

Maple Grove City Council work session

meeting minutes

August 1, 2022

Call to order

Pursuant to call and notice thereof, a City Council work session was held at 5:45 p.m. on Monday, August 1, 2022 at the Maple Grove Government Center/Public Safety Facility, Hennepin County, Minnesota. Present was Mayor Mark Steffenson, and Councilmembers Karen Jaeger, Phil Leith (attending remotely via WebEx), Judy Hanson, and Kristy Barnett. Absent was none. Present also was City Administrator Heidi Nelson, Chief of Police Eric Werner, Police Captain Travis Pobuda, Fire Chief Tim Bush, Deputy Chief of Prevention Patrick Farrens, Human Resources Director Krista Guzman, Finance Director Greg Sticha, Parks and Recreation Director Chuck Stifter, and City Attorney Justin Templin.

Mayor Steffenson called the meeting to order at 5:51 p.m.

Local option sales tax ballot question

City Administrator Nelson explained that the City Council has previously discussed potential ballot language in order to pursue a local option sales tax to fund the Community Center renovation and expansion project. She noted that the ballot language needs to be submitted to the Hennepin County Auditor by August 26 in order to be included on the General Election ballot. As such, the August 15 City Council meeting is the last opportunity to take action on this agenda item.

Councilmember Hanson stated that the first word on the ballot question says “shall” and she questioned if it would be better to say “should”. She further questioned if the ballot language should read “which *will* include the following” rather than it reading “*may* include the following”.

City Administrator Nelson indicated that the city’s bond counsel representative, Mary Ippel, Taft Law, was present and could speak to the ballot language. She also noted that the city’s lobbyist, Ann Lenczewski, was present to answer questions regarding the legislative process.

Ms. Ippel explained that the ballot language was chosen to manage the city’s obligation in terms of the scope of the project and to provide the most flexibility. She did not see a practical difference between using the term “could” rather than “may”, but as far as “shall” or “should”, she felt the proper terminology would be to use “shall”.

Mayor Steffenson noted that the most important thing is for people to understand that repairs need to be made at the Community Center.

Ms. Ippel stated the city was fortunate to get the legislation to pass this in 2021.

Councilmember Barnett stated she does not support this going on the ballot this year because she does not feel it is enough money to grow the space. She questioned how the demands of the Community Center will be met as the city continues to grow if there is not enough square footage to make the Community Center larger. Councilmember Barnett indicated she feels the city needs a new Community Center, but supports pausing the project until there is a plan that meets more of the growing community's need.

Mayor Steffenson expressed his concern that if this does not happen now, it might never happen. Or, if when it does happen years from now, it will cost the residents twice as much money. He noted that the local option sales tax will pay for what has to be done, which is HVAC, roofs, and building structure repairs.

Councilmember Hanson agreed that the project should go forward.

Ms. Lenczewski stated that it is not a simple task to get this approved by the legislature, and there are a lot of factors as it relates to the legislative process. She advised that the city cannot assume that it will ever get this approved again. She also advised that the local option sales tax is shared by anyone visiting and spending money in the city whereas levying against property tax strictly affects Maple Grove residents. A ballot question in the fall provides residents a choice regarding who should help pay for the Community Center project.

City Administrator Nelson summarized that the ballot language of "may" will become "could" and this agenda item will be coming back for council consideration at the August 15 City Council meeting.

**Review draft
remote work policy**

City Administrator Nelson discussed the changes that were made to the remote work policy based on previous feedback received from the City Council. She noted that staff was asked to find out what the cities of Eden Prairie and Plymouth were offering for remote work. She advised that Eden Prairie does not have a formal policy. Plymouth does not have a formal policy, but does have a practice of remote work.

Councilmember Jaeger questioned what advantage there is to offering remote work. Mayor Steffenson responded and said that it is a need of today's workforce. City Administrator Nelson stated that today's workforce has changing needs and it is desirable to potential recruits. She advised that during COVID, staff was very productive while working remote and she acknowledged that service to the public always comes first. She stated that remote work helps with recruitment and retention of staff.

Councilmember Hanson stated she is currently seeing this in her workplace right now as their staff is looking for jobs that offer more flexibility. She noted that time and money go into training staff, so it is hard to see people leave just because there

is not enough flexibility offered. She reported that she has read through the draft remote work policy and she supports it.

Human Resources Director Guzman stated that in her previous city, remote work was appreciated, but at the same time, only about ten percent of the staff took advantage of working remotely. For those looking for that flexibility, remote work is worth more than money, and it is a great benefit that can be offered. She indicated that the City of Maple Grove has lost some good candidates because a remote work policy is not currently offered here.

Discussion continued regarding concerns with fire and police staff working remotely. The consensus of the council was to move forward with a remote work policy as long as the practice of remote work is the same as the policy and the concerns that have been previously discussed. City Administrator Nelson stated the remote work policy will be brought back to a future City Council meeting for formal consideration.

**Fence consortium
joint powers
agreement**

Deputy Chief of Prevention Farrens provided a brief summary of the working group that has been studying options and making recommendations for protection of buildings associated with no-notice critical incidents. He stated that the group determined that deployment of anti-scale fencing could be a tool used to protect government facilities while allowing for peaceful protests during critical events.

Deputy Chief of Prevention Farrens noted that there is not currently a supply of anti-scale fencing in Minnesota and the issue is that it could take 72 to 96 hours for fencing to be shipped to Minnesota, making alternative forms of barriers necessary in the interim.

Discussion continued regarding the joint powers agreement and some of the unknowns, including costs. The consensus of the City Council was to bring this item forward to a future City Council meeting for formal consideration.

**Other items as
deemed necessary**

None.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Steffenson at 7:20 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Nelson
City Administrator