

CITY OF NEW HOPE
4401 XYLON AVENUE NORTH
NEW HOPE, MINNESOTA 55428

City Council Minutes
Work Session Meeting

September 20, 2010
Conference Room

CALL TO ORDER The New Hope City Council met in work session pursuant to due call and notice thereof; Mayor Hemken called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Council present: Kathi Hemken, Mayor
John Elder, Council Member
Andy Hoffe, Council Member
Eric Lammle, Council Member
Daniel Stauner, Council Member

Staff present: Kirk McDonald, City Manager
Steve Ellingson, Athletic Supervisor
Shari French, Director of Parks and Recreation
Guy Johnson, Director of Public Works
Valerie Leone, City Clerk
Jason Quisberg, City Engineer
Eric Weiss, Community Development Assistant

Also Present: Scott Crandall, West Metro Fire District

**WEST METRO FIRE
Item 11.1**

Mayor Hemken introduced for discussion item 11.1, West Metro Fire-Rescue District update.

Fire Chief Scott Crandall apologized that Fire Board President Brian Hubbard was unable to attend the meeting.

Mr. Crandall stated due to the 2010 budget reduction a fire department open house will not be held this fall. He explained the department intends to conduct an open house in 2011.

Mr. Crandall reported the department is recruiting for ten positions (both day and evening firefighters at all three stations). He stated as a result of the SAFR grant the department hired a full-time staff member. He noted the new employee has allowed him to delegate several duties of routine nature.

Next Mr. Crandall reported on a request by the Crystal City Council to examine benefits of changing the staffing model from the current "paid on call" structure to "assigned dates". He reported legal counsel's opinion was that the department would be required to pay firefighters for their assigned days and it would be more costly than the current structure of paying when firefighters actually respond to calls. He pointed out the department will further research the "duty crew" concept to determine if the department will have to adapt to such a system to retain the required response personnel.

Mayor Hemken questioned whether there is adequate response under the present system. Mr. Crandall commented that most firefighters work day shifts which reduces day-time firefighter response numbers. He noted evening response for fire calls is much greater. He also reported that many firefighters have agreements with their employers that that can leave their place of employment to respond to a major fire incident.

Mr. Crandall reported on vehicle replacement projects. He stated the four new front line fire engines are expected to be delivered in January with the goal to implement the vehicles mid-May. He reported between January and May the department will handle testing and acceptance of the vehicles, equipment set up on the units, employee training, and the certification process.

He stated there is an option to trade-in the existing fleet, but he is seeking public sale in an attempt to realize a higher sale price.

Mr. Crandall updated the Council on the purchase of a rescue apparatus for the New Hope station. He stated the department utilized a purchasing consortium (HGAC-buy) headquartered in Texas. He stated a pre-construction meeting will occur on September 27. He pointed out his intent to have all the rescue vehicles set up identically (location of switches, etc) for uniform operation by fire personnel. He also noted after the department refused a trade-in price of \$5,000, the vendor located a city in South Dakota willing to purchase the used equipment for \$26,000.

Fire Chief Crandall reviewed the proposed 2011 budget of \$2,043,734 which is a slight increase over 2010 budget after the 4% reduction. He stated the proposed budget includes:

- Funding for the SAFR position (cost is offset by a federal grant)
- No cost of living increase planned (unless COLA is offered to Crystal and New Hope employees)
- Addition of long-term disability
- Adding a contract administrator for the flex spending plan benefit
- Modest increase in legal fees
- Reduction in vehicle repair costs (warranties)
- Slight increase in awards budget
- Reduction in training expenses.

Council Member Lammler asked Chief Crandall how the city can better plan for equipment replacement costs. Chief Crandall stated the department has an equipment replacement plan which is projected out 26 years. He noted the difficulty in predicting replacement costs due to limited number of manufacturers. He noted the plan includes inflationary cost and equipment life cycle. He stated the Board has indicated they will review the engines in 10 years and decide whether to refurbish or replace in 15 years. He stated the entire fleet is examined. He commented the CIP was previously funded \$100,000 annually but due to budget reductions this is no longer feasible. Mr. Crandall commented that the next major purchase will occur in 2015 for rescue trucks.

Council Member Elder asked Chief Crandall to report on pensions. Mr. Crandall stated the firefighters voluntarily agreed to a minimal pension increase last year due to economic conditions.

Council Member Elder inquired whether the fire department is planning for radio replacement similar to the police department. Mr. Crandall reported they recently received an “end of life” notice from Hennepin County regarding the radios and they will require replacement in the near future.

Council Member Elder supported exploration of a “duty crew” concept. He commented that Plymouth firefighters have occasionally arrived on scene before New Hope’s crew. He also suggested an open house be held in the spring in conjunction with the Farmers Market to display the new fire engines.

