



**Administrative  
Year End Report  
2024**

**Respectfully Submitted by:  
Kate Thunstrom**

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Mayor and City Council:

Each year Council works on requests related to resident needs, land use applications, policies, ordinances and projects to move the city in a path of success. Administration is the support to Council and to all departments that guide the city as it moves forward.

During the 2024 calendar year we managed challenges and success as we worked together on changes in Council, updates to staffing, several policy changes and completed the City Hall / Fire Station construction.

I am pleased to provide a summary of the activities accomplished in 2024.  
Your year in review.

Regards,

Kate Thunstrom  
City Administrator

## Administration Defined

Administration staff are the individuals that run the process of City services. The positions that fill these needs include the City Clerk, Finance Director, Accounting Tech, and Office Assistants. Within the Police Department there is an Administrative Assistant and a Records Clerk. The Public Works department has an Office Assistant. Whether a staff person is specific to one department or not, they still collaborate across all departments, and everyone plays an important role in the day-to-day operations of the city.

Below is a few of the duty's individuals in administrative positions handle.

Elections  
Human Resources  
    Interviews  
    Job postings, scoring  
    State reporting  
    Benefit management  
    Union Negotiations  
Contracts  
Legal Issue coordination with BGS  
Insurance Requirements  
Data Practices  
Record Keeping and Retention  
City Code  
Communications, social media and website  
Business, Peddlers and Gambling Licensing's  
Alcohol and Tobacco Licensing  
Charter Commission  
County Recording and Permit  
OSHA Requirements  
Day to day resident interaction and technical assistance

IT, Software and Computer information  
Financial  
    Audit  
    Payroll  
    Accounts receivable  
    Bill payment and invoicing  
Budgets  
Investments  
Bonds and Debt management  
Property Assessments  
Property Tax and State Fund Revenues  
Legislative polices, awareness and tracking  
Newsletter  
Council meetings and packets  
Resident Technical Assistance  
    Phone, fax and in person  
Administrative support to staff and Council  
Building Permit Management  
City Facility Rental scheduling  
Utility billing and customer inquiries

## **Administrative Projects:**

**Elections** – the city completed four elections in 2024. We had a special election for State Representative District 27B. Presidential years are taxing on city resources and capacity as it adds a third election and has a high turnout. The opportunities to vote up to 46 days prior to each election put a stress on the day-to-day operations pulling staff from daily tasks. The city was successful in this election in the turnout of residents and ensuring all steps were safe for election judges and staff.

**Legislation** – in the 2024 session the number of bills introduced dropped by 2,400 over 2023's 6,705 bills, as well as 22 less laws enacted than 2023. This was the year of a 1,430-page omnibus bill address housing, THC, employment laws, election laws, criminal laws, housing laws and funding to name a few. Staff continues to watch for municipal and employment impacts and to track the proposed changes on local permits and zoning.

**City Council Changes** – for the second year in a row, Council had mid-year changes. This year Robert Bauer retired and resigned from Council in June creating an opening that was then filled by Mark Vogel.

**Ordinances** – Council updated 8 ordinances., which were related to updating city code and land use projects. Ordinances numbered 325 through 337 were completed for reasons including, but not limited to; housekeeping to zoning and subdivision ordinances, administration and department codes, recreational vehicles for greater use of golf carts, updates to uses in zoning districts I2 and I1, removal of taxicab requirements, THC and Tobacco businesses.

**St. Francis Economic Development Authority** - The EDA held one meeting this year to continue its work with Northshore Development on the multi-family housing project off Bridge Street. Council met in a work session in February to discuss this and a second project as it relates to the need for TIF and how the city has a gap in housing types. With that direction Northshore has continued to move forward with site testing and financial needs to bring a multi-unit project forward and fill the housing need gaps in the city.

**Hwy 47 Reconstruction** -Discussions began with MnDOT in March of 2018 on the deficiencies of Hwy 47 and a plan for a redesign. Unfortunately, in November 2018, there was a pedestrian accident at Pederson which led to the installation of the temporary lights. The State has concluded that they are willing to move forward with a concept of two lights and two roundabouts along the corridor. Additionally, the city needs to make improvement to its infrastructure and lighting as part of the overall project.

In 2023 Council approved staff and our consulting firm, WSB, to apply for grant opportunities. The city was successful and received funds from Met Council for the Regional Solicitation program. However, there is a gap that continues to be a focus for staff. Countless meetings between the city, WSB, Anoka County and the state continue as we work to make progress on the project.

**City Hall / Fire Station Facility** – On October 28<sup>th</sup> this project received its Certificate of Substantial Completion as well as the Certificate of Occupancy. This project included 34 formal owner meetings as well as several smaller discussions to address individual items. This project was completed ahead of schedule and was successful as the team worked together. Stahl continues to compliment the work with Brunton as well as our building official - Metro-West. This project included several subcontractor leads and employees that are either residents of St. Francis, have children in the school district or other close ties to the community.

One item will carry over into 2025 – our generator is anticipated to arrive January mid-month. After the generator is completed the City and Stahl will finalize contract financials.

Save the date: February 1<sup>st</sup> – 9am to 12 pm, staff has planned an event to open the building to the public for activities and tours.

**Kare11 Olympic Event** – in a successful partnership with Kare11 and the St. Francis school district, together we celebrated a local athlete at the Paris Olympics. Our team and several from the community joined together to cheer on and celebrate St. Francis resident and graduate Dakotah Lindwurm. Two local businesses showed up with food trucks and were recognized that morning. It was a positive event for our community and showed the state how we come together.

## **Council Accomplishments**

**Council** – Council held the standard 24 meetings, without any cancellations.

**Special Meetings** – Council held two special meetings. These meetings allowed Council to make timely decisions on the Council vacancy in June as well as canvassing election results.

**Work Sessions** – Council and staff met for seven work sessions this year to discuss items such as staffing positions, dog parks, city hall hours, compensation study, HVAC concepts, park property, tobacco and THC ordinances.

**Parks** – the amenities provided through parks and trails are important in communities to support

and encourage development growth, child development and mental health, opportunities for events and neighborhood gatherings. Having Park amenities and events supports local economic development efforts through attracting people to the area. As the City continues the steps to follow the Park Plan, the following was completed:

- **Financial** – budgeted funds were allocated to address existing park and trail needs as well as addressing the needs outlined in the park plan. Having set aside funds allows the city to apply for grants to assist in paying for expenses related both existing and new park concepts.
- **Park Commission** – the Park Commission code was updated in 2023 and began meeting quarterly during this year. The group is excited to take this step forward with Council and residents to develop amenities that the residents are calling for and benefit from.
- **Dellwood Trail improvements** – a joint project with Anoka Conservation District was completed to improve the trail conditions and stability of the riverbank on the southern end of St. Francis. This project began in 2023 and was completed this year.
- **Farmers Market** – this was the second year of the farmers market in Community Park. The attendance and vendors doubled from last year with close to 300 visitors a week. The community had asked for this amenity and City staff have created a successful weekly event. Although this is time consuming, the feedback from participants at the market as well as the vendor input is highly positive, and they continue to ask for more.
- **Tree Replacement.** Public Works was successful in obtaining a DNR grant to address the issue of city property trees dying from Emerald Ash Bores. As this is a national issue, the MN DNR is helping cities remove the diseased trees. St. Francis lost hundreds of trees in the area including our parks and this program has aided in removal and replacement of mixed species.
- **Dog Park.** In September as the Farmers Market was winding down Public Works held a leash cutting for a long-awaited dog park. Several residents with their pets, as well as the St. Francis Area Chamber, St. Francis Ambassadors and a representative from Chuck and Dons Pet Food & Supply attended the event.

**Reviewed eight land use applications** to further the growth and development of the city Council worked on land use applications that include the Serenity at Seelye and Rivers Edge 7<sup>th</sup> final plats, the final plat of the city hall building, a site plan for First Baptist and Rum River Preserve, and a grading IUP for Northrup Grumman. Although Vista Prairies land use process had been completed prior to 2024, we discussed this project as several meetings as we worked on the public/private partnership that made that project a success. Council also attended the groundbreaking for Vista Prairie and were complimented by the project on the successful public/private partnership it created.

**Housing Opportunities.** Over the last 12 months Council discussed two multi-family housing projects, the senior housing and the needs of Tax Abatement and Tax Increment Financing. As market data shows a gap in housing options in this area, these are tools that allow us to support this needed housing for our residents along with supporting the units needed to address expensive wastewater/water prices.

- Eagle Point at Vista Prairie – St Francis as well as three other cities partnered to support Bonds as well as a Tax Abatement tool to create a 134-unit senior housing project.
- NorthShore Development – this project is part is a joint project with the SFEDA as well as Council. It continues to work through the process to acquire land from the EDA and partner with Council on TIF and the site plan process. This project will bring a local housing option that we are lacking in type with cost effective pricing. This project will also assist with the growth needs necessary for the water and wastewater facilities.

## Human Resources

As of this report there are 68 staff members that represent the goals and future of the City including our part time fire staff. As there has been turn over, there is also a core set of team members with greater than 15 years of history.

**Staffing** – The turnover of staff is an expensive, but sometimes necessary, part of the operational budget.

Staffing years of service levels fall as follows:

- 5 employees over 20 years
- 6 employees 15-19 years
- 10 employees 10 to 14 years
- 19 employees 5 to 9 years
- 29 employees under 5 years

Of our employees: 27 are part-time including firefighters and 41 are full-time.

15-19 years with City	20+ years with the City
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<p>Carl Johnson, Fire</p> <p>Melinda Michels, Bottle Shop</p> <p>Ryan Larson, Police</p> <p>Brandon Stemme, Police</p> <p>Nathan Schwieger, Police</p> <p>Parish Barton, Water/Sewer</p>	<p>Barry McDonough, Fire (28 years!!)</p> <p>Samuel Strassburg, Fire</p> <p>Taylor Herbst, Fire</p> <p>Crystal Buskey, Bottle Shop</p> <p>Todd Schwieger, Police Chief</p>
10-14 years with City	
<p>George Bichler, Fire</p> <p>Rick Phelps, Fire</p> <p>Evan Sturzl, Fire</p> <p>Sandy Hom, Police Department</p> <p>Darcy Mulvihill, Administration</p> <p>Tom Koep, Public Works</p> <p>Jeremy Shook, Public Works</p>	

2024 brought three position changes:

- a hybrid position creating an Administration Captain that works between Administration and the Fire Departments.
- to reduce cleaning costs, it was found that a full-time staff position, Facility Tech, was a cost savings over contracted services.
- To reduce cost and create a more effective position, the Deputy Clerk position was rehired as an Accounting Tech/Office Assistant.

