



**MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING OF THE CITY COUNCIL  
OF THE CITY OF WHITE BEAR LAKE, MINNESOTA  
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 23, 2018  
7:00 P.M. IN THE COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

**1. CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL**

Mayor Jo Emerson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilmembers Doug Biehn, Kevin Edberg, Steven Engstran, Dan Jones and Bill Walsh in attendance. Staff members present were City Manager Ellen Hiniker, Community Development Director Anne Kane, Assistant City Engineer Jesse Farrell, Finance Director Don Rambow, Assistant Finance Director Kerri Kindsvater, City Clerk Kara Coustry and City Attorney Andy Pratt.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

**2. APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

It was moved by Councilmember **Engstran** seconded by Councilmember **Edberg**, to approve the Minutes of the Regular City Council Meeting on October 9, 2018.

Motion carried unanimously.

**3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA**

It was moved by Councilmember **Biehn** seconded by Councilmember **Jones**, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

**4. VISITORS AND PRESENTATIONS**

**A. Swearing in Samuel Shafer**

Chief Swanson introduced Samuel Shafer who grew up in the Woodbury/Cottage Grove area with aspirations of becoming a police officer at an early age. Before graduating from East Ridge High School, Sam was already taking college level classes in law enforcement. He kicked off his career as a Woodbury Police Explorer before becoming a White Bear Lake Police Reserve in 2015. Sam was hired as a White Bear Lake Community Service Officer (CSO) in 2016 and cross-trained as a dispatcher while also working as a security guard at Woodwinds Hospital.

Chief Swanson spoke to Sam's character and his natural leadership as a mentor and role model to many newer Police Reserves and CSOs. To recognize Sam's accomplishment of becoming the newest White Bear Lake Police Officer, Sam was joined by many family and friends, including his mother, Valerie Current. The Oath of Office was administered by the city clerk and Officer Shafer's badge was pinned by his mother.

**B. Ramsey County Sheriff, Jack Serier**

Ramsey County Sheriff Jack Serier provided an annual update and highlighting initiatives of the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department as follows:

- Opioid Crisis Education Campaign – Through partnerships with local Police Departments and Adult and Teen Challenge of MN's "Know the Truth" seminars, they seek to educate people of the dangers of opioid addiction. In 2017 there were 72 opioid deaths in Ramsey County, but the use of Narcan prevented hundreds. The next "Know the Truth" seminar will be at Bethel University on Nov. 1<sup>st</sup> at 6:30 p.m.
- SWAT – East Metro SWAT dissolved and joined Ramsey County SWAT for a complete Ramsey County Suburban SWAT.
- Safety and Threat Assessment Group – Ramsey County designated a Sergeant to provide a countywide amenity on threat assessment and preparedness. Trainers educate staff, schools, corporate offices and churches about building safety, redesign and retrofitting for safety and threat preparedness.
- Budget – Sheriff Serier introduced Booker Hodges, Undersheriff for Administration and the chief bookkeeper. He reported that from a budget of approximately \$58 million, the Ramsey County Sheriff's Office was able to return \$1.2 million in unspent funding back to the community.
- Community Circle for Race and Gender Equity As an Employer of Choice – The investments made by staff and continued outreach has led to Ramsey County having the most diverse detention staff in Minnesota, with over 53% being women or people of color. Sheriff Serier reported those numbers are rising in the sworn ranks as well.
- Fright Farm – Open Friday and Saturday nights in October in addition to Halloween night, and a low-scare event on Sunday, October 28. Money raised from this event goes to the Sheriff's Foundation 501(c)(3) to support patrols in schools and other Sheriff's Department initiatives.

Having worked at the Sheriff's Office for 28 years and speaking to past co-workers, Councilmember Biehn expressed appreciation for the leadership at the Ramsey County Sheriff's Department and their relationship with the White Bear Lake Police Department. He also encouraged people to attend the Fright Farm.

