

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

St. Francis Area Schools District Office 4115 Ambassador Blvd. NW

May 6, 2024

6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The regular City Council meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Joe Muehlbauer.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Joe Muehlbauer, Councilmembers Robert Bauer, Kevin Robinson, Crystal Kreklow, and Sarah Udvig.

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Community Development Director Collette Baumgardner, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, Fire Chief Dave Schmidt, Finance Director Darcy Mulvihill, City Engineer Craig Jochum (Hakanson Associates, Inc.), Police Chief Todd Schwieger, Liquor Store Manager Joe Pfeifer, and City Planner Beth Richmond (HKGi).

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: UDVIG APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Ayes: Bauer, Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Muehlbauer shared that they will be removing Items H and L for discussion before approval of the Consent Agenda.

- A. City Council Minutes - April 15, 2024
- B. Resignation- Firefighter Ashley Preiss
- C. Change Orders– City Hall / Fire Station Project
- D. AC License Agreement- City Hall Fire Station Street Landscape
- E. Authorization to Purchase Mobile Radio
- F. Authorization to Purchase Thermal Imagers (3)
- G. Vista Prairie at Eagle Pointe Site Improvement Agreement
- H. Accept Resignation– Community Development Director
- I. Police Department Policy Manual
- J. Surplus Property & Replacement of Office Duty Handguns
- K. South Ambassador Watermain Improvements
- L. Hot Patch Trailer Purchase

- M. Zero Turn Replacement
- N. OPUS Utility Billing Contract Renewal
- O. Rental License Approvals
- P. St. Francis Lions Club Temporary On-Sale License for Pioneer Days 2024
- Q. Public Dance License
- R. Payment of Claims.

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: BAUER APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS A-G, I-K, and M-R.

Ayes: Bauer, Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

Robinson asked who will be getting a majority of the Community Development Director's workload after Baumgardner's last day and if it will be split between several individuals. City Administrator Thunstrom shared that the Community Development Specialist has been heavily reliable in this role over the past 12 weeks while Baumgardner has been on maternity leave. She noted that there is not really another internal individual who does the land use and zoning work to this level. She said this work will fall between herself and the Community Development Specialist.

Robinson asked if they anticipate this to be burdensome to take on this additional work for the next few months. Thunstrom explained that they are still working on a number of old projects in Community Development. She noted that the Community Development Specialist has already been a key piece of keeping everything moving.

Robinson said he wants to make sure that Thunstrom is not being overly burdened by this work. He said if she is comfortable with it then he is as well. He asked Thunstrom to let the Council know if she gets overwhelmed with the work.

Kreklow asked if the \$4 per hour increase for the Community Development Specialist is appropriate for the increased workload. Thunstrom said yes and explained that the increase supports the level of work. She added that they may also need some overtime when it comes to getting all of this work done as they are heading into the busy time of year for Community Development. She reiterated that the Community Development Specialist has already been a huge support while Baumgardner has been on maternity leave.

Bauer said he is okay with accepting Baumgardner's resignation, but he is not okay with the \$4 an hour pay raise for the Community Development Specialist.

Mayor Muehlbauer noted that the pay raise is temporary until the Community Development Director position is filled. He explained that the pay raise is to compensate the Community Development Specialist for the extra work that they

are doing and expected to do until the position is filled.

Robinson asked about the longevity of the cold patching compared to the hot patching trailers. Public Works Director Carpenter stated they are about the same. He explained that it comes down to how deep the pothole is. He noted the main reason for this request is that his staff is having to drag out bags of the patching materials by hand and filling single potholes at a time which is taking a lot of time. He said his staff will be able to work and move much faster with this trailer. He added that once this trailer is purchased it will be good for over 20 years.

Robinson asked if there will be safety courses and training that will help the staff operate this equipment. Carpenter said yes.

Robinson asked how much money is in the Public Works miscellaneous CIP. Carpenter said they are using about 50% of this fund for the purchase of this trailer. He noted this amount will come out in 2025.

Bauer asked if there are any other cities in the consortium that do this for hot patching. Carpenter said the hot patch is not included in the consortium.

