

**WORKSHOP MINUTES
OAKDALE CITY COUNCIL
JULY 11, 2023**

The City Council held a workshop on Tuesday, July 11, 2023 at Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Avenue North, Oakdale, Minnesota. The meeting began at 5:00 PM.

Present: Mayor Kevin Zabel

Council Members: Noah Her
Andy Morcomb
Susan Willenbring

Absent: Council Member Jake Ingebrigtson

City Staff Members: Christina Volkers, City Administrator
Sara Ludwig, City Clerk
Jesse Farrell, City Engineer
Andrew Gitzlaff, Community Development Director
Nick Newton, Police Chief
Lori Pulkrabek, Communications Manager
Jim Romanik, Public Works Manager
Kevin Wold, Fire Chief
Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director
Kevin Zittel, Facilities Manager

ONE-TIME PUBLIC SAFETY AID SPENDING PLAN

City Administrator Chris Volkers prefaced the conversation by stating that this is a preliminary discussion, and asked for Council direction for the proposed utilization of the one-time public safety aid. She noted that a majority of the funds are recommended for the additional requested positions within the Police Department.

Finance Director Jason Zimmerman provided a brief recap of the 2023 legislative session and one-time local public safety aid bill that was signed into law earlier this year. He noted that the estimated allocation for the City is \$1,231,196. Mr. Zimmerman recapped the eligible and restricted/ineligible uses, and the benefits of the creation of a local spending plan.

The proposed utilization of the one-time public safety aid funds was presented. Mr. Zimmerman explained that the phase-in process will recognize a portion of anticipated aid annually, at decreasing amounts, to exhaust the aid and directly offset the property tax levy impact of the three new Police Department positions.

In response to Council Member Morcomb's question about why this one-time funding is being offered now, Mayor Zabel and Ms. Volkers indicated it is likely that the legislature is reducing the surplus with one-time funding.

Mr. Zimmerman asked the Council if they were supportive of the creation of a formal spending plan. The Council was in favor of approving a formal spending plan at a future regular meeting.

In response to staff's recommendation of a phase-in approach, Mayor Zabel would like to see a ramp up as the years go on to account for increased salary costs.

Council Member Willenbring expressed concern about using one-time revenue for long-term expenditures, and asked Ms. Volkens if there is a way to account for this in future years. Ms. Volkens stated that the proposed spending plan attempts to address this concern by utilizing this one-time money on a decreasing basis until the aid is gone.

Council Member Morcomb views the additional one-time revenue as a bridge to an expanded tax base. He also agreed with Mayor Zabel's ramp-up approach.

Council Member Willenbring asked for clarification on the SRO position identified in the spending plan. Mayor Zabel indicated the SRO position will be covered by Independent School District (ISD) 622 for 80% of the year (during the months of the school year), but the City is not funding the totality of this SRO's salary.

Council Member Her asked if Council is comfortable spending all of these funds within the Police Department. Council agreed, and was supportive of the formal spending plan as recommended by staff assuming Ms. Volkens and Mr. Zimmerman can find some one-time funds for the few requests of the Fire department.

Council Member Morcomb asked if publishing this formal spending plan will have a negative impact on receiving County funding for other public safety related items. Ms. Volkens said it will not have such an effect.

In response to Council Member Morcomb's question about a required spending deadline, Mr. Zimmerman indicated there is nothing in the legislation about a timeline in which the aid must be expensed.

Council Member Willenbring asked Police Chief Nick Newton if the City has available funding for victim services, one of the eligible uses for the one-time public safety aid. Chief Newton answered that these services are primarily funded through Washington County.

2024-2028 CIP: CITY PROJECT U2024-01: WATER TOWER 3 RECONDITIONING

City Engineer Jesse Farrell explained that although this project is part of the 2024 CIP which has not yet received Council approval, staff is requesting authorization for work to begin sooner. Specifically, staff would like to bring action to the July 25, 2023 City Council regular meeting for approval. Mr. Farrell indicated that now would be an appropriate time to put out a request for proposals for this work. He cautioned that due to an influx of similar projects in other communities and a limited number of contractors that do this type of work, there is a

possibility that the City could receive unfavorable bids. If that happens, the City will rebid in 2024 for work to be completed in 2025.