Councilmember Edberg inquired as to advancements in domestic violence and mental health. Sheriff Serier noted this is domestic violence awareness month and staff will be holding a press conference at St. Paul Intervention Headquarters tomorrow to raise awareness. Sheriff Serier pointed to continuous process improvements driving better training and standards, which has transformed the approach to victims such that responders today are better advocates for them. He agreed to send statistics to Councilmember Edberg.

Sheriff Serier addressed mental health and mentioned the addition of a PhD Psychologist and a Masters in Social Work who work in the jail and the County workhouse. He stated that nationally, 1/3 the population have diagnosed mental health issues and another 1/3 have undiagnosed mental health issues. Sheriff Serier pointed to an increase in support and transition services to individuals exiting the jails. More training time for officers is devoted toward de-escalation and crisis intervention.

Councilmember Walsh asked if the cost of Narcan had stabilized. In response, Sheriff Serier stated there are foundations to assist with the purchase of Narcan but departments are beginning to budget for it. Undersheriff Hodges confirmed each dose costs \$100 and they have a shelf life of only one year.

Mayor Emerson thanked Sheriff Serier for his update.

## 5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

- A. Resolution establishing and imposing special assessment for the year 2018 with no interest on taxable property within the Birch Lake Improvement District

Finance Director Rambow reviewed the Birch Lake Improvement District (BLID)'s proposed special assessment. He added adjacent property owners would be assessed, and funds used for programs that are beneficial for Birch Lake, the surrounding community and the City of White Bear Lake.

Mayor Emerson opened the public hearing at 7:36 p.m.

Mr. Laliberte of the Birch Lake Improvement District, 1387 Highway 96, stated he lives on the south side of Birch Lake. He added the BLID is in its 9<sup>th</sup> year, with a \$20,000 budget (approximately \$300/unit). Half the budget goes toward managing the quality of water with weeds and the fish and the other half goes toward general improvements.

Mayor Emerson added that Birch Lake is a Minnesota Star Lake and BLID participated in a shoreline project with VLAWMO. Mr. Laliberte confirmed that and mentioned the next project will be to place cameras along the walking paths to take pictures for time lapse replay.

Mayor Emerson closed the public hearing at 7:39 p.m.

It was moved by Councilmember **Walsh** seconded by Councilmember **Biehn**, to approve **Resolution No. 12283** establishing and imposing special assessment for the year 2018 with no interest on taxable property within the Birch Lake Improvement District

Motion carried unanimously.

- B. Resolution certifying delinquent 2018 miscellaneous private property assessment for recovery of City expenses

Finance Director Rambow reviewed a list of services provided by the City to private residential properties that were not yet reimbursed. He added the residents have been notified of delinquent charges, which will be certified to the property for collection in a few weeks.

Mayor Emerson opened the public hearing at 7:40 p.m. but as no one came forward to speak, the public hearing was closed.

It was moved by Councilmember **Jones** seconded by Councilmember **Engstran**, to approve **Resolution No. 12284** certifying delinquent 2018 miscellaneous private property assessment for recovery of city expenses.

Motion carried unanimously.

- C. Resolution certifying delinquent charges related to the municipal utility system assessment

Finance Director Rambow reviewed proposed utility assessments for residents who are delinquent on their utility charges. He stated customers are given a 30-day period to pay their utility bill, after which a notice is sent, and the charges are certified and collected through property taxes.

Mayor Emerson opened the public hearing at 7:42 p.m. but as no one came forward to speak, the public hearing was closed.

It was moved by Councilmember **Biehn** seconded by Councilmember **Engstran**, to approve **Resolution No. 12285** certifying delinquent charges related to the municipal utility system assessment.

Motion carried unanimously.

**6. LAND USE**

Nothing scheduled

**7. UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

Nothing scheduled

**8. ORDINANCES**

Nothing scheduled

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Resolution authorizing White Bear Lake Fire Relief Pension Adjustment**

Finance Director Rambow explained that through an actuarial study, the Relief Association determined the pension fund is funded at 131% and could support a pension adjustment. Mr. Rambow explained that a pension adjustment was historically approved every three years, but the last approval happened in 2007 prior to the great recession of 2008. A resulting shortfall in the pension fund at that time led to the City being ordered by the State Auditor to make annual payments of approximately \$300,000 into the fund until recovered. Through special legislation, the Fire Relief Association conducted an interim actuarial study, which proved there was sufficient funding after the market rebounded in 2009. As a result, the City was not required by the State to supplement the fund.

