

**WORKSHOP MINUTES
OAKDALE CITY COUNCIL
OCTOBER 10, 2023**

The City Council held a workshop on Tuesday, October 10, 2023 at Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Avenue North, Oakdale, Minnesota. The meeting began at 5:01 PM.

Present: Mayor Kevin Zabel

Council Members: Noah Her
Jake Ingebrigtsen
Andy Morcomb
Susan Willenbring

City Staff Members: Christina Volkens, City Administrator
Sara Ludwig, City Clerk
Jesse Farrell, City Engineer
Andy Gitzlaff, Community Development Director
Nick Newton, Police Chief
Lori Pulkrabek, Communications Manager
Jim Romanik, Public Works Manager
Kyle Stasica, Accounting Manager
Kevin Zittel, Facilities Manager

Others Present: Tim Doolittle, Environmental Management Commission Applicant

ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION (EMC) INTERVIEW CANDIDATE: TIM DOOLITTLE

Mayor Zabel explained the interview process noting that it is an informal process and a chance to get to know Mr. Doolittle.

Mr. Doolittle provided a brief introduction about his relocation to Minnesota, work experience, and reasons for applying to the EMC.

In response to Council Member Willenbring's question about Mr. Doolittle's biggest passion related to the environment, Mr. Doolittle stated quality water including both drinking water and bodies of water, air quality, and the ability to create a sustainable future.

In response to Mayor Zabel's question about what other partnerships the City can leverage, Mr. Doolittle suggested partnering with the local schools and businesses in the area, i.e. 3M. Additionally, he suggested the City model the behavior it would like to see from its citizens.

Council Member Morcomb asked if Mr. Doolittle has seen the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. He said he has heard of it, but has not seen it. City Administrator Chris Volkens confirmed that Mr. Doolittle will receive a copy if he is appointed to the EMC.

Mr. Doolittle asked how the City Council utilizes the EMC. Mayor Zabel referenced the Bike and Pedestrian Plan as a good example of how the City Council utilized the EMC (and other commissions) to provide their perspective and feedback.

Mayor Zabel noted that City staff will be touch later this week about the City Council's decision.

DISCUSSION RE: ENVIRONMENTAL MANAGEMENT COMMISSION APPLICANT

The Council was in agreement to move forward with appointing Mr. Doolittle to the EMC.

MULTIUSE TRAIL BRIDGE ADJACENT TO 40TH STREET BRIDGE OVER I-694

City Engineer Jesse Farrell provided a brief context for the ask to include a high-level modest planning and scoping project for the 40th Street bridge in the 2024 budget. The project would help evaluate various alternatives, timelines, funding sources, and both initial and long-term expenses.

Because the existing 40th Street bridge is owned by MnDOT, and is not up for replacement until 2042, the City could expedite the reconstruction timeline by paying the delta – how much expected life is left in the bridge – which changes every year. In response to Mayor Zabel's question about the current delta, Mr. Farrell said the City would be responsible for approximately one third (1/3) of the cost. Council Member Ingebrigtsen was hesitant to partner with MnDOT given past project experiences. Mayor Zabel was not supportive of replacing the 40th Street bridge in its entirety, and was in agreement with Council Member Ingebrigtsen's sentiment.

Council Member Morcomb was concerned about the safety aspect of the current non-vehicular traffic crossing the 40th Street bridge. He was supportive of the planning and scoping project to learn more about the City's options. He also suggested looking into funding options at a later date.

In response to Council Member Morcomb's question about MnDOT providing a clear cost estimate, Mr. Farrell indicated he can ask MnDOT for the present value cost.

Ms. Volkers noted that it is unlikely State bonding funds can be used to lessen the reconstruction timeline for the replacement of the bridge. Mr. Farrell suggested seeking out grant funding and looking for support from MnDOT and neighboring cities like Lake Elmo. He would like to partner with the Communications Department to generate excitement and community support for a 40th Street bridge improvement project.

In response to Council Member Willenbring's question about any prior incidents that have occurred at the 40th Street bridge, Police Chief Nick Newton indicated there have been several incidents over the years.

The Council was supportive of the proposed \$15,000 planning and scoping project.

Mr. Farrell was asked to find out the 40th Street bridge replacement cost from MnDOT.

Ms. Volkers was asked to reach out to Senator Leon Lillie to inquire about State bonding options; as well as Washington County Commissioner Stan Karwoski to seek County support.

Council Member Willenbring asked for clarification on Council's support for a separate pedestrian bridge or a multimodal transportation bridge. Mayor Zabel, Council Member Ingebrigtsen, and Council Member Willenbring indicated the separate bridge had their support.

In response to Council Member Her's question about the City's responsibility of a newly built 40th Street pedestrian bridge, Mayor Zabel and Ms. Volkers were confident that if the City built the bridge then it would be maintained by the City.

Mr. Farrell reiterated that the planning and scoping project would review the City's options regarding a separate pedestrian bridge or a multimodal transportation bridge.

Mayor Zabel suggested moving the planning and scoping project from 2024 to 2023 and funding it from the Community Development SEED Fund. The Council was in agreement.

