



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
City Hall—Shared Vision Room, 3989 Central Ave NE
Monday, May 04, 2026
6:00 PM

Mayor
Amáda Márquez Simula
Councilmembers
Connie Buesgens
Rachel James
Justice Spriggs
Laurel Deneen
City Manager
Aaron Chirpich

MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The meeting was called to order by Council President James at 6:00 pm.

Present: Mayor Márquez Simula (via Teams), Councilmember Buesgens (6:29 pm), Councilmember Deneen, Councilmember James, Councilmember Spriggs

Also Present: Ursula Brandt, City Planner; Aaron Chirpich, City Manager; Mitchell Forney, Community Development Director; David Cullen, Public Works Director; Jesse Hauf, IT Director; Phil Jacobs, Chief Deputy of the Anoka County Sheriff's Office; Matt Markham, Police Chief; Anthony Mendoza, Lieutenant at the Anoka County Sheriff's Office; Mandy Meisner, Anoka County Commissioner; Will Rottler, Communications and Engagement Coordinator; John Stutzman, Parks and Recreation Director; Rochelle Widmer, Facilities Director; Brad Wise, Anoka County Sheriff; Jeff Von Feldt, Duffy Development

WORK SESSION ITEMS

1. Group Ice Breaker.

Council President James led the group in an icebreaker discussion, asking participants to "share one moment from the past week that reminded you why you serve".

2. Discussion of Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) Technology.

Presenting Item: Matt Markham, Chief of Police

Police Chief Markham led the discussion regarding Automatic License Plate Reader (ALPR) Technology. Lieutenant Mendoza presented on the Safe County Initiative.

Council President James asked what the Flock auditing procedure was for the master services agreement and how it would be enforced to ensure that the data is deleted automatically. Lieutenant Mendoza replied that the data is not on the Flock server, but it is on Amazon GovCloud. Council President James asked for additional information regarding the master service agreement and auditing for Flock.

Councilmember Deneen inquired about agreements with ICE and DHS on sharing data. Lieutenant Mendoza replied that there is no agreement with ICE or DHS. Council President James expressed concern that the Sheriff's Office could share data with other counties that have agreements with ICE or DHS on data sharing. Lieutenant Mendoza and Sheriff Wise explained that sharing is limited to one-to-one agreements, filters are enacted to prevent

federal access, and local policies can restrict data sharing. Commissioner Meisner emphasized the need for transparent and concrete policies at the county level.

Councilmember Buesgens expressed support for the program.

Councilmember James requested that there be a policy regarding officers responding to a scene after a drone first responds. She explained that she would want to ensure that an officer would arrive on the scene even if the drone determines that no one is on the scene. Councilmember Deneen agreed and added that the name of the program could lead people to believe that a drone will be the responder and that first responder officers would not come to the scene. She noted that there would need to be good communication if the program rolls out in order for there to be transparency with the community.

Council President James asked that the County consider holding a Public Hearing in order to meet the intent of the law that requires a Public Hearing, since the law is new, and it would be an expansion of the program and policy.

Council President James requested additional information regarding the policy for drone usage at public events. She requested a copy of the presentation for the Council.

Mayor Márquez Simula agreed with Councilmember Deneen's comments regarding communication in the community. She explained that the community is leery about the program. She asked if the County would be able to provide information for the listening session on May 14th.

The Council agreed that it would be best not to have Flock representatives present at the upcoming listening session.

3. Discussion of the Planned Development at 1515 44th Ave NE.

Presenting Item: Ursula Brandt, City Planner

Planner Brandt led the discussion regarding the planned development at 1515 44th Avenue NE. She introduced Jeff Von Feldt from Duffy Development. Mr. Von Feldt presented the proposed Heights Ridge Apartments to the Council. Community Development Forney explained that the item would go to the Planning Commission, but staff wanted to get the Council's comments before it went to the Planning Commission.

Councilmember Buesgens expressed her support for the project. She asked questions regarding management companies, underground and visitor parking, and senior housing. She mentioned it would be beneficial to tour other Duffy Development apartments.

Councilmember Spriggs wondered if it would be financially feasible to add another story to the building. Mr. Von Feldt replied that it would be possible, but the unit count has already been approved by the State, so the building could be four stories instead of three, but it is required to have the same number of units.

Council President James suggested connecting to the existing trail since there is a proposed park on the site plan. She added that she does not have any concerns regarding the project.

Councilmember Buesgens stated she is open to four stories for the building.

Mayor Márquez Simula requested that the sidewalk on the west side of the property be connected to the park, and the sidewalk on the reservoir side be connected.

Community Development Director Forney stated that staff would continue to work with Duffy Development and would keep the Council updated.

City Planner Brandt provided an update regarding a data center moratorium. She reviewed the current zoning code regarding data centers and explained that hyperscale data centers are not feasible on available sites. She recommended a future code update to address smaller-scale developments. The largest vacant properties are zoned general business and do not allow warehousing or data centers, except as a conditional use in industrial districts. Current code does not permit hyperscale data centers, and staff would not recommend processing use for smaller centers at this time.

Councilmember Buesgens pointed out that data centers in the future are likely to be smaller, and she would not want to see empty warehouses around the City because the large space is no longer needed.

4. Presentation on the Police Department Use of Force Report for 2025.

Presenting Item: Matt Markham, Chief of Police

Police Chief Markham presented the Police Department Use of Force Report for 2025.

