



MINUTES
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL
OF THE CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE, MINNESOTA
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 14, 2023
7 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS

1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Mayor Dan Louismet called the meeting to order at 7 p.m. The City Clerk took attendance for Councilmembers Kevin Edberg, Steven Engstran and Heidi Hughes. Councilmembers Dan Jones and Bill Walsh were excused. Staff in attendance were City Manager Lindy Crawford, Public Works Director/City Engineer Paul Kauppi, Community Development Director Jason Lindahl, Housing and Economic Development Coordinator Tracy Shimek, City Clerk Caley Longendyke, and City Attorney Troy Gilchrist.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. Minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting on October 24, 2023

It was moved by Councilmember **Engstran**, seconded by Councilmember **Edberg**, to approve the minutes. Motion carried 3-0.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Mayor Dan Louismet noted that a portion of the meeting will be closed for an attorney-client protected discussion regarding the PFAS class action suits against 3M and DuPont that identify the City as a claimant. It was moved by Councilmember **Edberg**, seconded by Councilmember **Engstran**, to approve the agenda as amended. Motion carried 3-0.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

- A. Accept minutes: September Park Advisory Commission, September White Bear Lake Conservation District, October Planning Commission
- B. Resolution approving on-sale intoxicating liquor license for Golf Nerd LLC **Res. No. 13265**
- C. Resolution approving edible cannabinoid products licenses for multiple eligible businesses **Res. No. 13266**
- D. Resolution approving Memorandum of Understanding and accepting a grant for the Rotary Nature Preserve Phase 2 Restoration Project **Res. No. 13267**
- E. Resolutions regarding construction for the Public Safety Facility Project – Contractor Default and Reassignment of Contract **Res. No. 13268, Res No. 13269**
- F. Resolution granting a conditional use permit for 4350 Centerville Road **Res. No. 13270**
- G. Resolutions approving Memorandums of Understanding for 2024 health insurance benefit contributions for bargaining employee groups **Res. No. 13271, Res. No. 13272, Res. No. 13273, Res. No. 13274**

It was moved by Councilmember **Hughes**, seconded by Councilmember **Engstran**, to approve the consent agenda. Motion carried 3-0.

5. VISITORS AND PRESENTATIONS

A. Housing Community Survey Report

Housing and Economic Development Coordinator Shimek introduced Peter Leatherman, chief executive officer of The Morris Leatherman Company, to present the findings of the recently conducted housing community survey. The survey included a random sample of 400 residents with a balloon sample of 400 residents ages 55 years and older. He shared demographic results, which helps ensure a fair representation of various ages and helps identify differences in opinions between demographic groups. Results were divided between “overall” and “55+” groups. More demographic results showed household ownership versus renting, type of housing, income range, gender, full-time or part-time occupations, financial situation, and ward designation. For rating quality of life, both the overall and 55+ population rated excellent or good. Leatherman noted that following the pandemic, people have become generally less enthusiastic, which makes it harder to achieve an excellent rating in surveys. He said White Bear Lake has a high number of excellent ratings compared to other communities. For what is most liked about the city, people responded most frequently about the small-town feel, sense of community, safe and friendly people. For most serious issues, most people responded nothing, then taxes and growth as the next highest report for issues. Leatherman found that White Bear Lake has four times the amount of “boosters,” or people who don’t think anything is wrong, compared to other communities, which indicates residents’ high enthusiasm of living here.

Both groups overwhelmingly rated the city excellent and good as a place to raise children and retiring. Leatherman said cities typically see one or the other, but said White Bear Lake shows that it caters to both. When surveying residents about their own residence, they reported liking most their friendly neighbors, their dwelling, safeness, and proximity to services, among other reasons. When surveying about what residents think is the most serious issue, the biggest response at 25% reported “nothing”. Single-digit percentages of respondents reported on various other issues, including traffic, taxes, and crime. When asked how big of a factor was the cost of housing when moving to the area, about a quarter of residents said it was a major factor with the rest reporting it was a minor factor or not a factor at all, meaning they were moving here for other reasons. Most reported they planned to live in their house the rest of their life, specifically 38% of the overall population and 52% of the 55+ population. For the 55+ population who indicated plans to move, reasons included downsizing or responding to high cost of living. When asked how important it is to stay in White Bear Lake, about three-quarters of both the overall and 55+ population responded very and somewhat. Leatherman shared results of residents rating the amount of housing types, such as apartments, townhomes, starter homes, high-end housing and one-level senior housing, with a rating scale of too much, about right and too little.