To avoid possible short-falls in the pension account similar to 2008, in which the City is financially responsible to cover, Mr. Rambow suggested the fund retain 115 – 120% or more funding after a pension adjustment. As such, he forwarded the White Bear Lake Fire Relief Board's recommendation for a maximum pension adjustment retroactively effective January 1, 2018 totaling \$170 for monthly annuities and \$1,040 for each service year for lump sum recipients. These adjustments would maintain a pension-funding ratio of 120%.

It was moved by Councilmember **Jones**, seconded by Councilmember **Edberg** to adopt **Resolution No. 12286** authorizing White Bear Lake Fire Relief Pension Adjustment.

Motion carried 4:1, Councilmember Engstran abstained.

B. Resolution authorizing a change to the By-Laws of the White Bear Lake Fire Relief Association

Finance Director Rambow highlighted two proposed changes to the By-Law of the White Bear Lake Fire Relief Association, which have remain unchanged since 2000. Mr. Rambow explained that the vesting provision is proposed to be 5-years instead of 10-years, which is more realistically achieved.

Mr. Rambow noted the other proposed change is to eliminate incentive points for pension calculations (annuity and lump sum). The recent reorganization which expands ambulance staffing through the combined use of full-time Paramedic/ Firefighters with part time duty crews and paid-on-call responders eliminates justification for incentive points. He reported that the assignment of incentive points over the years has become difficult to justify and forwarded the Fire Relief Board's recommendation to eliminate the incentive point system effective October 1, 2018.

Councilmember Edberg inquired as to the cost of implementing a reduced vesting period of five years. Mr. Rambow explained that the cost is relatively neutral as the actuarial study figures in everyone at the maximum benefit.

It was moved by Councilmember **Biehn**, seconded by Councilmember **Jones** to adopt **Resolution No. 12287** authorizing a change to the By-Laws of the White Bear Lake Fire Relief Association.

Motion carried 4:1, Councilmember Engstran abstained.

C. Resolution authorizing the White Bear Lake Fire Relief Association to join the Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Retirement Plan

Mr. Rambow reported that the state legislature created a Statewide Firefighter Retirement Plan (SVFRP) administered by PERA to relieve members from pension fund management. Any change in the financial status of this plan must be recommended by the Fire Relief Board of Trustees and approved by the City Council as the City is ultimately financially responsible. Mr. Rambow explained that 2018 legislation allows for the Fire Relief Board of Trustees to opt out of the PERA plan if dissatisfied, which has made the switch more palatable.

Mr. Rambow forwarded the Fire Relief Association's recommendation to join SVFRP. He highlighted benefits of switching plan administrators including no more annual audits, ensured compliance with expanding GASB standards, and monthly administration of retirees' payments. Mr. Rambow projected that investment, auditing, accounting and financial reporting fees could be reduced annually by approximately \$40,000 - \$50,000 – a cost savings that would become available for future pension adjustments.

Councilmember Walsh asked for clarification as to PERA's charges for managing the pension fund. Mr. Rambow stated that PERA will be charging just a few thousand dollars to manage this fund compared to approximately \$15,000 paid to the current vendor. Mr. Rambow also confirmed that this change would free up staff time as well.

Councilmember Jones inquired as to what triggered the change of allowing an entity to pull out of PERA. Mr. Rambow shared the argument of the Firefighter's Working Group that PERA should be competitive enough that if service is unsatisfactory, there should be a choice for organizations to switch plan administrators. Legislation to this effect was signed by the Governor this year.

It was moved by Councilmember **Jones**, seconded by Councilmember **Biehn** to adopt **Resolution No. 12288** authorizing the White Bear Lake Fire Relief Association to join the Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Retirement Plan.

