

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS  
ST. FRANCIS MN  
CITY COUNCIL MINUTES  
July 19, 2021  
St. Francis Area Schools District Office  
4115 Ambassador Blvd. NW  
6:00 PM

**1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The regular City Council meeting was called to order at 6:00 pm by Mayor Steve Feldman.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Steve Feldman, Councilmembers Joe Muehlbauer, Kevin Robinson, and Sarah Udvig. Robert Bauer absent.

Also present: Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), City Planner Beth Richmond (HKGi), City Administrator Joe Kohlmann, Police Chief Todd Schwieger, Fire Chief Dave Schmidt, Liquor Store Manager John Schmidt, Community Development Director Kate Thunstrom, Finance Director Darcy Mulvihill and City Clerk Diana Saenger

City Engineer Craig Jochum (Hakanson Associates, Inc.) absent.

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: UDVIG APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUCIL AGENDA, AS PRESENTED.

Ayes: Udvig, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Feldman

Nays: None

Motion carried 4-0

**4. CONSENT AGENDA**

Items D & F pulled by Mayor Feldman for further discussion.

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: UDVIG APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA, AS PRESENTED.

Ayes: Udvig, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Feldman

Nays: None

Motion carried 4-0

**Item D-Municode – Agenda Packet Software upgrade:**

Mayor Feldman asked for clarification. This was something brought to the attention of our City Administrator and I will let him explain it. I think this is a very good idea and it brings us into a very different level of technology and efficiency.

Kohlmann explained that currently our process for creating our City Council packets sitting before you is a very labor some process. That packet probably took about 4 to 5 hours because it is a short packet. A longer packet with more agenda items would be about a 6-hour process to put together. Currently people are saving documents in various formats requiring conversion to Adobe software, compiling documents, assigning resolution numbers and ensuring all attachments are included and it is very time consuming. Thursdays before a Council Meetings I hold aside for doing this packet. The software before you was reviewed in a tutorial with Municode. It is a much quicker, seamless process where department heads will drop their agenda report and attachments into a web portal which will auto-generate and agenda in which we can move items up or down and place them in the order we want them in. I have to be honest, I have been doing this for 11 years and I wish I would have known that this existed because the time to create a packet is just extraordinary and I think we can cut it down to an hour with this new software.

Feldman stated that he likes the idea and like the other things we have done utilizing technology to our benefit. He pointed out that the contract is \$3,800.00 per year for three years at a fixed price. What it does is save their time rather than taking six hours to do it they can do it in an hour. I think it is a great idea and it is too bad we did not do it earlier than we are. Kohlman added that it will streamline process as it auto converts formats, and it is a one button push to create and agenda and publish it to the web site. Right now, we have to upload each one through the back end. Feldman asked when it will be in effect, and Kohlmann stated that it will take about six weeks to gain a person to come out and work with us to get it all in order. It will work nicely with our existing municode software. Feldman asked other staff if they felt this would make things easier on their end. All staff agreed it would. The Mayor open this topic up for questions.

Robinson pointed out that the agenda report states that this cost is included in the budget already and asked what category. Kohlmann responded notifying Robinson that we have some working capital within the budget. There may be some savings here or there and ever since he has been here they have had some surplus. We can come in under budget in certain categories and are confident this technology cost will be covered. Robinson noted that the labor savings will more than cover this. He notified the Mayor he is good with this. Muehlbauer and Udvig agree to this item. The Mayor pointed out how he enjoys when we use technology so rather than wasting time on this you focus on more important items.

Feldman stated that Darcy wanted mention of our Houdini here, is our new system for sound and video. We said for four and a half years now we were going to work on this and we finally gotten to the point where we are. Hopefully, Houdini will be doing his job for us.