Bauer said he likes the savings this brings. He noted that he would like them to look at their sister cities to see if this is something that they could rent out. Carpenter shared that he reached out to two different cities who asked why the City did not currently have one, as most cities in the area do already have one.

Mayor Muehlbauer added that this trailer will pay for itself over the next five years due to cost savings in materials. He stated that anything that can make them more efficient and able to serve the residents better is a good idea.

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: KREKLOW APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA ITEM H.

Ayes: Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: Bauer

Motion carries: 4-1

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: ROBINSON APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA ITEM L.

Ayes: Bauer, Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Trent Blake, 22816 Poppy Street Northwest, came forward and thanked the City for their work on the golf cart rules he spoke about previously. He shared that he has concerns with speeding on his street. He noted that he was very good friends with the late Mayor Feldman, who mentioned that there was money set aside for

temporary speed bumps in the area. He added that Mayor Feldman had also mentioned speed trailers that take photos of vehicles speeding. He asked what happened to these items. He asked what can be done to help with speeding in this area. Mayor Muehlbauer stated this is the first he has heard that there has been money set aside for speed bumps in this area. He explained that Mayor Feldman had a lot of ideas of things he wanted to do within the City, but he did go rogue on some of these ideas. He noted that Mayor Feldman may have had a plan for this; however, the Council has never budgeted any items for speed bumps.

Mr. Blake asked if they would be able to look into these removable speed bumps as well as bring back the digital speeding signs. Mayor Muehlbauer shared he is open to hearing any ideas from Public Works on what they could do to mitigate the speeding in this area. He added that they will also have to deal with Oak Grove for any project pertaining to Poppy Street.

Police Chief Schwieger shared that they have speed signs that they rotate around different locations throughout the City. He said they will be back on Poppy Street soon. He added that they also rotate extra patrols and stationary patrols in this area.

Dave Voorhees, 23271 Vintage Street Northwest, came forward and shared that he overheard that someone bought out the strip mall where the Subway is located and there are plans to put in a smoke spot in this area. He asked if this is true, and if so, why they are allowing another smoke shop to be opened when there was just one opened down the road. He noted that this is a family-oriented neighborhood. He asked if there is a five-year plan to get more family-oriented activities around the community.

Mayor Muehlbauer explained that the City is a free market. He noted that the only thing he is aware of that was pushed by the City was the Kwik Trip. He said these businesses look into the City to see if it will work and be profitable for them and they buy the lot if it fits within the zoning and there is nothing the City can do legally to say they do not want certain businesses in the City. He noted there are restrictions from the State about the distances that these smoke shops can be from schools and daycares. He said the strip mall that Mr. Voorhees is referring to is likely too close to a school for there to be a smoke shop. He reiterated that if these businesses are complying with all of the legal standards set in place there is not much the City can do to stop businesses from coming to the City.

Mr. Voorhees asked if there are anyways that they can advertise to bring more family-oriented businesses to the City. Mayor Muehlbauer shared that this is a lot of what Community Development does. He noted that they try to attract more business to the City and the current limits to this are location and population.

Baumgardner explained that there are some areas of the City where they do get to have some discretion, which are the City owned lots. She noted that they are

actively recruiting businesses for these lots. She shared that they are also pursuing programming with the City for family-friendly options throughout the City.

Mayor Muehlbauer shared with Mr. Voorhees that if he has any further questions he can reach out to Staff or anyone on the Council. He said that calling Staff directly can help get the most straightforward answers. He noted that contact information for Staff can be found on the City's website.

Robinson added that Thunstrom and Baumgardner attend countless meetings with the County and neighboring cities so there is always networking going on behind the scenes. He noted that there is a coffee shop and other businesses that are making their way into the City.

6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

A. Vista Prairie at Eagle Point Conduit Bond

Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report in regard to the conduit bond for Vista Prairie at Eagle Point. She introduced attorney Libby Kantner with Kennedy Graven.

Ms. Kantner came forward and shared that Kennedy Graven is the bond counsel for St. Francis and it is their responsibility to ensure that bonds are issued correctly. She gave a brief background of the project and explained how conduit bonds work.

Udvig shared she is excited to see this project moving forward.

