

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION AGENDA
St. Francis City Hall Fire Station 3750 Bridge Street NW
June 9, 2025
5:30 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER

The City Council Work Session meeting was called to order at 5:30 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 and Liquor Store Manager Joe Pfeifer.

3. AGENDA ITEMS

A. City Charter Next Steps

City Administrator Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report in regard to the future of the Charter and its next steps. She shared that Josie Rosene, Staff Attorney with the League of Minnesota Cities, is in attendance this evening.

Robinson shared that he is supportive of a four-year Mayor term as he sees it as a benefit to the Council and the public.

Udvig agreed and shared that she would want this on the ballot so residents can vote. She noted they will need to do a good job educating the public and why they want to move to a four-year Mayor term.

Faanes said that she sees it as inconsequential to go from a two-year term to a four-year term for Mayor. She noted that a four-year term makes more sense. She asked if the Council and the Charter members all voted in favor of changing this, whether the residents' votes would matter. Thunstrom said the Council and Charter could vote on this and not send it to a ballot; however, if this were petitioned, then it would have to go back to a ballot anyway.

Muehlbauer asked if someone chose not to vote on this ballot question, if it would count as a no vote. Ms. Rosene said she can look into this and report back with an answer.

Muehlbauer said he finds it important to put this question on the ballot. He added that he would like this question to be on the ballot in a presidential election year because that is when they get the most voter turnout.

Faanes shared that there have been a lot of decisions that are bigger than this one that this, or previous, Councils have made without putting them on a ballot. She noted that the residents voted the Council in to make decisions for the City. She said she sees changing the Mayor term as a small issue.

Muehlbauer noted that they have seen how residents react when the Council makes big changes. He said it would be transparent to put this on the ballot.

Mayor Vogel agreed with Faanes. He added that this would not have any effect on his current Mayor term. He said if they do put this on a ballot, he would like it to be done during a presidential year.

Charter Commissioner Zimmerman shared that the consensus of the Charter Commission was to put the change in the Mayor's term on the ballot for the residents to vote on. He explained that they have had difficulty filling vacancies on the Charter Commission ever since he joined. He noted that because of this, moving to a statutory city may be a good idea.

Muehlbauer noted that he believes being a statutory city would be easier to deal with, and it would be less restrictive.

Mayor Vogel asked if all rules and regulations of a statutory city would also apply to a Charter city. Ms. Rosene explained that there are State laws that could preempt a Charter.

Muehlbauer asked about the biggest benefit of being a Charter city. Ms. Rosene explained that the major benefit of having a Charter is that a city can tailor their Charter to fit the unique needs of its city. She added that there are also things that can be done in Charter cities, but not statutory cities, such as elections based on wards.

Robinson asked if a statutory city puts more power in the Council's hands. He asked why they became a Charter city in the first place. Mr. Zimmerman shared that he has not served on the Charter Commission from its origin, so he is not sure why it was started.

Robinson said he is concerned that the Charter Commission has difficulty getting Commissioners to attend meetings and fill vacancies. He noted that anyone who wants to serve on the Commission can apply and be appointed by a judge to make important decisions for the City.

Thunstrom explained that in order to make Charter changes, the Council needs to vote unanimously, and if they do not, it would go to a ballot.

Udvig noted that there were quite a few Charter Commissioners whose terms all expired at the same time. She asked if everyone re-upped their terms. Thunstrom said there is still a vacancy.

Faanes shared that at the last Charter Commission meeting, she thinks that some of the Commissioners had an interest in keeping the Charter. She said she does not think having a difficult time filling vacancies is enough of a reason to get rid of the Charter. She stated she likes having a Commission available to the Council to help them interpret things and make decisions when needed.

Muehlbauer noted that a lot of this will come down to educating the residents before putting this on a ballot.

Mayor Vogel explained that he is in favor of the four-year Mayor term because anyone in a new role on the Council will take several months to get up to speed on the Council, and by the time they start to get comfortable, it will be time for the next election.

Mr. Zimmerman asked if they were already a statutory City if the Mayor's term could be in the statute. Ms. Rosene explained that statutes are determined by City ordinances, and they could amend the ordinance to a four-year term for the Mayor.

Faanes asked if they were a statutory City, if the Council would be able to make this change without putting it on the ballot. Thunstrom said yes.

Mayor Vogel shared his support for moving to a statutory City. He noted that most residents likely do not know that they are currently a charter City and what that even means. He added that they also have difficulty filling vacancies with people who would be passionate about the work that the Charter Commission does. He asked if the Council were to come to a consensus this evening that they wanted to move to being a statutory City if would they have to send this to the Charter Commission to vote on. Thunstrom explained that she would work with the League of Minnesota Cities to create a timeline and outline steps that they would take to formally approve this change.

Muehlbauer asked if it would be easiest if they were to put both the change in Mayor term and change to a statutory City on the same election year ballot so they can educate residents on both at the same time or if they should put one on the 2026 election ballot and the other on the 2028 election ballot.

Robinson said he thinks it would be more transparent to do both at the same time. He asked Mr. Zimmerman if he thinks the Charter Commission has been beneficial or if they are on the right path to dissolve it. Mr. Zimmerman said the Charter Commission has been beneficial; however, they only meet once a year, which is a long time to go between meetings.

Muehlbauer asked if there are often reasons that they call a second Charter Commission meeting during a year. Mr. Zimmerman said he has served on the Commission for almost 20 years, and there have only been a few years when they met more than once.

Faanes said she is not in favor of moving to being a statutory City.

The consensus of the Council was to move towards changing to a statutory City in 2028.

B. Liquor Store - Full Time Employment

Liquor Store Manager Pfeifer reviewed the Staff report and his request for a current part-time employee to become a full-time employee at the Liquor Store.

Robinson asked how many full-time employees the Liquor Store currently has. Pfeifer said this would be the fourth full-time employee.

Robinson asked if this would change the current employee's hourly wage. Pfeifer said this employee would move up a tier, but the main change for him would be that he would be eligible for benefits.

Udvig said he has seen this employee at the Liquor Store many times, and he is very knowledgeable and good with customers. She shared her support for making him a full-time employee.

Faanes asked if this change would still leave them with enough Staff to cover vacations or sick days. Pfeifer said yes, as they will still have four part-time employees.

Muehlbauer stated he is not in favor of moving someone from a part-time role to a full-time role due to budgeting.

Thunstrom explained that this will not have an impact on their budget or levy as it will be coming out of the enterprise fund.

Muehlbauer said if this were a self-sustaining change, then he could support it.

Faanes shared that she has been self-employed for years, and she knows how important it is for someone to have access to health benefits, so she is supportive of this change, so the employee would be eligible for benefits.

Mayor Vogel shared some of the same concerns as Muehlbauer; however, he understands the situation and is supportive of the change.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with making this part-time

employee a full-time employee.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

There being no further business, Mayor Vogel adjourned the City Council Work Session at 6:17 p.m.

Jennifer Wida, City Clerk