

**MINUTES**

**Welcome**

Mayor Labadie opened the meeting at 8:35 AM and noted that Councilmember Johnson would be arriving later.

**Council Priorities Discussion**

**1. City Staffing**

The current staffing levels, the City's organizational structure, and roles and responsibilities were reviewed. Staff noted potentially needing more capacity in the Planning and Finance departments. Park and Recreation noted the various activities it oversees, including parks activities, the Community Center rental, and programing, and staffing needs. The Council noted that its philosophy in operating the SCEC is that it is an amenity for the community and not a strictly a business enterprise.

Discussion occurred regarding the use and practice of responding to SeeClickFix posts. It was noted that SeeClickFix works best for issues that can be quickly addressed, such as a pothole or broken park equipment. It is more difficult to respond to concerns that require planning and long-term investment, such as where infrastructure is involved. It was agreed that such responses should direct people to the website or encourage a meeting with staff or Council, and then be closed out. Staff will develop clearer protocols for SeeClickFix responses and continued use of the program will be evaluated in the future, as staff noted many concerns are reported via email or phone calls.

Finally, completion of a compensation study was discussed. It was noted that during recent hirings the City compensation appeared to be under-market. Staff outlined different scopes of work and price points to complete a study and noted that benefits should also be considered. Council asked staff to look closely at Minnetrista's data and report back to Council in a work session before preparing an RFP.

**2. Review of 2020 - 2025 Strategic Plan / Plan for Update**

Staff reviewed the current strategic plan and asked Council if there was a desire to update the plan or start fresh. Council discussed how to get community input on a strategic plan, how best to set the City up for success, and how to set realistic goals. Council concluded it would be appropriate to first note what has been completed to date, and to see if there is more detail about goals or objectives before deciding on next steps.

**3. Update – Next steps for Integrated Pest Management Plan**

Council and staff discussed the following questions regarding the Integrated Pest Management Plan (IPM):

- A. How should the City approach maintenance of its Athletic Fields? How should the City approach treating other green space? Council asked staff to prepare several options for further consideration at a work session. It was noted that community engagement would be important

in finalizing an approach to maintaining parks. There is a need to pay attention to timing and schedules, as certain actions or treatments need to occur by certain points in the year. It was commented that the City should make an effort to communicate how its activities are consistent with its goals in the restated “bee-safe” resolution. Finally, the Council felt it was most appropriate for the Parks Commission to oversee the IPM.

- B. How should the City address EAB on public property? Council felt it was appropriate to target high value ash trees with treatment, but also to develop a plan to remove ash trees and replace them with a variety of other species. Staff was requested to bring back more specific details regarding the number and location of high value trees.
- C. How should the City address the buckthorn in Freeman Park? Council believed it was important to utilize the grant funds provided by the DNR to remove and treat buckthorn in Freeman Park. There was acknowledgment that the herbicide (Pathfinder) commonly used to kill buckthorn was noted as a “yellow” product in the IPM report and recommended its judicious use. It is an acceptable product by the DNR, so Council felt that daubing stumps with Pathfinder was both a cautious and effective approach for buckthorn removal. Hennepin County may be able to provide plantings to re-establish a ground cover in the treated area.

Councilmember Johnson arrived at 1:00 PM.

#### **4. Long-Term Plan for Water infrastructure Investment**

Staff summarized the City’s water supply system. Water is treated with chlorine and fluoride at every well. The Southeast Well is also filtered for iron. Badger and Southeast wells provide most of the water. Staff noted maps with hook-ups vs. wells, and areas where water is available but property owners have not connected. Iron has guidelines/standards but it is not regulated. The main issues with iron are taste, odor, aesthetic. The east side of the City does not connect with the west side currently. The City does not flush water in the winter, so more iron is present, especially near where mains terminate. It was asked if water would be more consistent if we treated iron at all well houses. It would be an expensive investment but could look at adding iron treatment at Badger. The rough estimate for this type of improvement is \$7.5M per well house. It is assumed the source of the iron are wells, not pipes. Looping might be a localized solution to increase flow through the mains year-round. Council suspects that new residents have different expectations for water quality than long term residents. Filtration systems may be options for individual homes. There are investments that can be made to improve water quality but need to first get a better insight and data about the issue. Data/samples will be collected before further options are presented.

