

OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the regularly scheduled meeting of the Spring Lake Park City Council Work Session was held on January 21, 2025 at the Able Park Building, 8200 Able Street NE, at 5:00 PM.

1. CALL TO ORDER

MEMBERS PRESENT

Councilmember Ken Wendling
Councilmember Goodboe-Bisschoff
Councilmember Lisa Dircks
Councilmember April Moran
Mayor Robert Nelson

STAFF PRESENT

Public Works Director Linngren, Building Official Baker, Police Chief Antoine, Administrator Buchholtz

VISITORS PRESENT

Michael Swanson, Four Paws and a Tail, Blaine
Megan Helling, Lino Lakes
Aaron Zellhoefer, Humane Society of the United States
Ann Olsen, St. Paul
Jessica Bahr, Blaine

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Discussion of Humane Pet Store Ordinance

The Council revisited a proposed humane pet store ordinance, which would prohibit the retail sale of puppies and kittens in pet stores while allowing partnerships with animal shelters and rescues.

Mayor Nelson introduced Michael Swanson, owner of Four Paws and a Tail, who strongly opposed the ordinance. Mr. Swanson argued that banning pet store sales would not address concerns about unethical breeding practices but would instead push sales underground, increasing the risk of unregulated backyard breeding. He emphasized that his business follows all legal requirements and provides high-quality care for animals. He also raised concerns about economic impacts, such as the loss of local tax revenue and business opportunities.

Aaron Zellhoefer, Humane Society of the United States, presented counterarguments, stating that many pet stores source animals from high-volume breeding facilities with documented violations of animal welfare laws. He stated that public records from USDA inspections indicated that a significant percentage of breeders used by pet stores had citations related to veterinary care, enclosures, and overall animal well-being. He advocated for a preventative approach, highlighting that 99% of pet stores in Minnesota already operate under a humane pet store model without selling puppies and kittens.

Councilmembers engaged in a discussion regarding the balance between consumer choice, ethical breeding practices, and the role of government regulation. Some members expressed support for the ordinance as a way to ensure humane treatment of animals, while others questioned whether additional state-level regulations would be a more appropriate approach.

Following deliberation, the Council directed staff to draft an ordinance similar to the Coon Rapids model, which would prohibit the sale of puppies and kittens in pet stores while allowing partnerships with rescues and shelters. Staff will bring forward draft language at a future work session for further review and discussion.

B. Discussion of 2025 Appointments and City Councilmember Assignments

Administrator Buchholtz stated that the City Council requested that the annual appointments be placed on a work session agenda.

Administrator Buchholtz asked which City Councilmembers were interested in serving as Acting Mayor. Councilmember Wendling and Councilmember Goodboe-Bisschoff expressed their interest in serving as Acting Mayor. Administrator Buchholtz asked members for their preference. Councilmembers Wendling, Dircks and Moran expressed support for Councilmember Wendling. Councilmember Goodboe-Bisschoff and Mayor Nelson expressed support for Councilmember Goodboe-Bisschoff. Administrator Buchholtz noted that the majority of the Council supported Councilmember Wendling as Acting Mayor.

After discussion, the City Council recommended Councilmembers to serve on the following positions:

Acting Mayor	Ken Wendling
Parks and Recreation Commission	April Moran
	Ken Wendling (alt)
Planning Commission Liaison	Ken Wendling
	April Moran (alt)
Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council	Bob Nelson
	Ken Wendling (alt)
Anoka County Fire Protection Council	Lisa Dircks
	April Moran (alt)
Beyond the Yellow Ribbon	Bob Nelson
SBM Fire Department Liaison	April Moran
Negotiations – Patrol	Ken Wendling
	Lisa Dircks
Negotiations – Sergeants	Bob Nelson
	Barbara Goodboe-Bisschoff
Negotiations – Public Works	Ken Wendling
	April Moran
Non-Bargained Personnel Committee	Lisa Dircks
	Ken Wendling

N. Metro Cable Communications Commission	Barbara Goodboe-Bisschoff
	April Moran (alt)
North Metro Mayor's Association	Bob Nelson
	Barbara Goodboe-Bisschoff (alt)
Tower Days Committee	Lisa Dircks
	Ken Wendling (alt)
Trunk Highway 65 Corridor Coalition	Barbara Goodboe-Bisschoff
School Board Liaison	April Moran
	Ken Wendling (alt)
Coon Creek Citizen Advisory Committee	Barbara Goodboe-Bisschoff

Administrator Buchholtz noted that these appointments would be on the agenda for the January 21, 2025 meeting.

C. Discussion of Code Enforcement Position

Administrator Buchholtz provided a historical overview of the position, noting that before the expansion to full-time, the city had difficulty maintaining adequate enforcement with only a part-time employee. He stated that the Council initially authorized the transition to a full-time role in 2021 following a rental housing study that identified the need for stronger oversight and enforcement. He said the position is primarily funded through rental licensing fees, rather than being a direct burden on taxpayers.

Building Official Jeff Baker provided additional insight, explaining that since the position became full-time, the city has seen significant improvements in the condition of rental properties, a reduction in nuisance complaints, and increased enforcement of property maintenance codes. He highlighted key successes, including:

- A substantial decrease in late rental registrations (from an average of 45 down to 5).
- Enhanced commercial fire inspections, which had previously experienced significant backlogs.
- Increased accountability for property owners with a history of neglecting maintenance.
- The successful abatement of a long-standing nuisance property at 8064 Garfield Street.

Mayor Nelson expressed concerns about long-term staffing needs and budget implications, suggesting that the Council take a broader look at staffing levels across all departments before making additional long-term commitments. He noted the increasing costs of city services and emphasized the importance of ensuring that new positions are financially sustainable.

Councilmembers Dircks and Moran supported maintaining the full-time role, stating that the improvements in rental housing and overall property conditions justified the expense. They also noted that cutting the position back to part-time could lead to decreased enforcement and a return to past issues with substandard housing conditions.

After further discussion, a consensus was reached to proceed with filling the position as a full-time role.

3. REPORT

A. City Council and Staff Reports - None

4. ADJOURN

The meeting was adjourned at 6:40pm.

APPROVED BY

Robert Nelson, Mayor

Attest:

Daniel R. Buchholtz, Administrator, Clerk/Treasurer