Motion carried 4:1, Councilmember Engstran abstained.

- D. Resolution accepting bids and awarding contract for the HVAC improvements to the White Bear Lake Armory, City Project No. 19-12

Assistant City Engineer Farrell reported the City received two bids for HVAC improvements to the White Bear Lake Armory. He stated the Historical Society will contribute \$30,000, raised through grants and fundraising, toward this project. Mr. Farrell forwarded a recommendation to receive the bids and award the contract to New Century Systems, Inc., with the lowest base bid of \$48,736.00. Mr. Farrell anticipated this work would be complete by the end of next month.

Mr. Farrell added that the emergency boiler repairs at the Armory have been completed and the heat will be back on tomorrow.

It was moved by Councilmember **Biehn**, seconded by Councilmember **Engstran** to adopt **Resolution No. 12289** accepting bids and awarding contract for the HVAC improvements to the White Bear Lake Armory, City Project No. 19-12.

Motion carried unanimously.

- E. Resolution providing benefits for employees of the City of White Bear Lake who are not covered by employment agreements

City Manager Hiniker stated that the majority of the City's workforce is not represented by a collective bargaining agreement. Non-union members are classified as clerical/technical or management/exempt. She explained that each year the Council establishes compensation parameters for these employees through the Position Classification and Compensation Plan. Other benefit changes for non-bargaining employees, including medical/life insurance, have historically been established by Council to coincide with premium rate adjustments and market conditions effective January 1, 2019. The renewal period also allows employee benefits to be coordinated with union contract negotiations, which all have a January 1st renewal date.

Ms. Hiniker explained that after an extensive RFP process, health insurance increased on average 12.5%. A comparison with other northeast entities revealed that White Bear Lake is somewhat behind others in benefit offerings. She forwarded a recommendation that the City increase its HSA contribution to match the plan deductible increase in order to neutralize the impact of the insurance plan adopted.

Ms. Hiniker also pointed to a recommended change to the fitness program in which the City will partner with the YMCA for its wellness program. Lastly, staff is not

recommending any change to the employee deferred insurance benefit contribution.

Councilmember Edberg inquired as to the reason for steeply increased quotes for health insurance coverage. Ms. Hiniker confirmed the reason is primarily internally driven from a high experience rating within the organization. To address this, staff is looking at replacing the fitness incentive with a more holistic wellness program. She mentioned that the experience rating is not always tied directly to the employee, but to family members of the employee who are covered under medical insurance. Ms. Hiniker also pointed to the small size of the organization, which absorbs costs less effectively. Lastly, Ms. Hiniker expressed a desire to explore joining with other communities for a larger pool.

It was moved by Councilmember **Walsh**, seconded by Councilmember **Biehn** to adopt **Resolution No. 12290** providing benefits for employees of the City of White Bear Lake who are not covered by employment agreements.

Motion carried unanimously.

## 10. CONSENT

- A. Resolution approving business licenses. **Resolution No. 12291**
- B. Acceptance of an extension to the White Bear Lake Mitsubishi lease

It was moved by Councilmember **Biehn** seconded by Councilmember **Walsh**, to approve the consent agenda as presented.

Motion carried unanimously.

## 11. DISCUSSION

- A. Rush Line Station Area Planning

Ms. Hiniker stated that the Rush Line Planning Team is here to present the Rush Line BRT project as it stands today. She assured all who are listening that there will be future opportunities for additional engagement and directed people to provide feedback at [rushline.org](http://rushline.org) so that all comments are tracked appropriately.

Brian Isaksson stated he is the Deputy Director for multi-model Planning with Ramsey County Public Works. He encouraged folks to provide feedback at [rushline.org](http://rushline.org) so that comments related to the Rush Line Project can be catalogued. He passed along Commissioner Reinhardt's regrets she could not be here this evening.