The timeline for the project was reviewed, which could include Council approval of a contract at the end of August, and work to begin in Spring 2024.

Council Member Her asked about the current state of the water tower. Mr. Farrell said that the work could have been done a year ago as there is currently visible corrosion.

In response to Council Member Willenbring's question about how long the noisiest part of the project will take, Mr. Farrell responded that it could take several months. Mayor Zabel would like to ensure there is a communications and outreach plan in place so the neighborhood is aware of the project and associated noise.

Council Member Willenbring asked if the working hours could be set up to start later in the morning and end earlier in the evening. Mr. Farrell noted this could extend the project and ultimately make it more expensive. The current working hours are 7:00 AM – 7:00 PM, Monday through Friday.

Mayor Zabel recommended reaching out to the City of Maplewood to see if they have any insight on communications having just recently done a similar project. Communications Manager Lori Pulkrabek asked how many homes will be affected by this project. Mr. Farrell indicated about a dozen. Ms. Pulkrabek said those houses will be specifically targeted, likely with an in-person visit, to ensure they have been notified of the upcoming increased noise levels.

The Council was supportive of proceeding with City Project U2024-01.

Ms. Volkens suggested that staff come to Council with recommendations on the paint color and logo to allow for Council input. Council Member Morcomb asked if paint colors vary in cost which could have an effect on Council's decision. Staff will include this as part of their recommendation.

RECORDING OF CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Ms. Volkens began by stating this discussion has two parts – City Council meeting minutes and advisory body meeting minutes. Ms. Volkens suggested that after Council provides direction, one City staff member should record the advisory body meeting minutes so there is consistency and the management team will try and identify a staff member to take on this responsibility.

City Clerk Sara Ludwig provided rationale behind how the minutes are taken currently.

Council Member Her would like to add language to the City Code based on Council's direction. Sample language was offered which included a statement about an individual council member requesting a specific statement be recorded in the minutes. Council Member Willenbring clarified that those requests would have to be made during the meeting and not be sent at a later date for inclusion.

Council Member Morcomb asked about how long the City Council videos remain on YouTube for future viewing purposes. Mayor Zabel indicated that besides YouTube, they are also stored by the Ramsey Washington Counties Suburban Cable Commission as well, however Ms. Pulkrabek was unsure of the actual length of time they are kept. Ms. Volkers asked about the records retention requirements for City Council meeting videos. Ms. Ludwig said she would double check the records retention schedule.

Council Member Morcomb expressed concern about the amount of information that may be available to future onlookers if the minutes are not detailed enough for them to understand the scope of the discussion.

Council Member Willenbring referenced language found in the second paragraph on the second page of the Office of the State Auditor's Statement of Position on Meeting Minutes (2012) which states that "a governing body's reasons for reaching a particular decision may be important for defending a challenge to the action taken" (p. 2). She said that it is important to have a record of the deliberation and how Council came to a conclusion. She used the franchise fee discussion from the June 13, 2023 workshop as an example, explaining that transparency in this case is important for residents. Council Member Morcomb agreed, but in reference to regular Council meetings as he would like to preserve the record in the public's interest.

Council Member Willenbring noted that if the workshop minutes do not document a dissenting opinion or the reasoning behind it, then it may need to be explained at the regular Council meeting during the formal vote.

Council agreed that the current recording of the regular meeting minutes is satisfactory.

Mayor Zabel would like to see the workshop minutes shortened. Council Member Her was comfortable with the workshop minutes, but would like language added to the City Code to memorialize the current process. Council Member Morcomb is in favor of amending the City Code to make the process clear and simple.

Ms. Volkers said that City staff frequently reference the meeting minutes, and there is a tracking document to assist with follow up items that come out of Council meetings.

Mayor Zabel summarized that the Council would like to keep the recording of the minutes as is, but any specific items to be recorded in the minutes must be explicitly requested during the meeting. Council Member Her added that language should be included in the City Code.

Mayor Zabel would like to defer to staff on that decision. Ms. Volkens indicated other parts of Chapter 2, Article III need to be amended so it can be revisited at that time.

ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Ms. Volkens stated that the ribbon cutting for the Springs at Willowbrooke is scheduled for August 22nd at 3:45 PM prior to the workshop meeting.

Ms. Volkens reported on the first month's reconciliation from the local option sales tax implemented April 1, 2023. The estimated monthly revenue from sales tax to Oakdale was \$159,000 per month, however, the actual amount received in the first month was \$193,000. The City had to pay the Department of Revenue \$16,000 to initially set up the local option sales tax. There is also an administrative fee of approximately \$3,000 per month. The net revenue received for the first month (April 1-30, 2023) was \$175,000.

Ms. Volkens noted that staff did some research on Council Member Her's suggestion to look at alternative volleyball court materials. Before presenting the research, Public Works Manager Jim Romanik noted that due to individuals staking volleyball nets in ballfield outfields there has been damage to irrigation lines. He suggested using social media to inform residents of the damage that can be caused by stakes, and also suggested steering individuals to parks that do not have irrigation lines. As for the alternative material for volleyball courts, Mr. Romanik stated that Flagship Recreation provided a rough estimate of \$35,000-\$40,000 for one volleyball court. Council Member Willenbring asked about the cost of maintenance for the artificial turf. Mr. Romanik said he would look into it. Council Member Morcomb asked if the \$40,000 included installation or solely covered the cost of the materials. Mr. Romanik said he would look into this as well.

Lastly, Ms. Volkens stated that the Acorn Award Tour is scheduled for August 8th at 3:30 PM prior to the workshop meeting.

COUNCIL TOPICS

In reference to the Council Liaison Update that is provided during advisory body meetings, Ms. Volkens cautioned the Council to only share relevant information. As an example, Council Member Her asked about sharing the franchise fee information with the Economic Development Commission. Mayor Zabel and Ms. Volkens stated that given the last workshop discussion that would be appropriate to share a current update. Discussion continued about what should be provided during the Council Liaison Update at the advisory body meetings and how Council should seek input from these commissions/board. Mayor Zabel explained that the past process has been that Council asks the advisory body for feedback before topics are brought back to workshop for discussion and then ultimately a formal Council decision. Council Member Morcomb would like to review the Council-advisory body relationship holistically and implement an agreed-upon and updated process beginning in 2024. He would like the advisory bodies to be able to offer feedback to Council on topics prior to those items

coming to a workshop meeting. Mayor Zabel reminded the group that no financial matters are discussed with or decided upon by an advisory body per State law. He added that once the Council formulates a strategic plan that can be used to drive the advisory bodies' role. Council Member Her was supportive of soliciting additional advisory body feedback generally. Ms. Volkens stated that a proposed revised City Policy MIS-013: Boards and Commissions Appointment and Reappointment Process will be brought to Council this Fall to help further this conversation.

Council Member Willenbring brought up a topic from the most recent Tree Board meeting about Emerald Ash Borer and the City Code. Mayor Zabel informed the group that Chapter 22 covers this in detail especially as it relates to resident complaints of neighboring infested trees and what the City can do to address it. Council Member Willenbring asked if City Forester Loren Cota could add this information to the next Tree Board agenda. Ms. Volkens will follow up with him.

Council Member Morcomb asked if there is a replacement/maintenance program for City trails and sidewalks. Mayor Zabel said the Bike and Pedestrian Plan somewhat addresses this, but usually the yearly Street Improvement project also covers trails and sidewalks.

Mayor Zabel asked the Council to sign thank you letters for those involved with Summerfest.

Mayor Zabel asked the Council how to proceed with requests he receives from other mayors or organizations to sign on to social statements or petitions. After a brief discussion, it was determined that if the Mayor receives these requests, and suspects there may be interest from the Council, he will forward to Ms. Volkens to get the opinion from the rest of the Council.

Mayor Zabel reported on the most recent Regional Council of Mayors meeting and asked Ms. Volkens to forward on the presentation to Council. At this meeting, ISD622 Superintendent Christine Tucci Osorio offered to come to a future workshop to discuss current initiatives happening within the school district. Ms. Volkens was asked to find thirty minutes on a future workshop agenda for this item and extend an invite to Ms. Osorio.

ADJOURNMENT

The workshop was adjourned at 6:48 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Ludwig, City Clerk