Item F-Biosolids Tank Cleaning – Feldman stated that he spoke with Parish today about this. It states here that there is about three feet of solids that have to be removed. By not removing these solids, we are decreasing our holding capacity, which shortens the treatment time of solids for land application. We will also then be allowed to have about 20,000 more gallons of storage. He stated that it took time to gauge and to gain this information that we did before. We spoke about doing every three years and might want to do it every year and rotate each tank to be cleaned. He said he was going to have it in each year's budget. It was pointed out that they have been collecting data and this information was not available back in 2017. Windingstad responded noting that they did not have anything to measure against until now. Moving forward it will be a give or take based on how much is added year after year. Feldman did agree there would be an increase in frequency and he is glad they are proactively managing this. Muehlbauer asked about the process. Windingstad provided a summary including the cost is at an amount for an hourly rate and are not to exceed. This works out in our benefit. Feldman stated the importance of frequency making the point that they will then not have three feet to deal with because it will be taken care of before then. Windingstad stated that until they go through a full cycle they will not have an idea of a cost. It will be easier to gauge going forward once we have done it. Muehlbauer asked if the land applications are OK. Windingstad stated yes. The group discussed some more details. Feldman asked the other for their opinions. Robinson asked about the cost and it was confirmed that minus a couple of attachments which should have been removed, the cost is a little over \$31,000 and it is in the budget.

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: ROBINSON - APPROVING THE CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS D & E, AS PRESENTED.

Ayes: Udvig, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Feldman

Nays: None

Motion carried 4-0

**5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

City Administrator Kohlmann made note that there is no one currently in attendance to address the Council.

**6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE**

**7. PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE**

## 8. **OLD BUSINESS**

2nd reading of Ordinance 282 SS updating Chapter 2, Section 9, Fee Schedule. Kohlmann presented and explained that three additions since the 1<sup>st</sup> reading were a Bed & Breakfast fee of \$100, a slight increase in utility and a \$10 burn permit and is the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading if approved to be published on July 23<sup>rd</sup> and effective August 23<sup>rd</sup>, 2021.

Feldman stated that these rates seem to be right on and he is happy to see we are on top of these rates as necessary. He wants to move forward on this. Muehlbauer said he is good with this update. Robinson, said yes as long as Kate does what she said and looks at every two years to make sure that we are staying competitive and are aware of who is looking at our costs. It is a good place to build. Feldman agreed and stated that we want to stay competitive but do not go in the hole. Udvig is good. Feldman pointed out the less than 1% increase to the water meter equipment. That is because we upgraded to the new meters.

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: UDVIG - ORDINANCE 282, SECOND SERIES, AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 2-9-1 OF THE CITY CODE REGARDING THE FEE SCHEDULE

Ayes: Udvig, Robinson, Muehlbauer, Feldman

Nays: None

Motion carried 4-0

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: UDVIG - APPROVING RESOLUTION 2021-36 AUTHORIZING THE SUMMARY PUBLICATION OF ORDINANCE 282, SECOND SERIES AMENDING THE FEE SCHEDULE

Ayes: Udvig, Robinson, Muehlbauer, Feldman

Nays: None

Motion carried 4-0

## 9. **NEW BUSINESS**

Sale of Bonds – Resolution 2021-37 Awarding the Sale of General Obligation Bonds, Series 2021A, in the original aggregate principle amount of \$3,230,000.

The City Council decided to refund the 2010A GO Sewer Bonds, 2013A GO Crossover Refunding Bonds and the 2019 Water Meter Lease. The attached resolution will be updated once the bids have been received. Nick Anhut from Ehlers will present the results to council.

The City has been considering some refunding opportunities considering that today interest rates have been lower than experienced before. There are three different debt obligations that the City already had on its books. These