Kreklow asked what interest other cities have in bonding for something that is coming to St. Francis. Ms. Kantner explained that these cities will get an issuer fee for issuing these bonds, which is their primary interest. She added that this is also something easy that can be done to help out another community as there is no risk to any of the cities.

Kreklow asked if the City has ever issued these types of bonds for other cities. Thunstrom said no.

Mayor Muehlbauer said there is no risk associated with this and they are able to gain an issuer fee. He noted this project will benefit the community.

Mayor Muehlbauer opened the Public Hearing at 6:37 p.m.

Mayor Muehlbauer closed the Public Hearing at 6:38 p.m.

MOTION BY: BAUER SECOND: KREKLOW TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-15, A RESOLUTION AUTHORIZING THE ISSUANCE OF REVENUE OBLIGATIONS FOR THE BENEFIT OF VISTA PRAIRIE AT EAGLE POINTE, LLC.

Ayes: Bauer, Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

8. **OLD BUSINESS - NONE**

9. **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Solar Farm Zoning Ordinance Amendment – First Reading

Ordinance 329 Amending the zoning code to allow solar farms in the I-2 District

City Planner Richmond reviewed the Staff report concerning a request for a Zoning Code amendment to allow solar farms in the I-2 district. She shared the Planning Commission's recommendation of approval.

Bauer noted that he does not think this is the right area for this kind of industry due to the concussion. He asked if this is owner based that the property owner would be able to sell off. Richmond explained that Connexus Energy is working with Northrup Grumman on this project.

Robinson asked if they will be cutting down trees to put in this solar farm. He asked if any of the solar panels or support frames will be put into the wildland areas. Richmond noted that the next step in this process if this item is approved is for the applicant to submit an application for this. She explained that the standards are written so that certain sizes of these solar farms need conditional approval. She noted that the size of the solar farm that the applicant is interested in would need to go through the conditional use process. She added that this would allow them to look at the site plan to ensure that there are necessary setbacks from wetlands and look at any tree removal that would occur.

Robinson asked if any power that is transmitted by the solar panels will be used on site. He noted that the internet service in this area is not good and asked if there would be any way to tag along with this project by running fiber optic lines. Richmond explained that the energy will be going back to a larger service. She said she is not sure what kind of utilities they could put in.

Robinson asked what this will do for landowners in the area that could decide to put up their own solar farms. He asked what impact this will have on wildlife in the area. Richmond stated that because most of the land in this area is owned by Northrup Grumman, she does not think this will really be opening the door to additional landowners in the area putting up their own solar farms as there are only two property owners currently in the I-2 district. She noted that there are already standards in City Code pertaining to solar panels.

Steve Rauschendorfer, from Northrup Grumman came forward and addressed the concerns with the concussion stated that they do not anticipate this being a problem as the panels will be able to withstand hail and other things of that nature.

Tom Guttormson, Principal Engineer with Connexus Energy, came forward and

shared that the output for this system will be connected into existing power lines so they should not need to build any additional power line facilities. He added that all of the energy will be generated into the distributed lines and consumed by residents in the area. He explained that the solar panels will be pretty tough and he has seen them withstand high winds and hail storms. He said they will be bringing up the concussion as part of the design to see if there are any additional questions. He noted that at this particular site, the solar farm will be designed and owned by Cedar Creek.

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: KREKLOW TO APPROVE THE FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE 329 AMENDING THE ZONING CODE TO ALLOW SOLAR FARMS AS A PERMITTED WITH STANDARDS USE WITHIN THE I-2 DISTRICT.

A roll call vote was performed:

Mayor Muehlbauer	aye
Councilmember Bauer	aye
Councilmember Udvig	aye
Councilmember Robinson	aye
Councilmember Kreklow	aye

Motion carried: 5-0

B. Ordinance Amendment – Chapter 7-3-6 Recreational Motor Vehicles, First Reading

Ordinance 330 Amending Chapter 7-3-6 Recreational Motor Vehicles

Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report in regard to the ordinance amendment to the golf cart ordinance that was requested on April 1 by resident Trent Blake.

Kreklow asked what kind of fee schedule they will be looking at for these permits. Thunstrom explained that the fees are currently set in the fee schedule on an annual basis. She stated they do not put this in the ordinances as they do change.