Council Member Stauner inquired whether “duty crew” structure would lower homeowner insurance rates. Chief Crandall reported there would likely be a greater positive impact to commercial properties than residential properties. He noted ISO performs the rating and they are in the process of revising their rating schedule. Council Member Stauner recommended obtaining the information as part of the duty crew research.

Mr. Kirk McDonald, city manager, thanked West Metro for their participation in the New Hope’s “City Day” held on July 31. He also conveyed his appreciation to West Metro for providing emergency management training and their involvement with the CERTS program.

Mr. McDonald advised the Council that both cities (New Hope and Crystal) must approve the fire budget, and he recommended placing the item on the October 11 meeting agenda for approval. Council was agreeable with the timeline.

Mr. McDonald reported regarding the need for appointment by the Fire Board of an elected or appointed official from each city to serve as an ex-officio member to the West Metro Fire Rescue District Firefighters Relief Association Board of Trustees. He stated it does not need to be an existing board member. Chief Crandall stated the Board meets monthly, and the ex-officio member could be the city’s finance director. Mayor Hemken stated she would serve if Crystal appoints their mayor to the position. Council Member Elder offered to serve if needed. Council Member Stauner pointed out the benefit of educating another member of the council of fire activities. Mr. McDonald stated the names of council members interested in representing the city would be forwarded to President Hubbard.

**GYMNASTICS
PROGRAM
Item 11.2**

Mayor Hemken introduced for discussion item 11.2, Update regarding the city’s search for a new location for the gymnastics program.

Ms. Shari French, director of parks and recreation, and Steve Ellingson, Athletic Supervisor, were recognized.

Mr. Steve Ellingson, athletic supervisor, provided background of the gymnastics program previously located at Hosterman School. He stated the program is very successful with 600+ registrants. He shared staff’s findings regarding alternate sites

and costs (requires 3,000 to 4,000 square feet and ceiling height of at least 14 feet).

Mr. Ellingson reported ISD 281 is willing to lease Sandburg School at a cost of \$14,517 including janitorial, building supervisor, and maintenance). The Sandburg site would allow equipment storage. He stated the additional cost could be covered by increasing the nine-week gymnastics class fee by \$10. He also pointed out the possibility of offering additional classes since the city would have more available hours at the Sandburg site (additional hours would require payment of \$12.95/hour for facility supervisor fees). Mr. Ellingson also reported the district sold equipment valued at \$3,000 to the city for \$400.

Director French pointed out there is no guarantee the school district will renew the lease after it expires in two years. It was noted that staff will continue to explore alternate long-term options for relocation of the gymnastics program.

Council Member Elder commented on the popularity of the gymnastics program and that it serves youth from New Hope and neighboring communities.

Mayor Hemken thanked Council Member Elder for his assistance (with the school district and community discussions) and thanked Steve Ellingson for his persistence in locating a new location for the gymnastics program. Mr. Ellingson noted neighboring cities (Crystal, Golden Valley) have offered collaborative efforts such as advertising the gymnastics program.

Council Member Hoffe requested a breakdown of the participants per city so the Council can share the information with council members from other cities and possibly seek financial assistance. Director French indicated the information is available and would be distributed to Council through the city manager.

Council supported entering into the lease and directed staff to place the item on the consent agenda of the September 27 Council Meeting.

**COMMUNITY
GARDENS
Item 11.3**

Mayor Hemken introduced for discussion item 11.3, Discussion regarding community gardens.

Mr. Eric Weiss, community development assistant, explained through the city's participation in the Active Living Hennepin County group, the city has obtained the support of the community gardens consulting group, Gardening Matters, in promoting community gardens. He emphasized that in addition to health benefits, community gardening offers a gathering space and builds a sense of pride and civic participation among residents.

Ms. Kirsten Saylor of Gardening Matters was introduced.

Mr. Weiss stated many metro cities that have public sponsored community gardens report the gardens are very popular and it is common to have waiting lists for garden space.

Mayor Hemken noted Winnetka Learning Center has a garden. She also stated the Back Acres Garden Club may be willing to provide assistance.

Discussion ensued regarding potential locations, staff involvement, and potential city costs. Mr. Weiss recommended beginning with community outreach to form a garden committee. He stated the committee would be asked to take the lead to work with the city in realizing a community garden possibly as early as next spring. The committee would make recommendations to the Council regarding the use of public property or capital costs. It was noted that stall rental fees would cover maintenance and operations costs. Mr. Weiss stated Gardening Matters is a valuable resource.

Ms. Saylor offered assistance with recruitment and meetings.

It was noted the University of Minnesota offers soil tests at reasonable costs.

Council Member Stauner recommended contacting Citizen Advisory Commissioner Karen Nolte as she advocated for community gardens for many years. He also pointed out the need for awareness of fertilizer usage and water runoff management.