Overall, Leatherman reported the community has strong cohesion and has a small-town feel, with residents being content living here and not having a desire to leave. Mayor Louismet thanked Leatherman for the overview and asked him to expand on the city being a unique

suburb that mirrors a small town. Leatherman said most residents would highly rate location and convenience of where they live, but White Bear Lake residents specifically noted the sense of community, which is not common for a suburb in the metropolitan area. Councilmember Edberg requested for a breakdown of the survey comparing perceptions of affordability for those who purchased their homes decades ago versus those who recently purchased their home. He also wondered about any shifts that have compromised the perception of affordability. Leatherman said longitudinal data would help explain shifts, which is not available for White Bear Lake. Leatherman, Mayor Louismet and Councilmember Edberg shared discussion about perception on property taxes and how it reflects in survey results. When asked if there were any blaring reports of concerns, Leatherman explained White Bear Lake is in line with other communities on reported issues, and that he'd expect the city to be first affected by macro, state-level issues than issues happening locally in the community. City Manager Crawford shared comments from a local business owner and prospective resident who both commented on the "sense of belonging" in White Bear Lake.

It was moved by Councilmember **Engstran**, seconded by Councilmember **Edberg**, to approve **Res. No. 13275** accepting the Community Housing Survey summary report. Motion carried 3-0.

B. Downtown Mobility and Parking Study Update

Public Works Director/City Engineer Kauppi introduced Mark Nolan, project manager for Short Elliot Hendrickson (SEH), who is leading the Downtown Mobility and Parking Study for the City. He talked about the process of the study and mentioned there has been general consensus between the steering committee and the greater community on certain issues. Nolan said the study is about two-thirds complete and they expect it to wrap up in February 2024. He summarized the findings of a crash analysis conducted between 2018-2022, and there was focus on the intersection of 4th Street and Highway 61, as well as specific areas of downtown. Nolan presented information on parking utilization and the findings of the study. The study showed the availability of on-street and off-street parking during different times of the day. He summarized the findings by stating there is parking, but it's a matter of people understanding they may not be parking right in front of their destination. Nolan shared information about public engagement, like the Marketfest booth, community survey, and sidewalk decals. There were 255 survey responses and 20 attendees who attended a community workshop.

During a mobility and circulation analysis, Nolan said the downtown sidewalks have enough pedestrian corridor, but there is a lack of buffered space on either side of the walkways where trees, benches, bike racks and flowerpots could be placed. These buffers are called activity and boulevard zones. Nolan said some ways to improve circulation and access would be to add bike route connections; modify access points and intersections from Highway 61; improve pedestrian crossings; incorporate one-way streets, and incorporate pedestrian-focused streets. He displayed images showing alternative options for road and sidewalk layouts to improve pedestrian space. He also shared images of unique pedestrian crossways, such as raised crosswalks, curb extensions that narrow the road at the crossing point, and changes in roadway material at crosswalks. Nolan explained different ways to improve the parking experience, such as shifting the community's perception that parking may not be right in front of the destination business, supporting some on-street parking in adjacent neighborhoods, directing downtown

business employees to park in designated areas, and utilizing private parking lots through agreements. Nolan shared a list of next steps, including engaging property owners and business owners and continuing to convene the committee.

Mayor Louismet noted the importance of preserving what the community likes about downtown while making improvements. Mayor Louismet asked about the viability of a pedestrian bridge or an underpass across Highway 61. Due to accessibility requirements and maximum slope, a pedestrian bridge would extend so far out from the intersection that pedestrians would likely not use it and the structure would interfere with surrounding buildings. With the proximity to the lake, an underpass would interfere with groundwater levels and would likely require consistent pumping efforts to keep it dry. Decreasing the speed limit on Highway 61 around downtown was discussed, but would not be effective without road re-design. Community Development Director Lindahl shared information about how certain perceptual roadway designs will naturally slow down drivers, such as buildings placed closer to the roadway and narrower streets. There was discussion on whether snow impacts the parking analysis. Director Kauppi referenced a different parking analysis study conducted by SEH that didn't show significant variances in the data with snowfall, but said there will be some impact with continuous heavy snow fall. Councilmember Edberg asked how residents are being engaged, in response to on-street parking in adjacent neighborhoods as a solution. Director Kauppi said even during the busiest times, there isn't much parking activity in the neighborhoods, with the exception of households right next to the downtown district. Nevertheless, staff will plan to expand mailings to those neighborhoods for the next open house.