Council Member Willenbring asked if MnDOT would consider making the existing 40th Street bridge railings higher. Mr. Farrell was unsure if this bridge is up for accommodations, but stated this suggestion will likely come up during the study.

Mr. Farrell noted that there are additional funds in the Engineering Department budget than can be used for this project.

WATER TOWER 3 RECONDITIONING PROJECT – LOGO DISCUSSION

Mr. Farrell explained that the Council should have an opportunity to provide input on the redesign of the logo on Water Tower 3. He asked for Council direction on the process for the logo design and decision for Water Tower 3.

Mayor Zabel noted he would prefer to choose from simplistic options.

Council Member Willenbring was supportive of an artistic design.

Mayor Zabel would prefer that it not say "City of Oakdale" as that seems redundant.

Mr. Farrell noted that bold colors do not age well, and cautioned Council to think about a timeless versus trendy design.

Council Member Willenbring was supportive of a staff committee making the decision.

Council Member Ingebrigtsen was opposed to opening it up to community feedback so as not to cause disappointment for any resident.

Mr. Farrell offered to provide different cities' approaches for dissemination to the Council. He also stated that larger or more intricate logos are costlier.

Mayor Zabel suggested that City staff provide various logo options at a future workshop meeting. Additionally, Council was asked to independently research and bring back artistic logo options to the future discussion as well.

Mr. Farrell was asked to send the style of the water tower to Ms. Volkens for dissemination to the Council. He asked that Council think about how many logos should be on the water tower, at what orientation, and what base color should be used.

Ms. Volkens added that it could be possible to open up the process to submissions from the community. Council Member Her was hesitant to support this idea in case one of the submissions was not chosen. Mr. Farrell offered that the City could frame it as an art contest for a new logo without mentioning that it is for the water tower redesign project.

City staff was directed to provide logo design options for Council to choose from at a future workshop meeting.

MANAGEMENT DISCUSSION – COMMUNICATIONS MANAGER

Communications Manager Lori Pulkrabek began by explaining that the list of activities and projects included in the memo is not all-encompassing. She also noted that the Communications Department works closely with all departments on various one-time projects or on an on-going basis. Ms. Pulkrabek highlighted several projects that have been completed in the last year including the redesign of the website, the Local Option Sales Tax informational campaign, the new website URL, and the redesign of the Oakdale Update newsletter. Ms. Pulkrabek gave kudos to Communications Specialist Sara Quinnell for her hard work on the newsletter redesign. Next, Ms. Pulkrabek reviewed a few of the new activities and projects within the Communications Department, including the seasonal photo contest, the Monday Morning Minute weekly video, OpenGov online forms, and the State of the City video produced by Suburban Community Channels (SCC). Mayor Zabel praised the SCC for their work in creating video content for the City. Lastly, the paid advertising analytics were discussed.

Council Member Morcomb applauded the Communications Department for their accomplishments within the last year. He asked if there are any plans to do more surveys to obtain public feedback, outside of the POLCO community survey. Ms. Pulkrabek stated that the POLCO community survey is the official survey used by the City to get resident feedback.

Additionally, there are challenges using social media polls as they are not typically statistically relevant/significant. Council Member Morcomb suggested adding an envelope on the back of the Oakdale Update newsletter as an avenue to obtain feedback. Ms. Volkens suggested that a QR code linked to an online form could be used as an alternative to save money. Mayor Zabel was open to the idea but unsure of how to execute it effectively. Council Member Her was unsure if the effort put into this process would reap the desired results. Council Member Willenbring noted that it might work better if there was a specific topic identified. Ms. Volkens stated that the SeeClickFix, aka Oakdale 311, request and work management software might be a way for residents to provide feedback on an ongoing basis.

In response to Mayor Zabel's question about the upcoming projects in 2024, Ms. Pulkrabek said the POLCO community survey, the new Public Works facility interior design, and the new video conferencing equipment/software.

In response to Council Member Her's question about the need for additional Communications Department staff, Ms. Pulkrabek said it will depend on what projects come in the future, but she may return to the Council if staffing needs change.

PRESCRIPTION DRUG COLLECTION BOX

Chief Newton provided a brief highlight of the prescription drug collection box program offered through the Washington County Public Health Department in partnership with the Drug Task Force. Chief Newton reported on the conversations had with the Public Health Department and the Sheriff's Office about the potential for housing a prescription collection box in Oakdale. He reviewed the strict guidelines for placement, storage, transportation, disposal, and staffing. Chief Newton indicated that no other municipalities in Washington County run the program themselves; either the prescription drug collection box is housed in a County-owned building or the County handles the operations if the collection box is in a City-owned building. It was noted that the Washington County Sheriff's Office will not offer this type of service to Oakdale.

In response to Council Member Ingebrigtsen's question about Chief Newton's greatest challenge, Chief Newton stated it is staffing, because a patrol officer would have to take on this task.

