

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
St. Francis City Hall 3750 Bridge Street NW
May 5, 2025
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 Mark Vogel.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Mark Vogel, Councilmembers Kevin Robinson, Sarah Udvig, Amy Faanes, and Joe Muehlbauer.

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Deputy Administrator-City Clerk Jenni Wida, Community Development Director Jessica Rieland, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Police Chief Todd Schwieger, Fire Chief Dave Schmidt, Finance Director Darcy Mulvihill, and City Planner Beth Richmond (HKGi).

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: ROBINSON APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Faanes shared that she has questions on Items K and L.

A. City Council Minutes - April 21, 2025

B. Grant Navigation Resolution Authorization

Resolution 2025-22 authorizing application for grant navigation support for the city

C. Abandoned Property

Resolution 2025-23 declaring seized property related to St. Francis Police Case Number 1-40500 as abandoned surplus property

D. Canine Program Grant

Resolution 2025-24 accepting a canine grant to the city of St. Francis Police Department

E. Winning With Cops Donation

Resolution 2025-25 accepting a donation to the City of St. Francis Police Department

F. Canine Program Donation

Resolution 2025-26 accepting a donation to the City of St. Francis Police Department

- G. Application for On-Sale Wine and Strong Beer Liquor License for All Taco, LLC
Resolution 2025-27 approving on-sale wine and strong beer liquor license for All Taco, LLC
- H. URRWMO Annual Budget
- I. Zero Turn Replacement
- J. Appointment of Chad Schroeder to the position of Lieutenant - Training
- K. Authorization to Post for the Position of Fire Prevention Captain (Part-time)
- L. Job Description Update - Administrative Captain
- M. Rental License Approvals
- N. Site Improvement Performance Agreement for First Baptist Church
- O. Site Improvement Performance Agreement for Rum River Preserve
- P. TNT Fireworks – Sale of Consumer Fireworks License
- Q. Payment of Claims

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: MUEHLBAUER APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS A-J AND M-Q.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

Faanes asked if the Fire Prevention Captain role was for fire inspections or if the fire inspections would be done by other members of the department. Fire Chief Schmidt said they will be going through the application process and will wait to see if they can find someone who meets the fire inspector criteria.

Faanes asked if Schroeder had already met the Lieutenant requirements. Schmidt said yes.

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: UDVIG APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS K AND L.

Ayes: Faanes, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: Muehlbauer

Motion carries: 4-1

5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Jeff Taylor, a representative from R&R Investments, came forward and shared that he has an offer on the old City Hall building. He noted he was the highest bidder for the project by over \$10,000. He stated they have a facility in Bethel that they want to move into St. Francis because a lot of their employees live in the City, and this is a great location for a dispensary. He encouraged the Council to come and tour their Bethel facility to see how they make their products and how they run their business.

Derek Lind, with the Anoka County Elections Integrity Team (ACEIT), came forward and shared that he wanted to bring the Council's attention to poll pad agreements. He asked the Council to invite ACEIT back to talk with them at length about the issues with the current poll pad agreements. He said these poll pad agreements were brought in during 2018, and they were not voted on by the Council and were handled mostly by Staff. He noted there are some risks associated with using these poll pads and ACEIT would like to discuss these risks along with the statute surrounding the poll pads. He added that Oak Grove and Ramsey have already canceled their poll pad agreements with the County.

Mayor Vogel said he would be interested in inviting ACEIT back to a Work Session with someone from the County in attendance.

Amanda Stene, with Vista Prairie at Eagle Point, came forward and shared Vista Prairie's support for the new market-rate apartment complex that is proposed by North Shore Development. She noted that Vista Prairie will be opening soon and they will be employing approximately 40 full-time employees who will need somewhere to live in St. Francis, as this complex would expand housing availability and also provide a convenient location to the Vista Prairie facility.

Michael Powell, 23045 Ambassador Boulevard NW, came forward and shared that the apartment complex in this area has been discussed for two years and no one has done a traffic assessment. He noted that Bridge Street and Ambassador Boulevard are already very busy roads. He stated they already have the senior living facility coming, which will be 80% independent living. He said he understands that growth needs to happen; however, he thinks they are sacrificing too much in this main area of the City. He added that all of the natural barriers behind his home have already been removed and he will have no privacy from these apartments.

Mike Rodger, 2770 232nd Lane, came forward and shared his appreciation for all the Council and Staff does. He shared his admiration for their passion for this apartment project and urged them to look at the big-picture impacts of the whole project. He said there has never been a project to come into the City and paid over \$900,000 in WAC and SAC charges. He noted this will put the City in a good position for the future. He said if they do not move forward with this project, then Staff will once again have to take care of this lot until it is sold to something else. He added that if this project does not move forward, then they will have to raise the water rates significantly.

