

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

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

July 29, 2024

5:30 p.m.

**1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The special City Council meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Joe Muehlbauer.

**2. ROLL CALL**

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

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Deputy City Administrator/City Clerk Jenni Wida, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps and (Barna, Guzy & Steffen).

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

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

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

**4. NEW BUSINESS**

**A. City Council Interviews to fill vacancy**

City Administrator Thunstrom shared that the Council will be holding interviews to fill the Council vacancy this evening.

Assistant City Attorney Schaps shared that Staff put together a seven-question questionnaire for those interested in joining the Council. He explained that they will hold the three interviews then make an appointment to the vacancy.

The first applicant, Amy Faanes, entered to be interviewed by the Council.

Schaps asked Ms. Faanes what she believes is the job or role of City government. Ms. Faanes shared that she thinks the role of City government in a City of this size is to support the residents, bring the community together, and advocate for residents. She added that the City government should not ask as 'big brother' too much when they live in a rural community.

Schaps asked her to explain her experience with local government, committees, or community involvement, including participating on a Board or other governing

group. Ms. Faanes shared that she is currently a St. Francis Charter Member. She added that she has also been on many different Boards, including booster clubs for her kids' activities, as well as attending most School Board meetings. She said she has been a candidate for the School Board and a candidate for Mayor. She noted that she has also been a part of many networking groups and other community groups. She shared that she is a part of the curriculum committee at St. Francis High School. She added that she is also a member of different groups in her church. She said she tries to be as involved with the community as she can be.

Schaps shared that the City Council requires a significant time commitment, usually two to four meetings a month, as well as preparation prior to meetings. He asked if this will fit in with her other commitments. Ms. Faanes said yes. She explained that she has three teenage daughters that keep her busy. She shared that her oldest daughter is now driving which cuts down on her need to drive her children around. She added that her job is very flexible as she is self-employed.

Schaps noted that if she were appointed to this position, it would be to fill a vacancy until December 31, 2024. He asked what her expectations were for filling this position since it is not a full term. Ms. Faanes shared that she expects to get a jump start on the next full term as she is planning on running for City Council for the next four year term. She said she would use this time to become knowledgeable on everything that she may have missed to be able to get up to speed over the next few months.

Schaps asked if she were to get appointed if she has any conflict-of-interest issues due to her involvement, or family involvement, with City projects, contracts, vendors, Staff, or committees. Ms. Faanes said no.

Schaps asked her to identify any experience she has in budgets, both in terms of operations and capital improvements or equipment. Ms. Faanes explained that her experience with budgets and operations is rather extensive. She shared that she has a degree in accounting and a degree in business management. She added that she has also been running her own business for almost 20 years. She noted that she also worked in different banks and credit unions for 15 years in almost every role available, starting as a teller, moving her way up to being a regional operations manager at one of the banks she worked for.

Schaps asked about her experience or background in negotiating labor relations, contracts, or managing people in a unionized environment. Ms. Faanes shared that she does not have any experience with unionized environments. She noted that in her positions at the bank she worked for, she supervised hundreds of people and was often the one put in charge of solving problems. She added that she was put in charge of the IRA department at a credit union and when she was asked to do it, she did not know anything about IRAs, yet she was able to jump right in and figure it out. She shared that she was branch manager of 15 different locations

throughout her time in banking. She said she has a lot of experience supervising people, as well as procedures. She noted that although she does not have experience in a unionized environment, she believes that people are people regardless of whether they are in a union and they deserve to be managed and respected in the same way.

Schaps asked if there is anything else she would like the Council to know about her. Ms. Faanes shared that she has lived in St. Francis for 14 years and has been pretty involved with the community in many different aspects. She added that she has lived in Anoka County for nearly her entire life. She noted that she has tried to be involved with City government for several years and she truly cares about the citizens of St. Francis, and she would be honored to represent them on the Council.

The Council thanked Ms. Faanes for her time.

The next applicant, Mark Vogel, entered to be interviewed by the Council.

Schaps asked Mr. Vogel what he believes is the job or role of City government. Mr. Vogel shared that he believes the role of City government is to oversee the management of all entities, set policies, and make plans per the will of the people. He explained that when he was on the School Board, it was not their job to manage the day-to-day operations, but rather oversee the management and represent the people.