Council Member Morcomb was unclear why the County could not do the administrative tasks of the program like it does for the City of Hugo, especially because there is not a centrally-located prescription drug collection box in the County. Mayor Zabel indicated there will likely be a collection box in the new Washington County Service Center that is being relocated in Woodbury. Chief Newton noted that currently when residents come to City Hall looking for a prescription drug collection box, City staff directs them to the County Service Center in Woodbury or the Oakdale Hy-Vee. Council Member Willenbring suggested using social media to inform residents about the current drop off sites located in the City.

Mayor Zabel added that promoting current locations within the City could be an effective alternative to the prescription drug collection box program.

Council Member Morcomb stated that he will call County Commissioner Stan Karwoski to ask for an update from their previous conversation about this program. He clarified that the proposed drop site could be at the Oakdale Library versus City Hall.

ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Ms. Volkers stated that the topic of City advisory bodies will be brought to the October 24, 2023 workshop for Council to discuss any changes they may want to make to some or all of the advisory bodies.

Ms. Volkers reported that the new Public Works facility site clean up should be done by April 1, 2024. In response to Council Member Willenbring's question about the color of the exterior and interior shades of blue, Ms. Volkers and Public Works Manager Jim Romanik confirmed they are intended to match; however, the renderings do not always provide the accurate color when printed out.

COUNCIL TOPICS

Council Member Ingebrigtsen asked if the Planning Commission can table an agenda item. Mayor Zabel and Ms. Volkers indicated they have to vote even if they are uncomfortable doing so as that is part of being on the Commission, and the City Council uses their recommendations when making decisions. Council Member Ingebrigtsen offered to provide feedback on the matter to Planning Commission Chair Dallas Pierson. The Council was comfortable with this suggestion.

Council Member Her stated that Stacie Penn, Economic Development Commissioner, mentioned to him that Granada Lakes Townhome Association often has abandoned bulk furniture on the corner of their neighborhood. Community Development Director Andy Gitzlaff stated he will notify Code Enforcement Officer Ken Meuwissen. Council Member Her suggested the City sponsor a spring-cleaning event to help mitigate this issue. Mayor Zabel added the possibility of a one-day bulk drop off at City Hall. Mr. Romanik stated that the City used to have an event like this, but the cost to the City was too burdensome. City staff was asked to research the possibility of bringing this event back in the future.

Council Member Morcomb noted that he will be absent at the October 24, 2023 meetings. He also asked if any COVID loans have been repaid. Mr. Gitzlaff reported that two loans have been repaid. Ms. Volkers added that letters have been sent to each debtor with a payment plan option and next steps the City will take if the loan is not repaid.

In reference to the new franchise fee percentage-based model, Council Member Willenbring would like clarity on which line item on her Xcel Energy bill is reflective of the 'gross revenue' referenced in the franchise fee ordinances. Ms. Volkers indicated she will research this and report back.

Council Member Willenbring asked Chief Newton about the process of bringing residents into compliance after the change to City Code Chapter 4, relating to the maximum number of birds that can be kept on a resident's property. Chief Newton explained that the residents holding current licenses are informed of the ordinance change and given a grace period to comply. Council Member Willenbring would like to revisit the Chapter 4 ordinance change, especially as it relates to the coop regulations given the comments from Oakdale resident Les Larson during the Open Forum at the September 12, 2023 regular meeting. Chief Newton noted that 14 other cities' ordinances were used as a guide to rewrite the Oakdale City Code. Council Member Morcomb expressed a similar view as Council Member Willenbring as he would like to ensure that what is written in the City Code is accurate and well thought out. Ms. Volkers was unsure how to proceed without taking one person's suggestions and solely using them as the basis for an ordinance change. Mayor Zabel suggested that Council Member Willenbring research coop standards and bring back her findings to a future workshop meeting to continue the discussion and possibly look at changing the ordinance.

Mayor Zabel stated there have been safety concerns that have been brought up by residents and elected officials about the parent pick up line for Eagle Point Elementary School that spills out onto 15th Street North. Mayor Zabel suggested that senior City staff brainstorm solutions to address this issue and open the conversation up to Independent School District (ISD) 622 to find a viable solution. Council Member Willenbring clarified that school busses are not causing the traffic concern, it is solely related to the cars lining up on 15th Street North. Council Member Morcomb would support leaving this issue and resolution at the discretion of ISD622. Mayor Zabel suggested that the City remain involved to see that a resolution is implemented. Council Member Ingebrigtson suggested sending the Police Department to disallow queueing on 15th Street North. Council Member Her suggested bringing the issue to Superintendent Osorio's attention when she attends a future workshop meeting, but give her notice that this is an item the Council would like to discuss. Council Member Morcomb agreed with this suggestion. Council Member Ingebrigtson was concerned that there may not be a viable solution to this issue. Ms. Volkers stated she will provide notice to Superintendent Osorio that it is a topic the Council would like to discuss when she attends a future workshop meeting.

Mayor Zabel reminded the Council to think about desired items for the 2024 legislative agenda.

ADJOURNMENT

The workshop was adjourned at 6:55 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Sara Ludwig, City Clerk