Tina Carrol, 23045 Ambassador Boulevard, came forward and shared that while she appreciates Mr. Rodger's opinion, he does not live on Bridge Street or Ambassador Boulevard. She noted that she understands that growth is needed in the City; however, there is plenty of other open land across the City than this proposed location. She said she is concerned with people from the apartment coming into her yard and possibly getting injured and it would be her responsibility even though these people were trespassing. She stated she would like to know

how much the property is being sold for.

Mayor Vogel said there is a purchase agreement with the EDA for \$5,000. Ms. Carroll said this seems extremely low for six and a half acres of land.

Amy Bening, 22983 Kiowa Street NW, came forward and shared her concern with the apartment complex. She asked why this property was not opened up for an open sale before entering a purchase agreement with North Shore. Mayor Vogel explained that the EDA sells land that they want to be developed and the developer has to follow through with what the plan for the property is. He said this is not like a normal sale as the property has to be developed using the proposed and approved plan.

City Administrator Thunstrom added that there will be certain deadlines that the developer has to follow and if they fail to meet these deadlines, the EDA can retract the agreement. She said it cannot be sold for the intent of sitting vacant or non-development.

Ms. Bening shared her concerns about traffic. She noted that they could use more apartments in the City; however, there are other properties available other than this one. She asked if the residents paid for the clearing of this lot. Mayor Vogel said yes.

Ms. Bening said it seems like the City and the taxpayers are paying the developer to take this land and it does not feel fair to the residents.

Sandra Schear, 22957 Rum River Boulevard NW, came forward and asked who would be eating the extra sewer and water fees. Muehlbauer explained that having this apartment complex would actually benefit the residents as the developer would be paying the WAC and SAC charges and there would be many more people added to the system.

Ms. Schear asked why the City could not buy this property and utilize it for the residents. She noted that the traffic in this area in the morning and after school is already terrible and this will make it significantly worse.

Ms. Carroll asked if a traffic study would be required for this project. Thunstrom said this would be up to the County and that would come out of the next steps of the application as it moves forward.

Ms. Carroll asked if the residents would have a say in the matter of this at all. She shared that the stop sign in the area is currently treated as a suggestion and people are often speeding on this road. She added that she thinks they should be allowed to request that the developer conduct a traffic analysis for the safety of the community.

Stacy Uhrich, 3845 226th Avenue, came forward and shared that she has lived in the City for 55 years and she lives here because she likes the small town feel. She said this development seems like they are bringing Minneapolis to St. Francis. She asked if they plan on adding more police officers to the Police Department to keep up with the increased crime. She asked if these apartments would be low-income apartments. She noted that taxes will be going up if they approve TIF for this project. She agreed with the traffic concerns of other residents. She said that she and other residents in the City are going to start moving out if this is the direction the City continues to go.

Kris, Lichtscheidl, 23843 Germanium Street, came forward and shared what low-income housing means to her and her family. She said her daughter has special needs but is high functioning so she lives independently in an apartment; however, she requires daily support. She noted she drives the roads that are being discussed every day. She stated the apartment that her daughter currently lives in is being sold and she will need somewhere else to go.

Scott Pechovnik, 23111 Butterfield Drive NW, came forward and shared that he has concerns with the traffic in this area with the new apartments. He said traffic is already an issue and this complex would likely add over 200 more cars to the roads. He noted that emergency services also have to get through this area. He said he is against this project as there are plenty of other locations in the City where this complex could go.

Danielle Ackerman, 23048 Butterfield Drive NW, came forward and shared that the trees behind her home were already torn down for this project, and feels as though it has already been decided that this apartment will go through. She noted that she has heard that they will be putting a pond behind her property and she shared her safety concerns with this as she has four small children. She added that traffic is also a concern of hers. She said the community in St. Francis is so beautiful and this project would diminish it. She added that she does not think they would even be able to get a good resale value for their home now that the trees have been removed. She noted that she does not think having these apartments will greatly benefit the senior facility as people will drive from other cities to work at this facility.

Ms. Bening came forward and said she wanted to think of a solution that would be good for the City overall. She asked if the developer was open to suggestions that would work for the community. She said that she thinks the residents should have a say in what goes here. She stated an apartment in this area just does not make sense.

Mr. Rodger shared that he believes the County already did a traffic study on Bridge Street and Ambassador Boulevard before the roundabouts were installed. He noted that Anoka has put in similar-sized apartment buildings. He asked if anyone had reached out to Anoka to ask how their traffic has increased as a result of apartments in the main area of the City.

Mr. Powell asked if they were going to have to wait for a few people to die as a result of the traffic in this area before the County would do anything since it is a County road. He said he is not against low-income housing as there is a need for it; however, he does not think this area is right for this housing.

6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE

8. OLD BUSINESS - NONE

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Bridge Street Connection Feasibility Study

Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report in regard to the Bridge Street connection feasibility study.

Robinson asked where the bus barn would be relocated to if this moves forward. Thunstrom said they have discussed a few different locations. She stated they are still looking at the big picture of this, and the feasibility study would look into how this connection would work if the bus barn was to be moved. She said there are a lot of moving pieces in this study.

Robinson asked if the school would be contributing to the cost of the feasibility study. Thunstrom said no and noted that they have not spoken with the school about partnering on this study.

Faanes noted that the School District seems to be on board with looking at this and all options available. She said she does not think it would be wrong to ask them to share in some of these costs.

Mayor Vogel suggested they table this item to discuss with the School District about sharing these costs before moving forward.

Udvig asked if the School District does not want to share in these costs, if the City will still move forward with the study. She said she does not want to get to a place where all of these costs fall on the City but the project would benefit others who are not contributing financially. She added that she does not want the City to put money into this if it is not going to move through.

Muehlbauer asked the residents in the audience if they were aware of what this feasibility study was for. He explained that this project would put Bridge Street through to meet up with Pederson Drive. He said he would currently be against this as it would be a costly project and they have no tax base to support it. He shared that he is also concerned with people potentially speeding through this area.

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: ROBINSON TO CONTINUE THE BRIDGE STREET CONNECTION FEASIBILITY STUDY PENDING DISCUSSIONS WITH THE SCHOOL DISTRICT.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

B. St. Francis Apartments Concept Review

City Planner Richmond reviewed the Staff report concerning the St. Francis Apartment concept review.

Matt Alexander, North Shore Development, came forward and shared his appreciation for those who have shared their concerns this evening. He noted that there is a traffic issue in this area and they have been considering this. He said that this is why they are looking at having access off of Ambassador Boulevard to alleviate the traffic on Bridge Street. He explained that this complex would be 120 units, which typically means about 90% to 95% will be occupied. He shared that the average number of cars per unit is 1.5, which would add about 170 to 190 cars to the roadways. He proposed that a traffic study be initiated by North Shore. He shared that he understands that the traffic in the area is a concern and he would like answers himself. He noted that for 20% of the units, they would be limiting the rent based on income. He shared that many of their projects have this kind of requirement. He said they conducted a market study last year and they found that market rates were at or lower than the area median income rents. He stated these apartments are a type of product that the City currently does not have. He answered the questions that residents have had about why they could not just put townhomes in this area rather than apartments by saying that the City does not have as much of a need for townhomes as they do for studio apartments. He shared that he hears the concerns about crime; however, they conduct background checks on everyone who will come into the apartments and they also have cameras all over the property. He added that they also have full-time property managers at the complex during the day. He noted that the amount of crime that is generated by a new apartment complex is low and has not been a concern at any of their past projects. He explained that they will be following every rule when it comes to the ponding behind the property, whether that be fencing requirements or other barriers. He shared that they have to go through a rigorous engineering process for a project like this. He added that they plan on giving the excess land to the north back to the City due to the wetlands.

Muehlbauer shared that he asked Police Chief Schwieger about the crime statistics for other apartment complexes in the City. He explained that there were 112 total calls for service to the three largest apartments over the last three years, 33 of which could be considered criminal calls. He noted most of the calls for service were non-emergency or medical calls.

This item was for discussion only.

C. Tax Increment Financing (TIF) Application – North Shore Development Partners

Community Development Director Rieland reviewed the Staff report in regard to the TIF application from North Shore Development Partners.

Nick Anhut, Ehlers and Associates, gave the Council an overview of the TIF application.

Muehlbauer asked if the term of the TIF was up to the Council or was based on what the developer needed. Mr. Anhut shared that Elhers will make a recommendation to the Council before approval. He stated that could not go any longer than 26 years.

Mayor Vogel shared that he is not in favor of using TIF as he does not understand why the residents should have to pay for private development. He said this is a developer problem and not a taxpayer problem. He explained that if he bought an empty lot in the City to build a house on, he would not get a tax break from the City. He said it is not the resident's responsibility to pay for development.