Director Kauppi noted that the study will help create solutions which could be implemented over an extended period of time. Every issue will not be resolved immediately due to cost constraints, but there could be a plan in place. He said the Minnesota Department of Transportation is working closely with the City on future plans for improving Highway 61 intersections, with work estimated to commence in 2027. Councilmember Edberg pointed out the heavy focus of downtown for this study and advocated for other areas to receive this level of investment. City Manager Crawford emphasized the importance of the entire City as a whole and noted there are other active projects happening outside of the downtown area, such as the County Road E Corridor Action Plan. Councilmember Hughes questioned the sustainability of added features of the downtown area and the ongoing effect on other City resources, for example, more staff time needed to maintain any added trees. When asked about diagonal parking, Nolan shared the benefits and noted there will be more conversation about the option. Councilmember Hughes shared that she has frequently biked around the downtown area and supports bicyclist accessibility. She referred to Mayor Louismet's earlier comment about keeping the downtown charm and she agreed, sharing caution that some of the eccentric features of downtown shouldn't be completely eliminated with future construction.

C. Biannual Public Works / Engineering Department Report

Public Works Director/City Engineer Kauppi presented the department's first biannual report. He provided an overview of the staffing structure of both the Public Works and Engineering departments. He shared infrastructure statistics, such as the following: 89 miles of streets, 106

cul-de-sacs, 24 parks, 122 miles of watermain, 446 street lights, and more. Director Kauppi summarized the operations, projects, and new equipment overview for the Water Division, Sewer Division, Parks Division, Streets Division, Fleet Maintenance Division and Engineering Division. Below are highlighted projects between May and October 2023.

- Water: Lime slaker replacement; two new service trucks; Well 2 rehabilitation; and unplanned repairs for booster pumps, Well 1 VFD and chlorine scale.
- Sewer: Sewer lining; three manholes lined; purchase of a new service truck; and purchase of a push camera.
- Parks: Lakewood Hills All Abilities Playground; Lions Park restroom renovation; City Hall air handler replacement; Public Works generator installation; citywide lighting retrofit project; and building security upgrades.
- Streets: New service truck; new single axle plow truck; wildcat snow blower refresh; and unplanned pothole patch truck repairs.
- Fleet Maintenance: LaFrance engine repair; wildcat snow blower refresh; water plant slaker auger repairs; and asset management software implementation.
- Engineering: Public Safety Facility Project; Downtown Mobility and Parking Study; South Shore Boulevard Street and Trail Project; Rotary Nature Preserve Restoration Project; Oak Knoll Spent Lime Project; and various maintenance projects (seal coat, crack sealing, and concrete repairs).

City Manager Crawford noted there has been great progress catching up with replacing equipment in disrepair. She complimented the City's mechanics for maintaining the operation of equipment for as long as they have been. She said there will be a Public Works open house in the spring for the community to see the Public Works Facility and learn more about Public Works operations. Mayor Louismet and Councilmember Edberg passed on their appreciation to Public Works and Engineering staff for their work.

6. PUBLIC HEARINGS

Nothing scheduled.

7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

Nothing scheduled.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Canvass Results of Municipal General Election 2023

City Manager Crawford presented the official vote count for the 2023 municipal general election, declaring Bill Walsh (Ward 1), Andrea West (Ward 3), and Steven Engstran (Ward 5) elected to the office for the term January 2024 to January 2028. With the City Council being the Canvassing Board for all municipal elections, the Council must adopt a resolution canvassing the election results.

It was moved by Councilmember **Hughes**, seconded by Councilmember **Edberg**, to approve **Res. No. 13276** canvassing results of the 2023 general municipal election. Motion carried 3-0.

9. DISCUSSION

Nothing scheduled.

10. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

City Manager Crawford shared information on anniversary celebrations for NER & Hammer Residences, White Bear Country Inn, and Rudy’s Redeye Grill. She reported that City staff have been discussing the 2024 legislative priorities agenda in preparation for upcoming conversations with the Council.

11. CLOSED SESSION

Mayor Louismet announced that the City Council was entering into closed session.

A motion was made by Councilmember **Hughes** to go into closed session pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 13D.05, subdivision 3(b) for an attorney-client protected discussion with the City’s attorney regarding the PFAS class action suits against 3M and DuPont that identify the City as a claimant. The motion was seconded by Councilmember **Edberg**. The meeting was closed at 9:16 p.m.

A motion was made by Councilmember **Engstran** to reopen the closed meeting. The motion was seconded by Councilmember **Hughes**. The meeting was reopened at 9:49 p.m. No further action was taken.

12. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business before the Council, it was moved by Councilmember **Engstran**, seconded by Councilmember **Edberg**, to adjourn the regular meeting at 9:50 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Dan Louismet, Mayor

ATTEST:

Caley Longendyke, City Clerk