obligations paying up to 3.7% in interest. We considered savings at about \$125,000 from this refunding. Staff went on to get ratings on these bonds and that helped as they are rated at a high AA level which gives the market the ability to fund these at a lower interest rate. You are not a high risk and are able to repay the debt on these bonds. The rating was affirmed. The report is attached for Council Members and they can review it at their leisure. The City has good economic indicators showing no problem weathering the pandemic or resulting in recession that may take effect. It was noted that you have strong financial policies in place and strong cash and reserve policies in place. They did note that the City has a weak but manageable debt and pension liability but is consistent with many cities. That weakness did not hold you back from receiving a high rating in the top 15% of cities across that country. Kudos to the City for having those policies in place. We received 4 bids on the bonds with the low bid coming from Baird, proposing an interest rate of 0.76% on the bonds and their interties. This is for the bonds that will be repaid in just short of 10 years. The high bid came from Bernardi at 1.03% and in summarizing the difference between the two is about a sum of \$47,000. Working with the debt service agents the transaction should be put to Council as a request to request the amount to award bonds to Baird under proposal, \$200,474.00 on a net basis, net of any transactional costs incurred. The savings will not come up front but will be realized over time as you make lower bond payments. This results in about \$22,000 to \$25,000 in savings per year over the timeframe in which you retire these bonds and not extending them. This is a very positive result. There is a resolution before you. August 12<sup>th</sup> is when the funds will be wired in to take out the old debt and replace with the new debt savings allowing you to realize these savings right away.

Feldman thanked Anhut stating that his work is the best they have had in a long time creating a budget focused staff. We are doing our services at a low-cost, development of efficiencies and managing funds better. He pointed out this refunding and refinancing was originally presented in discussion at 1% and he came in even lower.

Udvig believes this savings is a good thing and thanked Darcy for her hard work. Robinson asked again what the exact savings is over the next ten years. Anhut stated \$200,474.00. Robinson just wanted to hear that again. He hopes the system appreciates this down the line and he thinks this is awesome and thanked staff. Muehlbauer echoed the others including thanking staff noting that he is glad to have Anhut on board and he has seen many improvements over the previous staff. Feldman stated it is about the market and we were diligent to be in discussions with City Administrator Kohlmann and watching this during the pandemic. One thing led to another and here we are. He thanked Staff and Anhut.

**MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: MUEHLBAUER APPROVING THE SALE OF BONDS - RESOLUTION 2021-37.**

Ayes: Udvig, Muehlbauer, Robinson, and Feldman  
Nays: None  
Motion carried 4-0

Post-Issuance Debt Compliance Policy – Darcy introduced the attached policy on Post-Issuance Debt Compliance Policy and Procedures. This is recommended to be adopted by Ehlers to comply with applicable state and federal laws. Ehlers will help with this compliance. Anhut explained that anytime debt is issued there are obligations the City has to make. There are also obligations particularly to the public markets there is an obligation to disclose. You do that through your audits. In addition to that you are issuing bonds that are on a tax-exempt basis and there are some IRS regulations imposed and what can qualify for tax exempt issuance. This policy cover these. It is called post issuance which is the policy for after the fact. It is a policy framework available for staff as well as advisors. It is good to have a formal policy framework. Anytime you are audited about your finances or issues through your disclosures, that is the first place to look. It was brought up in the past so they are presenting it again as it will strengthen the cities position.

Feldman asked if this is a continuous policy. Anhut responded stating yes, it is City wide and is a framework for all financial activity. Feldman asked if there were any questions. No questions.

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: MUEHLBAUER APPROVING POST ISSUANCE COMPLIANCE POLICY.

Ayes: Udvig, Muehlbauer, Robinson, and Feldman  
Nays: None  
Motion carried 4-0

#### **10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

There was no one in attendance to speak to the Council.

#### **11. REPORTS**

##### **PW – Water and Sewer Monthly**

Windingstad reports: Seal Coating complete. It went well. The mailing went out 2 weeks prior to project start. We come in under budget in seal coating. We received an email Friday from DNR declaring we are in severe drought. What that means is that we are in a watering ban. They want us to consider our water plan that we adopted in 2016. We have set an idea in place as to what we are going to do in this situation. If you look at what was pumped last year in June, we were shy of 28 gallons. Now we are at about 35 gallons. Usage is up due to added users and drought. We are not at the max point yet. The Governor has not signed an executive order. The DNR say we need to start taking steps to prepare for this issue. We are taking considerable steps to see where we can preserve. Two thoughts are: #1 a Water ban and educate the

community. #2 possible odd-even watering days.