Beth Bartz introduced herself as a member of SRF Consulting Group, who was contracted to assist Ramsey County in developing the Rush Line Project. Ms. Bartz provided a status update on the Rush Line Project, stating this is a purpose driven project identified decades ago in the Metropolitan Council's long-range plan to address:

- Planning for sustainable growth and development
- Limited sustainable travel options
- Serving the needs of those who rely on transit
- Increasing demand for reliable high-frequency transit

Ms. Bartz reviewed the timeline of the transitway development process, indicating the Ramsey County Regional Railroad Authority oversees the first two steps, Metropolitan Council oversees the remainder, and the public engagement process continues throughout:

1. Pre-Project Development (2015-2017) – Completed. Bus rapid transit (BRT) was selected with each terminus as downtown St. Paul and White Bear Lake.
2. Environmental Analysis (2018-2019) – The current phase of the project. The key goal is to define a working project definition so that an environmental study can be conducted to assess community impact, natural environment, right-of-way, project costs and economic impact.
3. Project Development (2020-2021)
4. Final Engineering (2022-2023)
5. Construction (2024-2026)

Ms. Bartz described bus rapid transit (BRT) as a high-quality service operating in a designated lane with frequent and reliable stops. The vehicles would be right-sized for the ridership, easy to board at all doors with a fare platform, electric or hybrid-electric in nature for quiet operations and low emissions and would have bike storage.

Ms. Bartz explained that public engagement has occurred from the onset and will continue throughout the project. From March through September, 87 events were conducted or staffed with over 1,300 community members, businesses and other stakeholders, and over 700 comments have been recorded. Ms. Bartz noted that there has been significant general support for the project and its long-term value for the White Bear Lake community and a high level of interest in a downtown station.

Ms. Bartz spoke of the station area planning process in which three meetings with the working group identified station locations that maximize access, ridership and increase transit connectivity. She stated there would be no bus maintenance or storage on site and the station would be regularly monitored and maintained. An adequate parcel size would accommodate 100 parking spaces, 4 bus platforms and an operator restroom/breakroom.

Ms. Bartz shared four proposed downtown sites as Clark Avenue, Banning Avenue, 4<sup>th</sup> & Bloom Avenue and on Long Avenue near the Hanifl Performing Arts Center. She stated that the working group recommended the Clark Avenue Station Platform as it served the downtown well, had opportunity for additional parking and was convenient for pedestrians.

Ms. Bartz conveyed concerns expressed by the public for a station platform in downtown White Bear Lake. She stated next steps by the Rush Line Project Team will be to look at broader downtown options, consider feedback on benefits and concerns, identify top candidates and bring analysis back to the community.

Councilmember Edberg stated there are many identified reasons for having rapid transit between downtown St. Paul and White Bear Lake, but asked specifically about the employment value. Ms. Bartz relayed interest expressed by employers such as Saputo Dairy, Grandma's Bakery and The Waters of White Bear Lake who have a difficult time filling many mid-level positions. She also stated that many medical facilities in St. Paul have expressed the same concerns relative to transit accessibility for their workforce.

Councilmember Edberg stated that there are about 10,000 baby boomers retiring each



day, which means businesses have a tremendous need to attract and retain employees. Ms. Bartz confirmed there are about 100,000 jobs located within a half mile of the stops along the project corridor. Councilmember Edberg pointed out that this is a reason to consider rapid transit and how communities are serving the needs of employers and employees. Regardless of station location, he expressed the importance of having BRT serve White Bear Lake.

Councilmember Walsh inquired as to funding of BRT in the absence of state and federal funding to date and expressed preference in an older process that would first find dedicated funds through state and federal government support before so much time was spent on planning. He asked where local money will come from in the absence of state funding and with waning support for these projects in the state legislature. He mentioned sales tax revenue now covering the local share, but federal funding a few years from now is questionable and he feels a lot of time is wasted in planning for something that may never get the funding needed to be viable.

Councilmember Walsh is opposed to the Rush Line Project. He does not feel there is a need or the ridership to support it. He wondered how much money would be recovered through fares compared to sales tax revenue used to pay for ongoing operations. Ms. Bartz relayed that this information will be assessed during this environmental assessment phase. She stated it is their assumption that 49% of the project will be federally funded and 51% of capital will come from Ramsey County's half-cent sales tax.