Schwieger shared that the permit fee is currently \$15.

Robinson asked if this creates any kind of undue burden on the Police Department. Schwieger noted this is just something they will have to monitor, and he is not concerned with the ordinance itself. He added that he does still have some concerns with traffic volumes depending on the time of day.

Bauer shared that he hopes that Staff did their due diligence when it comes to State and County highways. He asked if they talked to the County about putting a walking path on the side of the bridge that could also be used for the golf carts. Mayor Muehlbauer noted that when they directed Staff to look into this they directed them to look into what the City has jurisdiction over and they did not ask Staff to call the County or the State regarding this.

Thunstrom shared that they used State statutes to put together this ordinance.

Mayor Muehlbauer shared that he likes the idea of more freedom and less restrictions when it comes to things like this. He noted that this is something that can change if it ends up creating a public nuisance. He said his biggest fear with this is accidents and underage drivers operating golf carts on the roads. He encouraged those who will be driving their golf carts on the roads to be smart about this so that they can continue to allow golf cart use on City roads.

MOTION BY: KREKLOW SECOND: ROBINSON TO APPROVE THE FIRST READING OF ORDINANCE 330 AMENDING CHAPTER 7-3-6 RECREATIONAL MOTOR VEHICLES.

A roll call vote was performed:

Mayor Muehlbauer	aye
Councilmember Bauer	aye
Councilmember Udvig	aye
Councilmember Robinson	aye
Councilmember Kreklow	aye

Motion carried: 5-0

C. Pioneer Days Donation Request

Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report concerning a request for donations from the St. Francis Area Chamber of Commerce for the Pioneer Days Festival.

Robinson shared that they have donated fireworks in past years. He noted this cost was \$10,000 in years past but now cost \$15,000. Thunstrom explained that since the 2020 Pioneer Days, there has been an increase in fireworks by \$5,000 a year.

Robinson noted he will be abstaining from this vote as his wife is on the Pioneer Days Board.

Bauer said he will not be supporting this.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked what the driving cause is for needing more funds than the request has been in the past. He asked how they could justify this to the residents. Michelle Anderson, Chairperson of the St. Francis Area Chamber of Commerce, shared that Pioneer Day is a huge reflection on the City and they have thousands of people in attendance. She explained that the Chamber of Commerce volunteers have been working very hard on this event. She said this event gets more and more expensive every year. She shared a list of costs for each item.

Mayor Muehlbauer noted that this event helps promote the City. He asked if having Pioneer Days also benefits local businesses. Ms. Anderson shared that she believes the event helps get the word out for businesses throughout the City; however, it is more of an opportunity for the businesses to take advantage of the event if they so choose.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked if this donation request will be an annual request that will require an increased amount every year. Ms. Anderson said she is not sure because there are so many unknowns for future years that she would have no idea how to anticipate what the costs will be. She shared that they are being strategic with their purchases and trying to invest in things that can be reused year after year. She explained that they are also selling Pioneer Days buttons that will help people get into events -and get special discounts during Pioneer Days.

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: KREKLOW TO ACCEPT THE PIONEER DAYS DONATION REQUEST.

Ayes: Kreklow, Udvig, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: Bauer

Abstain: Robinson

Motion carries: 3-1-1

D. Work Session Request

Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report and shared the request for a Work Session meeting to discuss some items related to Public Works.

The Council agreed to schedule the Work Session meeting for May 13 at 6:00 p.m.

10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Travis Denzel, 3770 227th Court Northwest, came forward and shared that he pays a large water bill. He noted that his parents live in Blaine and they pay around \$160 to \$180 a quarter for water, sewer, and trash services. He said he pays around \$100 a quarter just for water and sewer, as well as \$45 to \$50 a month in trash service. He asked if there were any plans to contract with private companies to ensure that these utilities are sustainable. Mayor Muehlbauer explained that he had also been very upset about water rates in the past which is what led him to serve on the Council. He noted that Blaine, as well as other cities in the metro area, have a much larger customer base that is able to help split the costs. He explained that St. Francis has their own plant to sustain. He added that these other cities can tie into the Met Council's system and St. Francis cannot, so they do not have the benefit of paying what these other cities pay on a quarterly basis. He noted that he has also heard that there are 'strings-attached' to tying into Met Council systems. He stated that if someone reached out to the City about joining the Met Council's systems then it would be something they could look into and see if it would work for the City.