5. Social Media Policy.

Presenting Item: Will Rottler, Communications and Engagement Coordinator

Communications and Engagement Coordinator Rottler explained that he worked with staff, other cities, and the City's legal team to develop a social media policy. He presented the draft social media policy to the Council and asked the Council for direction on comment moderation, engagement strategies, and handling proclamations and informational posts.

Council President James expressed support for the proposed social media policy. She suggested allowing comments for all posts except those regarding Proclamations. Councilmember Deneen agreed. Councilmember Buesgens agreed and wondered if there could be a disclaimer included in the comment section. Communications and Engagement Coordinator Rottler stated that staff will monitor comments and provide links to the policy as needed.

Council President James recessed the meeting at 8:21 pm. The meeting convened at 8:25 pm.

6. Parks and Recreation Updates.

Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager

City manager Aaron Chirpich and new Parks and Recreation Director Stutzman updated the City Council on key parks projects, including Sullivan Park, the soccer field, and the parks master plan, discussing timelines, community engagement, and design considerations.

Councilmember Deneen mentioned that the soccer field is important and the community would like to see it prioritized. She suggested that there is communication around the steps that are being taken so that there is transparency and the community knows the project is moving forward.

Council President James expressed her concern about asking the public for more feedback since there have been many opportunities to do so. Councilmember Buesgens emphasized the importance of prioritizing the soccer fields.

Councilmember Spriggs mentioned that it would be helpful to have a Parks Master Plan and suggested that it be a part of a future plan. The Council and staff discussed a community center as part of the Parks Master Plan.

Councilmember Buesgens wondered if there would be a 10–15-year budget included in the Parks Master Plan. She added that she would like small and pocket parks prioritized in the plan. Parks and Recreation Director Stutzman replied that cost estimates would be included in the plan.

Council President James emphasized the importance of the County park and the Three Rivers Silverwood Park to the community. She mentioned that the City has not interacted and collaborated with the County and Three Rivers staff much on the parks, and she would like to see a stronger relationship between the City and the County and Three Rivers staff.

7. Municipal Consent for MnDOT Central Avenue Reconstruction Project.

Presenting Item: Rochelle Widmer, Director of Engineering and Facilities

Engineering and Facilities Director Widmer presented the municipal consent process for the Central Avenue project, detailing MnDOT's proposal, public hearing scheduling, cost participation policy updates, and key issues such as traffic signals, stormwater infrastructure, and pedestrian safety. She mentioned that the staff has tentatively set the Public Hearing for June 16th at 6:00 pm. Councilmember Buesgens mentioned she may have a conflict on that day, but would do her best to be there. The Council agreed to the tentative date proposed by staff.

City Manager Chirpich encouraged the Council to think about their thoughts on the lane configuration, key intersections, and stormwater.

Council President James explained that she is not happy that there is a long stretch between 45th Avenue and 46 ½ Avenue NE with no crosswalks. She added that it seems like it is the most crossed area and did not understand why there were not more crosswalks. Engineering and Facilities Director Widmer replied that there is a proposal for pedestrian beacons on the site plan for the project. Councilmember Spriggs pointed out that there is no crossing by the library on 39th Avenue, and it can be a dangerous area since there are four lanes of traffic.

Councilmember Spriggs suggested having a discussion about parking meters in the Downtown Business District, where there is dedicated parking.

8. Initiation of Regional Solicitation Funding Application for 44th Avenue NE Redesign from Main Street to Central Avenue.

Presenting Item: Rochelle Widmer, Director of Engineering and Facilities

Engineering and Facilities Director Widmer presented the initiation of the regional solicitation funding application for the 44th Avenue NE redesign from Main Street to Central Avenue. She mentioned that the City would be leveraging the Transportation Safety Action Plan and seeking federal funding, with consultants assisting in the process and a 20% local match required.

The Council agreed to approve the initiation of the application.

9. Update on 2026 Street Program – Municipal State Aid (MSA) Street Mill & Overlay Project.

Presenting Item: Rochelle Widmer, Director of Engineering and Facilities.

Engineering and Facilities Director Widmer provided an update on the 2026 street mill and overlay program, detailing the use of municipal state aid funds and levy, data-driven selection of project locations, and integration of AI-assisted pavement condition assessment, with construction scheduled for July to October 2026.

10. Introduction of Heights Project Hub and Council Work Session Item Proposal Process.

Presenting Item: Aaron Chipich, City Manager, and Jesse Hauf, IT Director

IT Director Hauf provided an update on the Heights Project Hub that the Council had discussed during a previous Council workshop. He showcased the internally developed performance measurement dashboard, highlighting its AI-driven project management features, integration with Microsoft authentication, agenda planning, and public-facing transparency tools, with plans for further refinement and rollout to staff and Council.

Councilmember Buesgens asked for an update on the Tyler permitting system. IT Director Hauf replied that Tyler was launched and is active on the website.

11. City Manager Follow Up on Previous Work Session Topics.

City Manager Aaron Chirpich introduced the item to the council to give status updates on several items that the council had discussed at previous work sessions. The items reviewed were the Ratio ownership change, a State bill being proposed for a cryptocurrency Ordinance, and a California Street Farm partnership with the liquor store. IT Director Hauf provided an update regarding Metronet and T-Mobile construction, with permits being pulled, construction starting soon, and Metronet taking over support responsibilities, including messaging and coordination with USI.

12. Council Corner.

The Council reviewed the May calendar, notified each other of upcoming events, and discussed proclamations for upcoming meetings.

Councilmember Buesgens suggested discussing affordable housing shortages, rent control, and how to review affordable housing applications.

ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned at approximately 10:20 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary