

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

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

February 20, 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, Deputy City Administrator/City Clerk Jenni Wida, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, Fire Chief Dave Schmidt, City Engineer Craig Jochum (Hakanson Associates, Inc.), and Police Chief Todd Schwieger

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

A. City Council Minutes - February 5, 2024

B. Stahl Construction – Pay Applications No. 5 – Labor & Material

C. Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan

Resolution 2024-09 Adopting Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan

D. Change Orders – City Hall / Fire Station Project

E. Job Description Updates

F. Hiring of Captains and Lieutenants

G. Police Department Equipment

H. Winning With Cops Donation

I. 245th Ave Mill and Overlay

J. Poppy Street and 229th Lane Reconstruction Project – Final Payment

K. 2023 Street Rehabilitation Project – Final Payment

L. Appointment of Election Judges

Resolution 2024-10 Appointing Election judges for the Special Primary Election on February 29, 2024

M. Approve Application for On-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License for Chester's Small Town Tavern & Eatery

Resolution 2024-11 Approving On-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License, Sunday Sales, and 2 AM License for Chester's Small Town Tavern & Eatery

N. Gambling Application

O. Payment of Claims

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

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

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mayor Muehlbauer asked City Clerk Wida if they had anyone wanting to speak. She said they did not.

6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE

8. OLD BUSINESS - NONE

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Assessing Services Update - Erik Skogquist

Erik Skogquist, Senior accredited Minnesota assessor, came forward and reviewed the 2024 assessment update. He reviewed the assessment and valuation timeline and the process of how the market values are determined for tax purposes. He encouraged residents to contact him if they have questions on their assessment.

Robinson asked Mr. Skogquist if he sees any trends that may result in property values not going up every year. Mr. Skogquist explained that residential valuations this year are rather flat. He noted that the new construction homes in the City are adding value. He shared that they follow whatever the market is telling them to do. He explained that the assessor's job is to set the valuation, as well as the classification of what the property is being utilized for. He noted that the taxes on these properties are based on the budget of the local government.

Robinson asked if they are seeing where businesses or apartment building values have decreased and if they use sales outside of St. Francis to determine these kinds of valuations. Mr. Skogquist explained that if there are not enough sales in St. Francis to look at, then they start looking County wide and work with the County Assessor to see what kind of valuations to assign.

Robinson shared that the ground up new constructions are down this year over the last two years. He asked if Mr. Skogquist sees any trends similar to what was seen in 2008 where values dropped considerably. Mr. Skogquist said this is hard to

predict. He noted that things have settled; however, land values are still pretty high. He shared that he is hopeful that 2008 value drops will not happen again.

Robinson shared they had a concerned citizen come forward at a meeting recently saying that St. Francis is treated differently by the County due to the manufactured homes and limited commercial entities. Mr. Skoquist said no and the only way that the City is looked at differently is based on what sales happened within the City. He noted that values in the City have to be reflective of what people are actually paying for properties in the City.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked how residential values are staying flat while commercial and industrial values tend to be different. Mr. Skoquist explained that it comes down to supply and demand. He noted that in the past, industrial and commercial values were more flat; however, a few years ago this changed. He stated that the market in the industrial world is causing the increase in demand. He added that the cost of building these industrial buildings is very high which also plays into the increase in values.

Mayor Muehlbauer shared that he was glad that some residents were able to reach out to Mr. Skoquist after the truth in taxation hearing to get some issues resolved. He suggested having the assessor's contact information on a tab on the website so residents can easily get into contact when they have questions or concerns.

B. Update City Code – Chapter 2 Administration First Reading
Ordinance 328 - Amending Chapter 2 Administration, Section 5.
Departments

City Administrator Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report in regard to updating the City Code.

**MOTION BY: BAUER SECOND: UDVIG TO ADOPT ORDINANCE 328,
 AMENDING CHAPTER 2 ADMINISTRATION, SECTION 5, DEPARTMENTS.**

A roll call vote was performed:

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

Motion carried 5-0

10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - NONE

11. REPORTS

A. Public Works Annual Report 2023

Public Works Director Carpenter reviewed the 2023 Public Works annual report,

highlighting the completion of the Dellwood Riverbank stabilization project, preparing the temporary Fire Station, working with Stanford Township on joint projects, and the Rum River Swale project. He shared that Public Works applied and obtained \$173,000 in grants in 2023 and he will continue to apply for grants in 2024. He added that they had their first annual Public Works Open House this year which was a successful event. He noted that the recycling events this year were all held at the Police Public Works building which saved money. He shared the popularity of the oil recycling bin and the increase in recycling drop offs. He added that they have received grant money to fully fund an enclosed recycling trailer. He explained that they have been working on project planning for the upcoming rain guard project for 227th Avenue. He shared that Staff conducted 65 site inspections including the City Hall Fire Station. He noted there were 95 hours of street sweeping in the spring and 71 hours in the fall. He shared they are up to date on their permit requirements, and they are continuing to upgrade this program. He shared that every three years they are required to do lead and copper samples in the City and they were under all of the requirements. He added that the Minnesota Department of Health conducted a sanitary inspection of the water treatment plant where they found no deficiencies or violations. He explained that they have started an asset management program, and they are now able to locate all sewer and water lines within the City. He noted they are using the specialized part of the water system to watch water usage to see if they can dial it in. He said the most common cause of water overuse in the City comes from leaky toilets. He shared that there was 90.3 inches of snow, they used 507 tons of salt on asphalt roads, and 47 tons of chips on the gravel roads in the year of 2023. He noted there were \$43,000 in repairs for the year. He mentioned the road washout of 245th Avenue and shared he was impressed with his team for having this repaired in under eight hours. He noted that there were 187 events in parks for 2023. He explained that with the dry winter, the Public Works Staff were able to work on the corner of 227th and Ambassador, as well as working on drainage issues at the wastewater treatment plant. He noted they have also been cleaning up the Public Works facility and parks in the time that they would normally spend plowing.

The Council thanked Carpenter and Public Works for all of their hard work.

Robinson asked how the last recycling event went when they only had the oil recycling open for a window of time. Carpenter explained that it was a little slow; however, he assumed that was because it was a new thing and the more they do it the better it will be.

Robinson asked about what will happen with the salt and chips that they have on hand that they have not needed to use due to the lack of snow. Carpenter said it will just sit before they need to use it again, but they should save money on salt this year due to the lack of snow.

Robinson noted the increase in stormwater prices. He asked if there is a quote for labor when it comes to stormwater work. Carpenter shared they are able to track

this, and he gave examples from the report of what the labor is for.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked if there are any major projects with MS4 coming up. Carpenter explained that the rain guards are a part of this. He noted that they will also be doing some culvert replacement this year.

B. Police Department Annual Report 2023

Police Chief Schwieger reviewed the 2023 Police Department report. He discussed staffing struggles and noted that they are hopeful that the current officer in training will complete his training and they will have a full department. He highlighted all officers and Police Department Staff and all the amazing work they do for the City. He discussed the community outreach efforts that the officers are involved in. He shared there were 131 investigation cases for the year, which is an increase over 2022. He stated there was an increase in thefts, DWIs, juvenile activity reports, assaults, and fraud reports for the year. He noted there were decreases in burglaries, drug offenses, and disorderly calls. He shared that officers responded to 243 calls for service at St. Francis schools. He added that they performed 2,210 traffic stops, issued 513 citations, with 421 being traffic related. He noted the response time for calls remains between five to six minutes. He discussed the Minnesota Towards Zero Deaths initiative and noted that traffic fatalities did decrease from 2022 to 2023; however, DWIs did increase which continues to be an issue. He shared that there was a total of 526 training hours completed over the course of 2023. He discussed the UAV program and the officers who use these devices. He shared the UAV has been deployed 17 times since implementation last summer. He explained that the Police Department also implemented a wellness program which focuses on physical and mental wellness of officers and Staff. He reviewed the numerous events that the Police Department is involved in throughout the year. He thanked the Council for their continued support of the Police Department.

The Council thanked Schwieger and his officers for their hard work to fearlessly protect the City.

Robinson asked if the DUIs are primarily from residents or people traveling through town. Schwieger stated it is relatively split between residents and non-residents.

Robinson asked how the calls for service to the schools compares to 2022 and years prior when resource officers were in the schools. Schwieger said he did not know the exact numbers from previous years but can get him the numbers later.

Robinson asked about the legislation to get the resource officers back in the schools. Schwieger said the last he heard, the language surrounding the SROs is being addressed. He noted he believes it will be sorted out but may take more time than people would like it to.

Robinson asked if there was some funding that was coming for these resource

officers. Schwieger said he had heard something about this; however, he was not sure how accurate the information was.

Robinson asked if the UAV has been useful since they started using it. Schwieger said it has worked very well for the situations they have needed it for. He noted they were able to use it to locate a missing person on the riverbank.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked where the Department is with the K-9 usage. Schwieger stated they are currently focused on getting back to full Staff and they will address K-9s more this year. He noted it may not happen this year, but they will continue to work towards it.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked if there was a date set for this year's Citizen's Academy. Schwieger said yes and that it is in April, but he is not sure of the exact day it starts.

Bauer asked about the lack of resource officers in the schools and if they are seeing an increase in putting people into custody for situations that could have been more tamed if the resource officer was in the school. He asked if they are seeing a trend with the students being further out of control without resource officers. Schwieger stated that there have been very volatile situations that have occurred that he believes could have been prevented with the presence of a resource officer in the school to diffuse the situation. He shared there was a situation that occurred this year where an officer was injured after fighting with a student who claimed he had a weapon.

Bauer explained that this is all about the safety for the children in these schools and with a resource officer in the building who can have a better rapport with the students, he thinks that situations would get less amped up. He hoped they would be able to get the resource officers back in the schools soon for the safety of the children.

12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

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

Mayor Muehlbauer asked the Council how they felt about the group who attended a Council meeting in the past and handed out flyers about election fairness and integrity. He shared this group is reaching out to try to set up a Work Session with the Council.

Robinson asked Thunstrom what benefit this would have to the City and if it is relative to what the Council does to serve the residents. Thunstrom shared there is some caution of what is being told to them and noted there is a lot of what Wida does that a lot of people who are advocating for changes in the election system do not sit down and take the time to review. She noted that much of what is done through the election process is very public. She said the information this group is

providing is interesting; however, she is not aware of how much ability the City would have to make any changes since they are under Anoka County. She noted that if there are large inaccuracies then they can listen to this data and come back with some information after the fact. She noted it would be difficult and disruptive to sit and debate this with the group at a meeting. She said they could invite them back to give a short presentation at a Council meeting or Work Session to hear what they have to say.

Mayor Muehlbauer shared that he imagines that this group is hoping to gather numbers and support from individual cities to advocate to the County for this. He noted that he does see a benefit in listening to this group come and speak as they could also help educate the group on what it is that they are talking about.

Kreklow shared there was no widespread voter fraud in Minnesota or St. Francis and since they do not have the authority to make any change to elections, she does not see the need for this presentation of discussion. Udvig agreed.

Bauer noted that if the City has inaccuracies in their voting and elections then it needs to be addressed.

The Council consensus was that they would not be interested in bringing this group back for a presentation at a Council meeting or Work Session.

13. UPCOMING EVENTS

February 20 - Winning with Cops - 4:00 pm - 6:00 pm Tasty Pizza Bar & Bowl
February 26 - City Council Work Session - 6:00 pm
March 4 - City Council Meeting - 6:00 pm
March 5 - URRWMO Meeting - 6:30 pm

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: UDVIG 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 7:17 p.m.