Ms. Saylor spoke of the increased interest in urban agriculture and the available resources for workshops and site assessments. She noted the likelihood of some obstacles (theft of produce, disturbance by animals) and said most gardeners are tolerant if they are made aware at the onset of the process.

Council expressed support for the community garden concept. Mr. Kirk McDonald, city manager, indicated staff will gauge public interest.

RECESS

A recess was held at 7:45 p.m., and the meeting resumed at 7:50 p.m.

COMPLETE STREETS CONCEPT Item 11.4

Mayor Hemken introduced for discussion item 11.4, Review of Complete Streets concept and state-wide initiative.

Mr. Eric Weiss, community development assistant, reported the Complete Streets movement is an effort to refocus road construction so that when designing the road, attention is given for all uses rather than only vehicles. He emphasized the main priority is safety.

He introduced Barb Thoman, executive director, Transit for Livable Communities, and noted Ms. Thoman can help the city promote bike/pedestrian/transit improvements. Mr. Weiss commented that the recent re-striping of Medicine Lake Road from a 4-lane road to a 3-lane road is considered a Complete Street initiative. He stated the state is encouraging local jurisdictions to adopt their own complete streets program.

Ms. Thoman stated during the 2010 session the Minnesota Legislature passed a statewide Complete Streets law which became effective in August. She indicated she served on an advisory panel with MnDOT in 2007. Ms. Thoman reported there were 500 Minnesota pedestrians and bicyclists killed in the last decade and more than 20,000 persons injured. She stated when road reconstruction is planned it is recommended to consider all users not only vehicles. She reviewed the benefits of

Complete Streets: safety, accessibility and independence, health (active living), family transportation cost savings, economic development/tourism, environment, quality of life and vibrancy.

Mr. Weiss pointed out he and Mayor Hemken recently attended a meeting with developers who supported Complete Streets. He stated the developers acknowledged the increase interest by businesses and individuals in purchasing property adjacent to Complete Streets projects.

Ms. Thoman stated a Complete Streets policy declares political support for building “complete” streets; sets a vision for a Complete Streets process (focused on safety and accessibility of all road users); offers implementation steps, and includes accountability.

She pointed out the increased documentation of cities that have started documenting the number of pedestrians/bicyclists on roadways before and after infrastructure (Complete Streets) changes. She also spoke of the benefit for a regional plan and the need to encourage leadership to create network links between cities.

Council Member Hoffe commented on the support by Three Rivers Park District regarding bike lanes. He also spoke of the likelihood of the Citizen Advisory Commission’s interest and suggested the information regarding Complete Streets be shared with them.

Discussion ensued regarding adopting a resolution in support of Complete Streets. Mr. Kirk McDonald, city manager, inquired of the impact to the city. Ms. Thoman stated it would require a more open process regarding infrastructure projects, seeking community engagement, and consideration of reasonable requests by users.

Mr. Weiss pointed out the resolution would be unique to New Hope’s wants and desires. Council Member Stauner suggested reviewing the policy and deciding what is important to the community (i.e. walkability).

Council thanked Ms. Thoman and Eric Weiss for the information. Council expressed interest in pursuing the concept and seeking community input. Mr. Weiss reported creation of a policy would likely require six months or longer.

**STORM WATER
PROJECTS
Item 11.5**

Mayor Hemken introduced for discussion item 11.5, Discussion regarding storm water projects.

Mr. Guy Johnson, director of public works, stated staff is seeking direction on two possible storm projects: Jordan Avenue storm water infrastructure repair and Northwood east wetland.

He provided history of the condition of a 66-inch storm water pipe that runs from TH 169 ditch to Northwood Lake. He stated the pipe has developed a substantial sag due to poor soils in the lot and a spot repair of the pipe was made in 2006. He stated this issue is being presented to the Council again due to the future

installation of a noise wall that will be constructed parallel to and west of the Jordan Avenue city lot on MnDOT right-of-way.

Mr. Jason Quisberg illustrated the existing pipe east of TH 169 which discharges into Northwood Lake. He recommended replacement of the existing storm water pipe and construction of a pond as a pre-treatment cell before water enters Northwood Lake. He stated water east of TH 169 would flow into the pre-treatment cell. He stated MnDOT is supportive and willing to adjust the wall alignment to allow for the city's pond improvements. He also explained that Plymouth is planning a significant project west of TH 169 in 2012/2013.

Council Member Stauner noted a pond buffer zone (tall grass) should reduce the goose population in the Jordan Avenue area.

Discussion ensued regarding taking the water from Plymouth into the pre-treatment cell. City Engineer Quisberg stated the pond could not accommodate the volume. He also advised that Plymouth's future project will result in pre-treatment of the water before it enters Northwood Lake.