Feldman stated that Windingstad is asking for the go ahead to plan for the issue while they are watching the conditions. Windingstad and Kohlmann have been in discussion of these strategies. With the new water system, we can monitor usage.

Public Works plans to have something together by the end of the week. We do not want to ticket residents but do need to take some kind of action hoping that we will get some rain.

Feldman likes #2 as a first step and then going into the full phase of #1 if we have to. Windingstad stated that Parish is watching this closely. Public communication is the key. Information regarding actions to prevent issues so no one suffers.

Muehlbauer is for phasing something in. Educating folks on this since he has never seen a city ticket people for water use. He does not want to be part of a city that tickets folks for this, but we do need to do something about this. He asked Police Chief Schwieger about laws.

A discussion occurred regarding education current systems in place for planning. Feldman suggests Jason to work up a phased in plan considering 3 to 1 time watering to prevent yards from burning up. Windingstad stated that what he is looking for now is approval to move forward with a plan. Feldman stated that the Rum River is currently 2 feet low. Minstricta in full water ban. Fires are a big issue right now. Feldman stated to work up a 3 to 1 watering plan. Schwieger responded saying without any laws, we have our code 3-2-7, which represents restrictions that can be put into place as a worst-case scenario. Robinson also agrees to a hands up and stop what you are doing now. We can tell that we are in trouble. Windingstad stated that we are not the only city that is doing something. Udvig and Muehlbauer agreed.

Fire Chief Schmidt stated that due to dryness and high heat we will be increased to the highest Fire alert category. Feldman asked what can people do. Schmidt responded stating to be careful and we discourage any recreational fires right now. Be wise, water down the areas if you are going to burn. Don't leave grills unattended. Be careful with your ashes. Just those proactive measures right now. Windingstad confirmed that Oak Grove has been in contact with us and they know they have to follow our rules.

Feldman made statements of the new equipment and technology which give goods numbers and information all agreed that our system is working.

## **Fire Monthly Comparison Report**

Fire Chief Schmidt is happy to report that they exceed our goal of response time in 10 minutes. Our new software gives us the clarity that we hoped for and our response times are going in the right direction. This is offset by run volumes going the wrong direction. We have seen a little bit of a decline so volumes have dropped off a little bit in July. He is not confident this will continue but will take what they can get. Staffing is stable. We have a new report showing average number of fire fighters responding by four-hour blocks and are seeing where the numbers have dropped of a bit which is now the overnight hours. This is consistent with what is seen nation-wide as well. Fire versus EMS distribution is stable 41 EMS versus 21 Fire related events. On the last page the Variance Usage report is working very well. He is happy to report that in June they do not report any COVID related cases. For our fire Inspections report, we had 4 additional inspections and 3 addition re-inspection for a total of 7 fire inspections.

Feldman stated it was a good report. He is always proud of the EMS services. He likes the fact there are less fires but EMS saves lives. This is where our two departments for public safety, which is two thirds of our budget and this shows it is paying off. Udvig commented it is a great report and continues to be impressed with Fire and EMS. They are a great team. Robinson agrees and commends the Chief and his department. Muehlbauer agrees this is a good report. He asked about staffing compared to last year with poor staffing COVID and low response time and now we are lower than that. What do you attribute that to? Schmidt provided the difference in types of staffing scenarios that were present at both times. Muehlbauer asked about Nowthen. Schmidt introduces Mayor Jeff Pilon of Nowthen to speak. It is a big chore to establish a Fire Department. It was more of smooth transition than expected. Mayor Pilon echoed our Chief's comments. He stated initially there was not a lot of enthusiasm. Covid had an impact. So, this took a lot time. But reports he is hearing from the fire department now is good with the new department and its policies. He provided some details of staffing turnover and stated things are good and he sees enthusiasm.

