



**Administrative  
Year End Report  
2023**

**Respectfully Submitted by:  
Kate Thunstrom**

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December 5, 2022

Mayor and City Council:

The functions of the Administrative staff within a municipality are not as well defined as the other departments. Types of duties within administration include meeting external needs such as elections, licensing, utility billing as well and internal needs such as human resources, finance and the general support of all staff. Administration is also Council's support to create the policies and projects that guide the city as it moves forward.

During the 2023 calendar year we had challenges and success as we worked together on changes in Council, transferred the city to a new financial/permitting software and started the City Hall / Fire Station construction. All successful and progressive.

I am pleased to provide a summary of the activities accomplished in Administration in 2023. Your year in review.

Regards,

Kate Thunstrom

## Administration Defined

Administration and administrative staff are individuals that run the process and the management of City services. The positions that fill these needs include the City Clerk, Finance Director, Accounting Tech/Deputy Clerk, and Office Assistant. 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 works across all departments, we collaborate and everyone plays an important role in the day to day operations of the city.

Below is a list of a few of the duty's individuals in Administrative positions manage.

- 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:**

**Software Conversion** – this was a large-scale project to update all the citywide financial, payroll, business license and permitting software. Past software programs were minimally functioning and on platforms that were struggling with ongoing support. By taking this step forward we transitioned to a cloud-based software, opening up faster responses internally, greater information to department heads and transitioned to a software-based HR system creating an electronic application process as well as electronic payroll systems.

This project was intensive for staff time and we continue to learn the system and all its capabilities.

**Metro-Inet JPA** – the City continues its relationship with the joint powers and Metro-Inet. They hired additional individuals to keep up with the 41 cities (1800 people) that are part of the agreement. They updated their computer use policy that applies to all staff and council. Further work is being done by Metro-Inet on cybersecurity and solutions to provide greater licensing opportunities to reduce fee's.

**Elections** – the city was not responsible for any elections in 2023. Starting this year, we have already begun gearing up for 2024. Several election laws were updated during the legislative session that will require additional staffing hours and process changes. Staff was recently notified of a fourth election due to the resignation of Commissioner Look.

**Legislation** – this year state legislators introduced 6,705 bills, the highest in history beating the 1971 record of 6,012. However, it is not in the top 50 of years for laws enacted. Of the laws passed, the State created a lot of work at the municipal level with changes to THC, employment laws, election laws, criminal laws, housing laws and funding to name a few. Staff continues to work through the 2023 legislative changes and anticipates 2024 will not be any easier.

**Ordinances** – Council adopted 21 ordinances, many of which were related specifically to updating city code and land use projects. Ordinances numbered 303 through 324 were completed for reasons including, but not limited to; park commission, zoning updates, use standards, firearms, fee schedules, parking, signs, and rezoning parcels for development such as Serenity at Seeley Brook, Auto Zone and Patriot Pkwy projects.

**St. Francis Economic Development Authority** - The EDA held two meetings this year in May and August. The May meeting was specific to land transfers between the City and the EDA for sites located north of 3731 and the location of the new city hall. The August meeting was for approval to enter into an MOU with a potential development partner for an apartment complex on an EDA owned property.

**Hwy 47 Redesign** -Discussions began with MnDOT in March of 2018 on the deficiencies of Hwy 47. Unfortunately, in November 2018, there was a pedestrian accident at Pederson which lead to the installation of the temporary lights and work towards a redesign. 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 infrastructure and lighting as part of the overall project.

In an attempt to raise funds, Staff applied for the Corridors of Commerce program in 2022 and learned this year we were not successful. This grant request was the City's first attempt at raising funds for the Hwy project. This year Council approved staff and our consulting firm, WSB, to apply for two additional grant opportunities, HSIP and Regional. Countless meetings between WSB, Staff, Anoka County and the state continue as we work to make progress on the project and find a road to success.

**City Hall / Fire Station Facility** – In August the City moved through the process of a ground breaking, demolition of the existing fire station and into construction of our new City Hall / Fire Station Facility. This will bring life to Bridge street, an in-house Council Chambers, adequate administrative and election space and improve the health of our firefighting staff by having the appropriate space and tools to mitigate hazardous materials and mental health. This project was over 20 years in the making and in all of our community engagement efforts has been widely supported. In roughly a year we will be moving and staff has already began discussing engagement ideas to allow opportunities for the public to visit the new building.

## **Council Accomplishments**

**Council** – Of our standard 24 meetings, this year we had started the year with inclement weather and had a cancellation. This year was a busy year not only due to large projects and planning but the transition of Council seats.

**Late Mayor Steve Feldman.** - Mayor Steve Feldman passed away on June 26<sup>th</sup>. Steve was passionate about St. Francis and worked hard moving the process forward. Through the laughter and the battles, everyone got to know Steve and understood his desire to make St Francis a great place. He is referenced occasionally and his phrases such as “you need to understand something” will not be forgotten.

**Work Sessions** –Council and staff met for eight work sessions this year to discuss items such as; the financial plan, personnel policy, stormwater funds,

**Special Meetings** – in a year such as this we also held five special meetings. These meetings allowed Council to make timely decisions on the Mayoral and Council vacancy as well as addressing a staffing matter.