Within the year we also had a changeover in:

- Community Development as the director went into the private sector
- Deputy Clerk/Finance Tech took a promotion opportunity in another city
- Assistant Fire Chief
- PD Records clerk turned over with the retirement of Lori Roberts
- Turnover in fire included the Bethel fire department in which we now oversee services and brought some of their team members on board.

**Retirements** – this year we congratulated Lori Roberts on her retirement from the administrative position in the Police Department. Lori had been with us for 16 years and supported the department through her caring nature as a staff member and her dedication to PD events to provide opportunities to residents.

**Personnel Committee** - to provide employees with a dedicated avenue to provide input a personnel committee was created in 2022. The goal of the group is to discuss employment conditions, new ideas and/or resources that would support all employees at the City. The Committee is made up of employees from each department. The committee met two times this year and discussed ideas related to staff wellbeing as well as benefits that are in the industry in other cities. We continue to work on those ideas in create ways to determine if they are a good fit for St. Francis.

**Personnel Policy** – updates continue as a housekeeping item and to maintain the policy with State and Federal employment laws. Staff brought housekeeping changes forward to meet state laws, to address processes that were left unclear and update drug and alcohol policies. This Policy will require ongoing attention to avoid becoming behind in the future.

**Compensation Study** – As the city continues to look to the future on staffing and its relationship with negotiations, it was determined that our 2007 compensation study was no longer competitive or helpful when hiring or pointing positions. In August Council kicked off a study with Abdo to look at our market and cleaning up our process for wage compensation. In November Abdo presented the final study as well as an updated wage chart and Council adopted the first phase of the study and secured contracts with two of our bargaining units.

**Bargaining Units** - The City ends the year with three bargaining units. This includes the Sergeants, Police Officer and Public Works. In 2024 we began negotiations with both the Police Officers and the Sergeants groups and were able to secure three-year contracts with both before the years end.

## **Finance**

Each year Council adopts an updated Capital Improvement Plan, Annual Budget and tax levy. All documents are available on the city website under Finance. There, Council and the public can see financial reports and planning documents dated back to 2011.

**2024 Budget** - the 2024 Budget as identified in our budget book was in the amount of \$14,712,823 included a 13.1% increase from the previous year. The budget year had challenges with increased inflation and costs.

**Long-Term Financial Plan** –in 2023 staff and council created a financial plan to watch and plan for upcoming costs looking at the long-term needs of staffing, equipment, and organizational needs. The financial plan is a budget planning document but also a system where year after year we can adapt to changes. With that, the 2024-2028 financial plan was adopted.

**Capital Improvement Plan** – is a schedule of proposed public projects and purchases over a five-year period. Capital projects include acquisition, construction, replacement and purchase of equipment or facilities including public buildings, infrastructure, utilities and parks. This year the 2025-2029 CIP was adopted setting the plan forward.

**Annual Budget Process** – this process begins in April with the estimates of salaries and operational expenses. From there Department Heads provide their budget, review expenditures and projects for a budget year still eight months away. In June and November, we held work sessions with Council to review budget impacts and options. This provides Finance and staff the direction to enter data which determines the levy. In September Council set the preliminary levy secured final approval of the levy in December.

## Looking Forward

**Hwy 47** - this will continue to be a major project as we work with WSB, Anoka County and MnDOT. This project is a large improvement to the city infrastructure and safety. At the same time, we must continue to work on limiting the financial impact of the project on residents. We will soon begin work on the environmental and design portion of the project. MnDOT is to take over the project after these initial steps are completed.

**Legislation** - The 2025 begins January 14th. Discussions on major changes to zoning and building permits that could greatly and negatively impact the city are expected to continue. The City will also monitor the THC laws that continue to evolve as well as impacts to elections, emergency services and personnel issues.

Our Legislators are MN House, Bryan Lawrence and MN Senate Andrew Mathews.

**Local Government Officials Meetings** - Council is encouraged to attend the four meetings hosted by Anoka County, Local Government Officials meetings. They consist of an opportunity for administration, Councils, Legislators and County leadership to learn about various topics. A meal is provided in which the city will cover the costs.

The 2025 meeting dates are January 29<sup>th</sup>, April 30<sup>th</sup>, July 30<sup>th</sup> and October 29<sup>th</sup>. Meetings begin at 6pm. Invitations are sent by the County prior to each meeting to identify meal and location.

**“The strength of the team is each individual member. The strength of each member is the team” – Phil Jackson.**

**With that we end 2024 and move forward to 2025!**