Funding was discussed and Director Johnson advised that the Bassett Creek Watershed TAC recommends the project be added to its Capital Improvement Program. Council Member Stauner noted the north branch of Bassett Creek flows through the pipe.

Council expressed support for pursuing pipe replacement through Bassett Creek Watershed Commission's CIP budget. Director Johnson noted if the funding is successful, the soonest the pipe would be replaced would be 2011/2012.

Next, Mr. Guy Johnson reported on the Northwood east wetland. He stated the vegetation and sediment is restricting the storm water flow through the wetland area at Northwood east wetland. He stated it takes an increased amount of time for the lake to return to its normal elevation after a heavy rain fall. He pointed out the channel has shifted. He recommended cleaning the channel to improve the water flow.

Mr. Johnson recommended postponing the 42nd Avenue railroad bridge storm water improvement and the Meadow Lake project in order to move forward the Northwood east wetland project. Council Member Stauner spoke against the proposed Meadow Lake project at this time as it's a drawdown. He noted it may be justified in ten years.

Council inquired where the sediment removal from the wetland would be placed. The city engineer stated it would likely be hauled off site depending on DNR direction.

Staff advised the Northwood east wetland project has not yet been discussed with Bassett Creek Watershed Commission. Mr. Johnson stated three years ago the Commission considered it a city maintenance issue.

Council expressed support for a feasibility report for a possible wetland

improvement project. Mr. Johnson was directed to place the item at a future council meeting for formal approval.

**PURCHASE OF
TRUCK BODY &
ACCESSORIES
Item 11.6**

Mayor Hemken introduced for discussion item 11.6, Discussion regarding the purchase of equipment and appropriate of funds in the amount of \$90,714.23 for the purchase and installation of a truck body, snowplow components, and accessory lights from Towmaster Inc.

Mr. Guy Johnson, director of public works, stated in order to realize a \$15,000 savings by buying a pre-2010 engine, Council directed staff to purchase a second chassis for replacement of a dump truck in 2011. He reported if the city purchased the accessories now, it would result in a savings of \$3,354 due to price increases and a 1% handling fee by the state for state contract purchases beginning in 2011. Mr. Johnson reported there are sufficient funds in the central garage budget for the purchase.

Council Member Elder inquired whether the vehicle would be put into service in 2010.

Mr. Johnson reported it would depend on the vendor's delivery schedule which may not occur until December, 2010.

Council unanimously supported purchasing the truck body, snowplow components, and accessory lighting purchases. Staff was directed to place the item on the September 27 Council Meeting consent agenda for formal approval.

**COUNCIL
COMPUTERS
Item 11.7**

Mayor Hemken introduced for discussion item 11.7, Discussion regarding computer equipment replacement for Council.

Mr. Kirk McDonald, city manager, inquired of the Council's technology needs. He stated the Council was previously provided laptop computers.

Council Member Elder stated his understanding that the Council can have high speed internet or a city-owned PDA at city expense and the monthly costs are comparable. He recommended Mayor Hemken be allowed both modes of communication (city paid internet and a PDA device) at the city's expense as she attends significantly more meetings and events than previous mayors. He stated she is oftentimes away from her residence from morning to night conducting city business.

Mayor Hemken acknowledged the need for email access via a cell phone/PDA as it is the primary method of communication with the city manager.

Council members agreed to retain city paid high speed internet service. Council Member Stauner noted he considers it as part of the Council's compensation package.

A brief discussion was held regarding different types of smart phones. City Clerk Leone stated the city utilizes Blackberry devices and has a dedicated server. She noted the equipment is a one-time expenditure whereas the ongoing cost results

from the monthly data plan service. Mayor Hemken inquired of a Droid brand cell phone. Staff agreed to research options. Council Member Hoffe asked to be notified of the cost of a Droid brand phone/pda also.

AUDIT PROPOSALS
Item 11.8

Mayor Hemken introduced for discussion item 11.8, Discussion regarding 2010 audit proposals.

Mr. Kirk McDonald, city manager, stated the city has utilized audit services by Malloy, Karnowski, Radosevich and Co. PA (MMKR) since 1998. He inquired whether Council would like to solicit quotes from other audit firms before requesting an engagement letter from MMKR this fall.

Council concurred it is prudent to periodically seek RFPs for outside services but also realized there is a cost to do so.

It was noted that AEM believes the fees paid to MMKR are reasonable compared to similar sized cities.

Mayor Hemken suggested consulting a few comparable sized cities including the city of Crystal regarding their audit firms and costs.

It was the consensus of the Council to use MMKR for the 2010 audit and proceed with an audit RFP next year.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at 9:27 p.m. as there was no further business to come before the Council at its work session.

Respectfully submitted,



Valerie Leone, City Clerk