Mr. Denzel shared that he and his neighbors also noticed a recent increase in their storm water fees. Mayor Muehlbauer stated this is a separate fee. He explained that the MS4 comes down from the State and is a permit that requires certain things to be done, given that they discharge to an outstanding water resource, which is the Rum River. He noted that this is an unfunded mandate from the State. He added that Mr. Denzel can call Public Works or any City Staff at any time with

questions about this.

Mr. Denzel thanked the Council for their transparency and insight. He asked if they anticipate these fees increasing anytime soon. Mayor Muehlbauer stated the fees were just increased so they likely will not have another increase anytime soon. He stated that the wastewater fees are being looked at for a small increase.

11. REPORTS

A. Public Works Quarterly Report

Carpenter reviewed the Public Works report for the first quarter of 2024. He highlighted the lack of snow and ice clearing that they did this year, at only 16 days. He said they plowed 800 less miles of road this year than they did last year. He shared that they were able to use the time that they did not have to spend plowing to clean, organize, and maintain the Public Works building. He added that they also did a lot of repair work. He shared that they had a new recycling event during this quarter for oil and appliance recycling. He noted that they were still able to do the Ride to School in a Snowplow event despite there being no snow on the ground. He shared that they also were able to do some grant writing over the winter. He explained that the wastewater Neptune 360 software is able to detect leaks in the system and wastewater Staff started a program in house to help the residents establish if they have leaks in their homes or not. He noted this has become extremely popular. He said they will continue to do this work year-round. He added that the Department of Health came out for a sanitary inspection of all of their water related equipment and there were no inefficiencies found. He noted that Staff has been working with the DNR for the water appropriation permit and they will be asking for a larger amount of water. He shared that they are continuing to work with their engineering consultant and the MPCA on the chlorides issue. He said the wastewater Staff has been able to keep all maintenance in house. He added that the new Public Works employee has been a wonderful addition to the team. He thanked all of Public Works for all of their hard work throughout this very unique year.

The Council thanked Carpenter for a great report and great work by him and his team.

Bauer shared that he would like to see a class of float water brought in to show that they are getting 100% out of the wastewater treatment facility so that what they are putting into the Rum River is clean.

Robinson asked for more information on the Neptune 360 software. Carpenter explained that the meters that are in homes are all read by this software. He shared that they could set parameters on average water usage. He noted that if a certain home has a high water bill, they would be able to look into this to see why that is and give suggestions to the homeowner as to why their bill is so high. He added that the software will also show them outliers so if a household uses way more or less water in a certain month than their average then they can look into this and

see what the cause is. He noted they are trying to help save the residents money on their water bill if necessary.

Robinson asked if this goes for the Oak Grove customers as well. Carpenter said no as they only have one meter in Oak Grove and the meters are not in individual homes.

Robinson asked how many users the water system has. Carpenter said he is not sure; however, they have plenty of space in the software for additional homes.

Mayor Muehlbauer shared that he had an incident in the past where his water bill was very high for a month and Staff was able to look into it and see that he had a toilet running at all times.

12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

The Council shared the meetings and events they attended in the past few weeks, as well as highlighting upcoming events.

Robinson shared that he was able to tour the new City Hall Fire Station and the building is looking great.

Udvig encouraged residents to get involved with Pioneer Days.

13. UPCOMING EVENTS

May 7 - URRWMO Meeting @ 6:30

May 9 - Citizen's Academy

May 9 - Parks Commission Meeting @ 7:00 pm

May 15 - Planning Commission Meeting @ 7:00 pm

May 16 - Citizen's Academy

May 20 - City Council Meeting @ 6:00 pm

May 27 - City Offices closed for Memorial Day

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: BAUER TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

Ayes: Bauer, Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

There being no further business, Mayor Muehlbauer adjourned the regular City Council at 7:46 p.m.