can look into this more next month to try and identify some changes.

12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Udvig shared that she attended the work session and the Farmer's Market. She stated that there are new vendors at the market which is very exciting. She noted that there is a possibility that they may extend the markets for a few more weeks due to the harvest times for different vegetables.

Robinson shared that he attended the work session as well as the Planning and Zoning Meeting. He stated that there is an AutoZone that came and applied for permits that will be coming to the City.

Bauer stated that he had nothing new to report.

Mayor Muehlbauer shared that he also attended the work session. He noted that he has been in touch with many members of Staff as well as residents over the last few weeks. He added that he reached out to Oak Grove's Mayor to hopefully work together with them better in the future. He stated that it now seems to be time for the two cities to move forward as sister cities. He said that he and the Oak Grove Mayor will get together soon to hopefully mend the divide between the two cities.

13. ATTORNEY

Performance review of Liquor Store Manager pursuant to Minn. Stat. § 13D.03; 13D.05, subd. 3(a): Request made by employee to keep the meeting open and not move to a closed meeting.

Assistant City Attorney Schaps reviewed the Staff report in regard to the performance review for the Liquor Store Manager John Schmidt.

Bauer stated that if he knew where the liquor store was prior to the expansion we would not have gone for an expansion. He noted that he has not seen much growth towards marketing and moving forward with sales and promotions. He stated that things have seemed status quo and he needs to see something bigger and better. He noted that they talked about the MMBA and he has not heard much progression

with this.

Mayor Muehlbauer added that the MMBA showed up at the last work session and were able to provide some information for things moving forward.

Udvig shared that she was really hoping to see a lot of changes with saturation on Facebook and different social media sites. She noted that they are now at a point where their backs are against a wall where they need to make some pretty drastic changes to keep the liquor store going.

Robinson said that Schmidt is not on trial here, it is the business method that has been concerning. He noted that it is a huge luxury to have a revenue source like the liquor store in the City and it should be taken advantage of in any way possible. He stated that it needs to be utilized more and do better than just breaking even. He shared that he would be in support of termination to get a fresh perspective. He noted that more resources, employees, and time have been given. He stated that he appreciates the MMBA coming here but thinks it was too little too late.

Mayor Muehlbauer stated that he thinks they needed more time after the remodel. He shared that if they had more information they may have made a different decision prior to the remodel. He added that he hates to have this conversation. He noted that they have had a lot of time and it now seems like time to try something different. He stated that this is not personal and strictly business.

Schmidt shared that he understands that his communication with the Council has been lacking. He stated that he finds it odd to hear that it is not personal, but business related as the store is up 6% so far this year sales and up 5% in customer count. He noted that he is doing his job to bring people into the store. He acknowledged that his communication does need improvement but he is willing to work on this.

Mayor Muehlbauer stated that the hardest part for him is that the cost of labor is increasing with more workers while the sales are not supporting this.

Bauer shared that as the manager, he does not expect Schmidt to be the one to go on Facebook and make posts, but he does expect the manager to set the goals. He stated that they have given the store full time employees and not only are they to be running the register, they are also there to make the City's liquor store great. He added that he needs to see managerial work on this aspect of the business while seeing where they are on profits. He noted that if they are just breaking even with the addition of these new employees then they are not making money and they are just going downhill.

Robinson stated that he did not put the target on Schmidt, Schmidt put it on himself with a lack of communication for 14 plus months with the Mayor, Council, and Staff. He noted that he gave Schmidt many opportunities and he continued to fall short.

Schmidt asked how many times Robinson reached out to him and he did not get a response. Robinson shared that he has heard reports from administration that they have reached out for information and Schmidt did not reply.

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: UDVIG FOR INTENT FOR TERMINATION OF THE LIQUOR STORE MANAGER.

Ayes: Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: Bauer

Motion carries: 3-1

Schaps stated that they will need to set a special meeting date for this item.

The Special City Council meeting was scheduled for August 24 at 5:30 p.m. in the Community Room.

14. UPCOMING EVENTS

August 22 - EDA Meeting - 5:30 p.m. @ City Hall Community Room

September 4 - City Offices closed in observance of Labor Day

September 5 - City Council Meeting - 6:00 p.m.

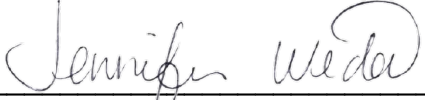
September 16 - Recycle Event - 8:00 a.m. - 12:00 p.m.

Farmers Market every Wednesday through September 13th

15. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: BAUER TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

There being no further business, Mayor Muehlbauer adjourned the regular City Council at 6:50 p.m.



Jennifer Wida, City Clerk