Schaps asked him to explain his experience with local government, committees, or community involvement, including participating on a Board or other governing group. Mr. Vogel shared that when he was in college, he was heavily involved with the Student Government Association. He added that he has been a parish councilmember and trustee, as well as serving on the District 15 School Board. He noted that he was also on the Board of Directors for a private school.

Schaps shared that the City Council requires a significant time commitment, usually two to four meetings a month, as well as preparation prior to meetings. He asked if this will fit in with his other commitments. Mr. Vogel said yes and shared that he has a very flexible schedule.

Schaps noted that if he were appointed to this position, it would be to fill a vacancy until December 31, 2024. He asked what his expectations were for filling this position since it is not a full term. Mr. Vogel shared that he would hope to fully participate in the Council and bring his skillset, ideas, and thoughts to the Council to represent the people while increasing his knowledge about how the Council functions. He added that he is also running for Mayor so this would help him 'get his feet wet' in City government.

Schaps asked if he were to get appointed if he has any conflict-of-interest issues due to his involvement, or family involvement, with City projects, contracts,

vendors, Staff, or committees. Mr. Vogel said no.

Schaps asked him to identify any experience he has in budgets, both in terms of operations and capital improvements or equipment. Mr. Vogel shared that he has a general business degree, and he is the co-owner of two businesses. He noted that he was also the facility manager at his church, which involved operations management and capital improvements. He added that he also dealt with these things on the School Board and being on the Board of Directors at the private school.

Schaps asked about his experience or background in negotiating labor relations, contracts, or managing people in a unionized environment. Mr. Vogel shared that as a School Board representative, he had to sit in on several negotiations as a part of the negotiations team.

Schaps asked if there is anything else he would like the Council to know about him. Mr. Vogel shared that he would really like the opportunity to serve his City. He said he has lived here for almost 25 years and he enjoys the City. He added that he liked being able to represent people and he hopes his skill sets would help him get along with a wide variety of people.

Robinson asked Mr. Vogel how long he served on the Board of Directors for the private school and how long he served on the School Board. Mr. Vogel said both were four year terms.

Robinson asked what held him back from running for School Board again. Mr. Vogel stated that at the time, his first term accomplished some of the goals that the School District wanted to accomplish and they were not in as good of a position by the end of his term.

Robinson asked if Mr. Vogel spearheaded any of these goals. Mr. Vogel said they worked as a team on all of the goals.

Robinson shared that when the Council decided to move forward with the City Hall Fire Station, Mr. Vogel had some concerns about the City communication of this project. He asked Mr. Vogel to elaborate on this. Mr. Vogel explained that there was nothing in the newsletter for two years prior about the City Hall Fire Station. He added that all conversations are recorded in the minutes posted on the website; however, he does not think this is enough. He noted that for a project of this size they need to go all out with communication to residents.

Robinson asked what he hopes to accomplish or what his goals would be for the partial term. Mr. Vogel said that most of his goals and dreams are long term and could not be accomplished in just four months. He shared that one of his goals is to push Bridge Street all the way to Highway 47. He noted that this can be accomplished, but it will take time.

Robinson asked if this ever came up during his time on the School Board. Mr. Vogel shared that there was talks of moving the bus barn out near where he lives in the rural area.

The Council thanked Mr. Vogel for his time.

The final applicant, Joe Lawrence, entered to be interviewed by the Council.

Schaps asked Mr. Lawrence what he believes is the job or role of City government. Mr. Lawrence shared that he believes the role of City government is to represent the citizens and businesses in the City, up to where State statutes and the Federal Constitution come into play.

Schaps asked him to explain his experience with local government, committees, or community involvement, including participating on a Board or other governing group. Mr. Lawrence shared that he sat on the Bethel and St. Francis Fire Board where he got the opportunity to work with a few of the St. Francis Councilmembers. He added that there were also some impromptu committees in association with Nowthen. He shared that he has also worked with the Anoka County Fire Protection Council and serves as a union board member as a part of his full-time job where he assists with labor management meetings.

Schaps shared that the City Council requires a significant time commitment, usually two to four meetings a month, as well as preparation prior to meetings. He asked if this will fit in with his other commitments. Mr. Lawrence said yes. He shared that he has looked at the schedule for the Council meetings and he only has very few conflicts.