Faanes thanked Staff for their work on this. She said she has an issue with the concept of the project due to the traffic concerns. She stated she was not willing to say yes to this project without first having a traffic study conducted. She shared that she attended the Planning and Zoning Commission meeting where 15 residents spoke about this project and only one was in favor of the project. She explained that she, as well as many other residents, moved to St. Francis for the small-town feel. She said she does not think this project is what the community wants. She stated she is not in favor of TIF for this project. She added that she thinks the EDA having a purchase agreement for this project at only \$5,000 was wrong. She noted that she also thinks they removed the trees prematurely as it does not seem as though the residents in the area were aware of the tree removal.

Muehlbauer noted that no matter where they try to develop in the City, there are always going to be people who oppose the development. He explained that the Council is elected to represent the residents and they have to think about the community as a whole when making decisions. He shared that traffic is one of his concerns. He said there is an aspect of personal responsibility when it comes to traffic. He noted that there were people who complained about the Green Valley development who did not even live in St. Francis and even those who lived in the City had complaints about traffic and crime even though this development was for large property homes. He asked the residents to try and be reasonable about this matter. He said he is in favor of TIF for this project as this is a location in the MUSA district where this project would fit. He noted that if a car accident happens in the City, it is not the City's fault and there needs to be some personal accountability from residents.

Udvig shared that she is also supportive of using TIF for this project. She acknowledged that traffic is an issue in the area; however, if they do not grow as a City then all of the current residents will have to pay all of the increases that will happen. She noted that nothing is getting cheaper so they will need to increase taxes, and without growth, this will all fall on the current residents. She said it would cost more money to keep the City small. She stated all cities have a downtown area that is more dense than other areas. She said she is looking out for financing for the City which is why she would support TIF.

Robinson thanked everyone who was involved in this and the residents who came to share their opinions. He said he personally does not like TIF; however, he does understand the concept. He noted that 26 years is a long time for TIF. He stated he was not fond of the sale price for the property. He shared he is also concerned with the traffic in the area. He added that the water rates will increase; however, if they move forward with this project, the current residents will not feel this increase as much as they would without this development. He said they need more hookups to the water and sewer systems. He noted that social media is not the place for residents to get their information and encouraged residents to contact Staff or the Council.

Faanes shared that she agrees with everything that has been shared by her fellow Councilmembers.

MOTION BY: FAANES SECOND: ROBINSON TO DENY THE TIF APPLICATION.

Ayes: Faanes, Robinson, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: Muehlbauer and Udvig

Motion carries: 3-2

D. Rivers Edge 8th Addition

Resolution 2025-28 approving the final plat and plans for the 8th addition of the Rivers Edge subdivision

Richmond reviewed the Staff report concerning the final plat for the 8th addition of Rivers Edge.

Muehlbauer asked how many homes would be in this addition to the project. Richmond said there are 29 homes proposed for the 8th addition, totaling 163 homes for the whole project.

MOTION BY: FAANES SECOND: UDVIG TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2025-28 APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT AND PLANS OF THE 8TH ADDITION OF THE RIVERS EDGE SUBDIVISION WITH CONDITIONS AND FINDINGS OF FACT AS PRESENTED BY STAFF.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mr. Rodger came forward and shared that some residents will likely be disappointed when they see the results of the traffic study. He explained that the County will be widening this road in 2030. He noted that this information has already been put out by the County.

Ms. Carroll came forward and shared that she agrees with Muehlbauer's comment about people needing to accept personal responsibility. She welcomed him to sit at her property and watch how people drove by her home, especially when she was trying to back into her driveway. She shared that she had stumps ground at her property recently and she had to stand in the road to stop traffic so they could get the stump grinding equipment across the street. She thanked the developer for listening to the residents' concerns about the pond behind the development. She asked if the developer would be contributing to mosquito control that will be needed as a result of this pond. She asked where the cameras on the property would be aimed and if they would be aimed at her and other residents' backyards.

Ms. Ackerman came forward and asked if there were future plans for the land now that the TIF application has been denied. She asked if they would still be putting a road through this area. Muehlbauer explained that they are required to put a road in order to market the corner lots. He said the County will not allow any new access.

Ms. Ackerman asked if they would be planting new trees where they were previously removed behind the homes. Mayor Vogel said no.

Robin Olson, 23041 Butterfield Drive NW, came forward and shared her concerns with the traffic going down Butterfield increasing. She shared that when she was four years old she watched her sister get hit by a car. She said there are a lot of kids who live in this area and she never wants anyone to have to witness what she witnessed with her sister.