It was also noted that ensuring the financial stability of the water fund is critical. Discussion occurred about how to incentivize residents to connect to the water supply. Ideas included a requirement to connect upon the sale of a property, establishing trigger threshold of significant building improvements, increasing connection charges over time, and an information campaign. Staff will research and explore these options further.

## 5. Hybrid Council Meetings

Staff noted that while virtual meetings were allowed by law and used extensively during the pandemic, many cities have continued to offer hybrid meeting options for the public, staff and consultant participation. Benefits of increased participation and convenience were noted. However, technology limitations and staffing requirements can make it difficult, especially for smaller cities, to provide a reliable hybrid meeting option. The City Attorney noted there is no legal requirement to offer hybrid meeting option, but he stressed that if it is offered, there is an expectation that it is reliable.

Council discussed the benefits and challenges of hybrid meetings. Alternate access gives increased opportunity to participate in a hearing or meeting in general. However, meetings are accessible via cable, and currently people are not showing up online or participating remotely. It was noted that the uncertain reliability of the technology causes stress and the meeting is less effective. The suggestion was made to try adding staff and having more rules around decorum. Eliminating hybrid option would reduce access, and having a hybrid option is considered a best practice. It was also suggested that if technology improves, a hybrid meeting format could be revisited in the future.

The City Attorney recommended that if the Council chooses to eliminate the hybrid meeting option, it should make a formal decision at a regular meeting and list reasons why.

## 6. Review of Current and Planned Public Improvement Projects

### 2023

- Strawberry Lane - goal to be back open by start of school, will be tough schedule
- Birch Bluff - Finish by Thanksgiving
- Freeman - New trails/trail head in summer/fall
- Shorewood Lane Ravine - stabilize ravine, started conversations with property owners and had feedback from MHCWD and properties. Installing more stormwater.
- Radisson Road lift station
- Trunk Hwy 7 Corridor Study - Continue discussions with MNDoT. Draft bill language for \$750M for study. Want to have solutions for planned work in 2028 from Christmas Lake Road to St. Boni.

### 2024

- Mill and Overlay - Location TBD but need to determine soon.

### 2025

- Mill street Trail - County lead project from Chan to Excel to get to regional trail. 11' lanes + on road bike facilities + blvd + 10' trail. Curb and Gutter so fully urban. Public feedback is to minimize ROW impacts. County is taking a firm stance on Blvd. Andrew would like there to be consensus on this. Andrew looking at adding watermain. Mill and Overlay
- Eureka N - has watermain, planned to do reclamation project. Sidewalk shown on plan but will ask the question.
- Vine Hill water Main replacement

2026

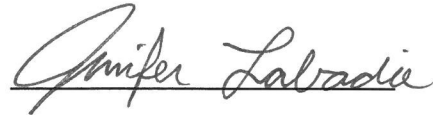
- Grant Lorenz - Watermain, full recon

Other Projects

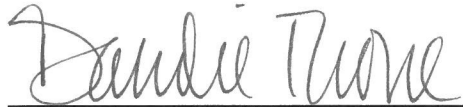
- Nobel road adding watermain to east
- Edgewood adding watermain
- Cathcart Playground Equip in 2025, Hockey boards in 2027
- Manor Park Amphitheatre
- Increase maintenance - add crack seal, seal road
- Sanitary sewer cleaning, repairs. A lot of SS in backyards, hire contractor to clean and TV.
- Stormwater ponds - need to maintain but don't know which ones or how much work yet.
- Galpin lake Trail/Connection - look at with Hwy 7 Corridor Study

The retreat adjourned at 3:30 PM

ATTEST:



Jennifer Labadie, Mayor



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Sandie Thone, City Clerk