Schaps noted that if he were appointed to this position, it would be to fill a vacancy until December 31, 2024. He asked what his expectations were for filling this position since it is not a full term. Mr. Lawrence shared that he expects to be treated like a regular Councilmember where he would be allowed to represent his constituents fairly and at the same level of the existing Councilmembers. He noted that he would like to help the City down the path it is currently going. He said there is not anything he expects to accomplish in just the four months left on the term. He added that he sees this as an opportunity to give back.

Schaps asked if he were to get appointed if he has any conflict-of-interest issues due to his involvement, or family involvement, with City projects, contracts, vendors, Staff, or committees. Mr. Lawrence shared that he is friends with a lot of City Staff including police officers, Public Works employees, as well as the Fire Chief; however, he does not see any of these being conflicts of interest.

Schaps asked him to identify any experience he has in budgets, both in terms of operations and capital improvements or equipment. Mr. Lawrence shared that he

was the Assistant Treasurer for the Brooklyn Park Fire Department Relief Association where they managed the operating budget and the retirement budget. He added that he looks at the special retirement budget as being similar to how a municipality sets money aside for future capital needs. He shared that on the union board that he serves on, they operate a general budget, which is pretty small. He noted that money is very tight so they have to really dial in to make the most of the money. He added that there were also lots of complications with budgeting when working with Nowthen for fire services that he has worked on.

Schaps asked about his experience or background in negotiating labor relations, contracts, or managing people in a unionized environment. Mr. Lawrence shared that he and the union board he serves on are currently working on Golden Valley's firefighter union contracts. He explained that this is a brand new union and they did not have a lot of experience to negotiate well. He added that he also sat on the board with the Brooklyn Park firefighters in a part time capacity. He said he has been through arbitration, and they are currently in mediation with Golden Valley. He shared that he has negotiated the last two contracts with St. Louis Park as the lead negotiator. He stated that he was also a part of sorting out pay and wages for Nowthen firefighters; however, this was not in a unionized capacity.

Schaps asked if there is anything else he would like the Council to know about him. Mr. Lawrence shared that he enjoys politics, and he will not shy away from an argument when needed and is able to not have any harsh feelings after an argument. He said he would look at this as business and it is okay to disagree with others.

Kreklow noted that both earlier applicants had shared their interest in using the remainder of this term as a way to get their feet wet on the Council in hopes of serving a full term. She asked if he is intending on running for a full term. Mr. Lawrence said this is something that interests him and he has never been able to run for the Council in the past as he has always worked for his city's fire departments. He said he is not running in the November election; however, he would love to run again in the future.

Robinson shared that he has worked with Mr. Lawrence on the Bethel Fire Board. He noted that there are 10 Council meetings and two or three Work Session meetings left for this year. He asked if he thinks he can be effective during this time. He shared that he is concerned that he already has two potential conflicts with the remaining meetings. Mr. Lawrence said he is not concerned about his attendance. He noted that he could work something out to make the remaining meetings fit with his schedule. He added that he thinks it would be nice to have someone who works nights represented on the Council as it brings a different perspective. He added that he does not believe that his friendships with City Staff would be a conflict.

Robinson asked what he thinks are two things that have the City on the right path.

Mr. Lawrence shared that right now is the heat of the budget and levy season. He noted that he believes the City provides great services to the City and he wants to make sure these things are maintained. He added that he also wants to help with contracts that are coming up, including the Police Department contract. He noted that if cities are not careful with how they negotiate these contracts, they could end up in a difficult situation. He shared that he fully endorses the City Hall Fire Station project as it is of great value to Bridge Street. He said there has been a decay on Bridge Street over the last 10 years and this will start with improvements in this area.

The Council thanked Mr. Lawrence for his time.

The Council discussed the applicants. The consensus was to appoint Mark Vogel to the Council vacancy.

MOTION BY: KREKLOW SECOND: UDVIG TO APPOINT MARK VOGEL TO THE VACANT CITY COUNCIL SEAT.

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

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: MAYOR MUEHLBAUER TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

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

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

There being no further business, Mayor Muehlbauer adjourned the special City Council at 6:10 p.m.

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Jennifer Wida, City Clerk