### **Police Department 2<sup>nd</sup> Quarter Report.**

Police Chief Schwieger highlighted the increase in traffic stops. Specific types of incidents that increased were domestic assaults, DWI's and narcotics. What decreased was medicals, non-domestic related assault and thefts. Our guys are continuing to do very well and are proactive during their shifts as represented in the last off-week memo. Staff and officers were also busy with training this quarter, including instructor training. We also have staff attending Police Intervention Tactic training. We do have a policy allowing police to pursue vehicles and if officers do choose to pursue, this tactic assists in that if put into that situation. Additional trainings like Type of Force, Firearms, CPR, 1<sup>st</sup> Aid and EMS are occurring and few are on zoom any longer. We are going

to these sites and being trained. Additionally, we have 6 officers attending cultural diversity and complicit bias training and one officer going to conflict management training in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. He is happy to return to his community outreach events and provided a summer of those in 2<sup>nd</sup> quarter. It is nice to be back in the community in that way. Staff will be participating in Night to Unite here on August 3<sup>rd</sup> also. He highlighted the change and increase in the type of police vehicles and will continue with replacement to Durango's as their budget allows. The Less Lethal equipment is coming and plans on getting the body worn camera policy off to legal this week. An update on the police eligibility, testing will begin on August 10<sup>th</sup> and we are optimistic that we will find a good candidate. There were 13 applicants in comparison to 41 last year. The climate right now is causing a decrease.

Mayor Feldman stated the Citizen Academy is a great community program. He also pointed out the reportable offenses and his frustration of DWI increases. A discussion of these increases and other clarifications occurred. He asked the Chief if the bars are working better with the Police? The Chief said all in all they are working better with them.

Udvig stated it is another good report. She hears from her community. She has heard that the officers have been stopping and talking to kids to have good moments and she wants to commend him and his staff on their impact. Robinson added the same complements and pointed out the level of officers in his community. He discussed that their Night to Unite flyers are out and there are stickers and helmets and their guys are doing a good job. He asked about differenced from last year. The Chief responded stating that domestics were higher during that stay home order. Robinson listed some of the behaviors that were unfortunate to see do the what has been seeing in the past. He is all for more police activity. Muehlbauer agrees they are doing a great job and encourage participation in the Citizens Academy. Robinson did mention that other cities are increasing their Police budgets and the Mayor stated that is good and proves that public safety means something.

### **Council Member Reports**

Muehlbauer – No report

Udvig – No Report

Robinson has no report but states that people are excited for Night to Unite.

Feldman provided updates on National Night Out placed in the Spot Light Window. He shared that there will be a Circus the same night at the Elementary School. He encourages folks to get out and enjoy the night and events.

Feldman give updates on the Liquor store hours. Robinson asked about shortages with the change in hours the shop will be open starting the end of

July. Feldman stated there are work arounds and so far, so good. Feldman asked Schmidt to give an update on his hiring of staff. He stated the number of applicants and he is interviewing tomorrow. Feldman encouraged folks to stop by and look at the project. Feldman addressed a question from Robinson on delivery of product and equipment scheduling. There has only been one issue with some panels so far. And he discussed some of the operational changes happening due to the construction. He stated that the purpose for the construction is to expand the product line. He stated that the purpose for the construction is to expand the product line. Schmidt has done a good job so far and this will help to continue to expand. Robinson asked about the goal completion date and October is the confirmed month. Feldman pointed out how well the city staff works together with a focus on our pocket book. We are living as a City of Progress, Pride and Possibilities. We are living those words today.

Feldman gave an update about the budget for the City Hall Security project. He researched and made some changes due to some miss information and new information he and Windingstad found to the plan resulting in a decrease of total project from \$33,504 to \$16,071.94, a \$17,432-dollar savings. He provided a list of changes resulting in the decrease. That along with other project saving he feels is being responsible. With a brief update on a possible schedule he pointed out that there should not be large disruption to staff.

Robinson pointed out that any other Mayor in another occupation would not be able to do this so he is thankful. Feldman highlighted how we take care of buildings and how we need to be proactive in maintaining them. He feels it is important to consider what the public will think. We are responsible and we come up with solutions. He encourages folks to reach out with reasonable requests.

## **12. ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mayor Feldman adjourned the regular City Council at 7:39 PM.



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Diana Saenger, City Clerk