**Parks** – the amenities of parks and trails are important in communities as it relates to supporting and encouraging development growth, child development and mental health, opportunities for events and neighborhood gatherings. In the past, the City held several events and over time pulled back on most of them. Having park amenities and events supports local economic development efforts through the ability to hold tournaments and/or attract people to the area. As the City completed an extensive Park Plan we continue to take steps to move the plan forward. This year those steps included the following:

- **Financial** – budgeted funds were allocated to address not only existing park and trail needs but to further address the needs outlined in the park plan. Having set aside funds allows the city to apply for grants to assist in paying for expenses.
- **Park Commission** – the Park Commission code was updated and applications were accepted. The Park Commission held its first meeting since 2009! 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 was substantially completed to improve the trail conditions and future stability of the riverbank. Final trail pavement will happen in 2024.
- **Farmers Market** – this was the first year of the market and it was held in Community Park. The attendance was more than expected and impressed the vendors for a first-year market. The community had asked for this event and City was able to make it work and make it a success.

**Reviewed 16 land use applications** to support the growth and development of the city. The applications included projects related to home-based businesses, development and subdivisions, approvals of Dollar General and Auto Zone, an expansion of the Gun Club and Northrup Grumman. For a year with economic uncertainty, it was a busy year for land use and conversations continue to show local interest in future development.

**Development Standards** become the tool in which any development must follow to adhere to road, water and sewer expectations. These are important as they are the future connections of our streets and utilities and must also plan for years to come. Council approved an updated and more efficient development standard guide which lead to some of the ordinance changes.

**UAV Program (Drone)** Council moved our public safety and emergency response team forward with technology through the approvals of a UAV program. This program not only provides a faster response for missing person searches, issues within the river and fires, but also allows a safety component to our officers to use this tool as a visual before going into unsafe situations.

## Human Resources

As of this report there are 64 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 members with greater than 15 years of history.

**Staffing** - This year a seasonal person was brought into City Hall from June through September. This was the sixth year of an administrative seasonal to provided added support for the building season, document retention, counter assistance and project support. There was a change over in our leadership staff with the Bottle Shop and a new manager was hired.

Staffing years of service levels fall as follows:

- 3 employees over 20 years
- 9 employees 15-19 years
- 8 employees 10 to 14 years
- 19 employees 5 to 9 years
- 24 employees under 5 years

Of our employees: 27 are part-time including firefighters and 37 are full-time.

15-19 years with City	20+ years with the City
Taylor Herbst, Fire Carl Johnson, Fire	Barry McDonough, Fire Samuel Strassburg, Fire
Melinda Michels, Bottle Shop	Crystal Buskey, Bottle Shop
Lori Roberts, Police Ryan Larson, Police Todd Schwieger, Police Brandon Stemme, Police Nathan Schwieger, Police	
Parish Barton, Water/Sewer	

**Personnel Committee** - In an effort to provide employees with an avenue of input Administration created a personnel committee in 2022. The goal of this 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. They did not request any meetings in 2023.



**Personnel Policy** – updates were necessary as our existing policy was outdated. Staff brought the policy forward making several housekeeping corrections, updating to meet state laws, to address processes that had changed and created new opportunities for succession planning. Council approved a revised policy in May supported by best practices, legislative requirements and legal housekeeping. The policy then had to come back for additional housekeeping and legislative changes at the end of the year. This Policy will require ongoing attention to avoid becoming so far behind in the future.

**Bargaining Units** - The City ends the year with three bargaining units. This includes the Sergeants, Police Officer and Public Works. With the large update of the personnel policy and the ongoing changes with legislation, our legal team provided each group with MOU's for ongoing collaboration.

## **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 general public can see financial reports and planning documents dated back to 2011.

**2023 Budget** - the 2023 Budget as identified in our budget book was in the amount of \$13,011,500 included a .8% decrease from 2022. The budget year had its challenges with increased inflation and costs. The year took its toll on public works equipment, the cost of fuel and repairs for all departments remained high and being short staffed creates needs for overtime hours.

**Long-Term Financial Plan** –over the past year financial staff worked closely with each department to identify if their needs were on track for operations today and in the future. Stepping back and looking at the long-term needs of the departments for staffing, equipment, and organization allows Council to move forward with fewer surprises. The financial plan is budget document but also a system where year after year we can plan financially and 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 2024-2028 CIP was adopted setting the plan forward.

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

## Looking Forward

**Staffing** - 2024 will bring a new hybrid position into city hall to support the Administration and Fire Departments. This position is looked at to fill the needs previously filled by a seasonal and a part time fire chief.

**City Hall and Fire Station Facility** - the project will continue to move forward through with substantial completion estimated in September with potential for occupancy in November, if everything stays on track. City Hall staff must remain in the existing building through the November primary election and will look to move towards the end of the month or early December.

**Elections** – staff are learning what the next 12 months bring in store with four elections. Each having its own set of rules, testing, judges, staffing, notices and so on that make the process happen. Anoka County guides us through the process but the work is done by the city. This will include extra weekends and night staffing hours. More information to come on a fourth election for County Commissioner.

**Hwy 47** - this will continue to be a major project topic as we work with WSB for grant opportunities, continue community engagement, environmental and design steps. Staff needs to continue to search for funding sources for not only the pavement and intersection controls but for lighting, water and sewer infrastructure needs. A meeting for January 11<sup>th</sup> is scheduled and all elected officials, MnDOT and County Hwy will be invited.

**Legislation** - The 2024 begins February 12<sup>th</sup> with one-third of the legislators in their second year and many housekeeping items lingering. Discussion on zoning, building permits, THC and employee benefits are all expected to continue.

Our Legislators are MN House, Kurt Daudt 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 2024 dates are January 31<sup>st</sup>, May 29<sup>th</sup>, July 31<sup>st</sup> and October 30.

**“Great things in business are never done by one person; they’re done by a team of people” – Steve Jobs.**

**With that we end 2023, and move forward to 2024!**