Councilmember Jones supports BRT coming up Highway 61, but finds it ironic the Metropolitan Council has removed bus routes and services in White Bear Lake.

Ms. Bartz mentioned the connectivity piece is part of this process, perhaps through the addition of local buses on east/west routes, or employment of NewTrax to run shuttle service during their downtimes such that broader connections can be made east/west of proposed stations. She reiterated that BRTs value would not be maximized if the focus was only on the half mile radius of station locations.

Mayor Emerson said she is against the Clark Avenue site, stating it just will not work and another site must be identified. She stated that at the end of the day the Council will make the decision.

Councilmember Biehn appreciates the deliberative process, only wishing it were faster. He supports the northbound route, believing it is necessary, but needs more information about the pros and cons of each of the proposed station locations before making a decision. He pointed out that the east metro has been left out and if we do not invest, we will continue to be left behind. He spoke to his positive experiences with mass transit throughout the world and the resulting development surrounding it, and ability to connect people.

Councilmember Edberg spoke to the deliberative process and the need to flush out the project prior to asking for a 49% federal investment. He believes the terminus should be downtown, but does not believe the Clark Avenue location is the right site. He prefers a location west of Highway 61 to tie into aspirations of a commercial district there. Councilmember Edberg also thanked the citizens who volunteered hours of their time considering what is best for the community. Although we may not agree with their proposed location, they deserve respect and credit for taking on this initiative.

Councilmember Jones agrees in the importance of access to downtown, but also believes that the station should be on the west side of Highway 61. He stated that with a BRT line going along Highway 61, it may be possible to reduce traffic speed to 30 miles per hour so some safe crosswalks could be implemented.

Councilmember Walsh questioned whether we even want a bus line coming up Highway 61 and what will that do to the small town feel that people love so much in community surveys. How will this affect the downtown and the marina triangle? He also mentioned the need to add law enforcement into the discussion to address the influx of people that will be coming into the community.

Ms. Bartz encouraged people to visit [rushline.org](http://rushline.org) to register for email notification of upcoming community meetings. Ms. Hiniker stated that staff will continue to work with the County and the Planning Team to make sure the Council is informed. She stated it is not likely this topic will be revisited until after the New Year.

Councilmember Biehn wanted to know the pros and cons of just having a bus stop in downtown and locating a station platform with parking in a more remote location.

Councilmember Jones wanted to know more about the parking needs in downtown White Bear Lake and the impact of traffic and congestion. Ms. Hiniker mentioned there has been a more informal parking survey conducted, but nothing formal is planned at this time until a more specific site for the platform is identified, unless otherwise directed by the Council.

Mayor Emerson thanked the community for their engagement and encouraged continue involvement as the Council works through this process.

#### B. DNR groundwater study

City Manager Hiniker reported that the DNR completed its transient model study and provided a brief summary of its findings. Ms. Hiniker also reported that the contested case hearing with the Administrative Judge related to amendments to the DNR permits is scheduled for November 8th.

## 12. COMMUNICATIONS FROM THE CITY MANAGER

- White Bear Lake School District Facility Study – Asst. City Manager Rick Juba is a participant in the planning process as the Vice Chair of Community Services. After tonight's meeting, the Planning Group will break out into three study groups to focus on Community Spaces, Security in Facilities and Learning Spaces. Each group will meet four times through December with findings presented to the School Board in January. Master Planning will follow in February and Community Engagement & Feedback will occur throughout spring.
- Bruce Vento – Oct. 25<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 p.m. in the Public Safety Building
- Fire Department – Eight Paramedic/Firefighters have been hired and start on Monday.
- Jesse Farrell, Assistant City Engineer announced that a neighborhood meeting for

the 2019 Street Reconstruction project is scheduled for November 7, 2018.

**13. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business before the Council, it was moved by Councilmember **Walsh** seconded by Councilmember **Biehn** to adjourn the regular meeting at **9:39 p.m.**

  
Jo Emerson, Mayor

**ATTEST:**

  
Kara Coustry, City Clerk