11. REPORTS

A. Community Development Report - Quarter 1

Rieland reviewed the Community Development first quarter report. She reviewed the economic development projects that were worked on in the first quarter including the Bridge Street corridor and Highway 47 corridor. She shared that the owners of 3645 and 3631 Bridge Street are hoping to sell these two parcels together. She noted that Vista Prairie is on schedule to open this fall. She discussed the plans for the third season of the farmer's markets including planning for growth. She added that Staff has remained active in the Chamber of Commerce. She explained that there are an estimated 44 lots remaining with sewer and water connections and 34 lots that would be on private wells and septic. She stated two residential developments are currently under review, the Bluffs of Rum River and Rivers Edge, and two commercial projects under review, the old City Hall buildings and the property at 3503 Bridge Street. She added that the City

issued one new construction permit in the first quarter. She noted that they have processed a total of 103 permits so far this year. She shared that code enforcement Staff responded to 11 property complaints through the first quarter that are in active code enforcement. She stated all rental properties ending in an odd number were up for renewal this year and multiple locations have required corrections which is taking the licenses longer to process due to the State requiring Tax IDs or Social Security Numbers from landlords and homeowners. She shared that the Planning Commission met once during the first quarter in January. She added that there is currently a vacant seat on the Planning Commission and Staff has received two applications and will be scheduling interviews soon. She explained that the need for housing is an issue beyond the City and expands to the County and the State. She said housing is regional in nature and it is reasonable to take into account the study that Anoka County completed which illustrates the housing needs across the County. She stated the County needs 18,000 more housing units by 2030 and the study estimates that less than half of this number will be created due to current economics. She reviewed the anticipated growth for the City and how they can accommodate the growth. She said there is a housing shortage nationwide. She noted there is demand for 540 single-family or multi-family owned units between 2023 and 2030. She stated that high mortgage interest rates drive up the need for apartments and affordable housing. She shared the current demand for rental units between 2023 and 2030 of 173 new units. She said that they will be able to meet the senior housing demand with the addition of Vista Prairie.

Muehlbauer asked if the vacant lot number includes the North Shore property. Rieland said no and stated this number would change after the vote to deny TIF.

Robinson asked how long the oldest property in active code enforcement has been in the code enforcement process. Rieland said she does not have this information; however, she believes most of them are rental properties that are turning over.

Council thanked Rieland for the great report and all of her work.

12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

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

Muehlbauer shared his appreciation for residents coming out to share their opinions on things they are passionate about. He said he wishes they had more involvement in these things at earlier stages in the process. He explained that he wanted to join the Council after the water rates were being increased and one of the Councilmembers at the time, Councilmember Tim Brown, encouraged him to educate himself on the difference between the Met Council and a standalone system. He shared that he learned a lot during this time. He noted that a lot of the decisions made by the Council require them to look at the decision objectively and separate the decision from emotions. He encouraged residents to sign up for the Citizens Academy which is starting tomorrow.

Faanes thanked residents for sharing their opinions with the Council. She encouraged residents to pay attention to what is going on with the City more so they can get involved sooner in the process. She asked if they would have someone from Pioneer Days at the next Council meeting to give the Council more information. She shared that she received an email from a business owner about the length of the planning and zoning process. She asked about the current process of changing zoning. Rieland shared that she and Richmond met with the business owner, and they gave them guidance on this process. Richmond added that once there is an application on the table for land use, they are held to a 60-day deadline from the State, which can be extended if needed. She said they have not received an application for this site, so the timeline has not started.

Faanes noted that the business owner was not aware that their building was zoned differently, and she added that she has also heard this from other business owners. She said she wanted to understand how the process works when a property is rezoned. Richmond shared that they are required by the State to notify property owners whenever zoning is changing.

Mayor Vogel shared that he is hoping to set up a sit-down discussion with this business owner to clear up their concerns.

Robinson shared that they have begun early budget discussions for 2026.

Mayor Vogel shared that he had a meeting with Rum River Consultants, who is interested in the old City Hall building, and he will be contacting Jeff Taylor, the other interested party, to tour their facility in Bethel. He encouraged the rest of the Council to also take time to sit down with both interested parties before they decide on the sale of the property.

13. UPCOMING EVENTS

May 06 - Citizens Academy - 6:00 pm
May 15 - Parks Commission - 7:00 pm
May 19 - City Council Meeting - 6:00 pm
May 20 - Citizens Academy - 6:00 pm
May 21 - Planning Commission Meeting - 7:00 pm
May 26 - City Offices Closed in observance of Memorial Day
May 27 - Citizens Academy - 6:00 pm
May 30 - June 1 - Pioneer Days

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: FAANES TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

There being no further business, Mayor Muehlbauer adjourned the regular City Council at 8:58 p.m.

Jennifer Wida, City Clerk

DRAFT