

CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS
DAKOTA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA

Minutes of the Regular Meeting
Held Tuesday, October 3, 2023

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the regular meeting of the City Council, City of Mendota Heights, Minnesota was held at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall, 1101 Victoria Curve, Mendota Heights, Minnesota.

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Levine called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. Councilors Lorberbaum, Paper and Mazzitello, were also present. Councilor Miller was absent.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Council, the audience, and staff recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

AGENDA ADOPTION

Mayor Levine presented the agenda for adoption. Councilor Mazzitello moved adoption of the agenda. Councilor Paper seconded the motion.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

CONSENT CALENDAR

Mayor Levine presented the consent calendar and explained the procedure for discussion and approval. Councilor Mazzitello moved approval of the consent calendar as presented, pulling items G and I.

- a. Approval of September 19, 2023 City Council Minutes
- b. Approval of September 19, 2023 Council Work Session Minutes
- c. Acknowledge July 11, 2023 Airport Relations Commission Meeting
- d. Acknowledge July 19, 2023 Airport Relations Commission Meeting
- e. Acknowledge September 13, 2023 Natural Resources Commission Minutes
- f. Appoint Student Commissioner to Natural Resources Commission
- ~~g. Accept the Retirement of Daniel Bogg as Mendota Heights Firefighter~~
- h. Authorize Fire Department Out of Metro Travel Request
- ~~i. Resolution 2023-65 Calling for a Public Hearing on a Right of Way Vacation—Summerset Boulevard~~
- j. Approve August 2023 Treasurer's Report
- k. Approve July 2023 Building Activity Report
- l. Approval of Claims List

Councilor Paper seconded the motion.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

PULLED CONSENT AGENDA ITEMS

G) ACCEPT RETIREMENT OF DANIEL BOGG AS MENDOTA HEIGHTS FIREFIGHTER

Mayor Levine thanked Daniel Bogg for his service with the Fire Department, noting that he has been a member for 11 years.

Councilor Mazzitello moved to accept the RETIREMENT OF DANIEL BOGG AS MENDOTA HEIGHTS FIREFIGHTER.

Councilor Lorberbaum seconded the motion.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

I) RESOLUTION 2023-65 CALLING FOR A PUBLIC HEARING ON A RIGHT-OF-WAY VACATION – SUMMERSET BOULEVARD

Councilor Lorberbaum commented that the area is near Ridge Place and hoped that there are clearer maps for the public hearing so that the information is clear for residents.

Councilor Mazzitello commented that typically with these types of processes, the public does not necessarily understand the steps in the process. He noted that the action tonight simply calls for a public hearing.

Mayor Levine commented that whenever someone in the community has a right to a public hearing, the intention is to allow a public hearing, and this is just a matter of process.

Councilor Lorberbaum moved to adopt RESOLUTION NO. 2023-65 CALLING FOR A PUBLIC HEARING ON A RIGHT-OF-WAY VACATION – SUMMERSET BOULEVARD.

Councilor Mazzitello seconded the motion.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

PUBLIC COMMENTS

No one from the public wished to be heard.

PRESENTATIONS

No items scheduled.

PUBLIC HEARING

No items scheduled.

NEW AND UNFINISHED BUSINESS
A) OAK AWARDS PROGRAM

Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter explained that the Council was being asked to accept the recommendation from the Natural Resources Commission to implement the Oak Awards program.

Nissa Tupper, Vice Chair of the Natural Resources Commission, commented that the Commission wanted a way to recognize the volunteer efforts and encourage more which led to this proposed program. She stated that they would hope to begin the application process this year with the first awards to be provided in 2024. She provided more information on the proposed program.

Councilor Paper thanked Commissioner Tupper and the Commission for their ideas to recognize members of the community for the work they do.

Councilor Lorberbaum also liked the idea. She asked the eligible age for the acorn award.

Commissioner Tupper stated that they did not want to place too many limitations this year as they would like to see how the program goes and could then place additional restrictions, therefore under 18 was intended for youth.

Councilor Lorberbaum asked if more than one award would be offered for each category.

Commissioner Tupper commented that the Commission did agree to potentially providing more than one award each year, especially in the starting years, recognizing that would be dependent on the number of applications.

Councilor Lorberbaum asked if someone could win in multiple years.

Commissioner Tupper commented that perhaps the leaf award could be won more than once but the canopy would not be awarded to someone multiple times.

Councilor Lorberbaum asked if there would be years where the canopy award may not be awarded.

Commissioner Tupper agreed that could be a possibility. She stated that the Commission felt that there would be a number of great nominees for each category.

Councilor Lorberbaum commented that if there were not a person that rose to that canopy level, she would think it would be okay to not award that for a year. She asked how the Commission would be discussing who wins the award, whether that would be done in a televised meeting or private worksession.

Commissioner Tupper replied that would be done in a worksession format.

Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter commented that has not fully been discussed, but she would imagine that could be done in a committee and then move forward to a worksession.

Councilor Lorberbaum agreed that the use of a committee would be helpful to get to a recommendation for the Commission to discuss.

Councilor Mazzitello thanked the Commission for developing a program that will recognize members of the public. He asked if this would recognize volunteers. He noted that Great River Greening has done amazing things in the community, but is paid for that work and asked if that would be considered.

Commissioner Tupper commented that the intent would be to recognize volunteers, but a contractor could be discussed if there were a nomination.

Councilor Mazzitello commented that it could simply be stated that the program is for volunteers.

Mayor Levine noted that Great River Greening works with volunteers, therefore that situation is a bit more complicated. She believed that the Commission should remain open to suggestion. She stated that if the Commission felt that a contractor working with volunteers should be considered, they should go with that feeling. She commented that this is a great program and adds excitement to the work the Commission is doing, while also raising the profile of these environmental issues. She commented that she is excited to see the great work the Commission has been doing.

Councilor Mazzitello moved to accept THE RECOMMENDATION FROM THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION TO IMPLEMENT THE OAK AWARD PROGRAM.

Councilor Lorberbaum seconded the motion.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

B) PARTNERS IN ENERGY PROGRAM APPLICATION

Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter provided a brief background on this item. The Council was asked to accept the recommendation from the Natural Resources Commission to apply for the Partners in Energy program.

Will Stein, Natural Resources Commissioner, commented on what a great asset that Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter and Assistant City Administrator Kelly Torkelson are, and have been, to the Commission and the City. He stated that this program would assist with emission reductions, environmental benefits, and ongoing cost savings through more efficient use of energy. He noted that this program could begin with a review of the City systems as well as providing educational materials to all residents and businesses about the programs and systems available. He commented that this would be a great time to begin this program because of the incentives that will be available for this type of activity. He also provided more personal examples of the energy efficiencies he has made at his home.

Councilor Mazzitello asked if Commissioner Stein's solar panels generate enough energy to power his car charger, heat pump, and his home.

Commissioner Stein replied that in the summer they have even gotten money back from the energy generation, but in the winter when the sun is more limited and heat usage is higher, they do not generate enough energy to support all those activities.

Councilor Mazzitello asked if the rebates in the summer offset the spend in the winter.

Commissioner Stein replied that there is not a complete offset but there is still a significant savings. He noted that more efficient use of energy has allowed them to spend money that would otherwise be spent on utilities on other things.

Councilor Lorberbaum referenced the statement that 16 cities have participated in the program and asked what was achieved in those cities that would be relevant to Mendota Heights.

Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter commented that would depend on the city and the objectives and areas of focus they selected. She noted that each energy plan is specifically crafted for that community.

Councilor Lorberbaum commented that she would be interested in hearing some of those success stories, even if they do not directly apply to this community. She commented that she did receive a call from Xcel offering a home inspection. She noted that for a cost of \$100 two representatives from Xcel came to her home to review what could be done. She reviewed some of the actions that were taken. She encouraged other residents to call and ask about that service.

Councilor Paper thanked Commissioner Stein for the example his family has set. He noted that is a great example of what could be done with foresight and planning.

Mayor Levine also expressed thanks. She noted that her family has also done the audit with Xcel. She asked if there are any cities participating in the program in this region.

Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter commented that Inver Grove Heights, Saint Paul, Richfield, and Saint Paul School District are participating.

Mayor Levine asked why Xcel would do the partners in energy program, recognizing that Xcel sells energy. She recognized the cost savings that are provided to users that choose to participate and asked how Xcel funds the program.

Natural Resources Coordinator Krista Spreiter was unsure about the funding details. She noted that Xcel has these programs and is committed to more sustainable energy. She explained that this is a way to partner with the communities that are served and to spread awareness about the programs that are out there.

Mayor Levine stated that she does like this idea because it helps to make people aware of the programs that are available, as that can be overwhelming. She commented that she would love to see data comparing before the program to after the program.

Councilor Lorberbaum moved to accept THE RECOMMENDATION FROM THE NATURAL RESOURCES COMMISSION TO APPLY FOR THE PARTNERS IN ENERGY PROGRAM.

Councilor Mazzitello seconded the motion.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

C) RESOLUTION 2023-66 SUPPORTING A REQUEST FOR 2024 MN CAPITAL BUDGET –
POLICE DEPARTMENT AND CITY HALL PROJECT

Police Chief Kelly McCarthy explained that the Council was being asked to adopt a resolution supporting a request to the State of Minnesota Capital Budget for capital improvements to the Mendota Heights Police Department and City Hall.

Councilor Mazzitello commented that without a scope or scale, they are making assumptions in terms of the funding amount requested.

Police Chief Kelly McCarthy confirmed that they had to make a request and that assumptions were made. She noted that just because you ask for that amount does not mean you will be awarded that amount. She commented that all options are on the table still. She commented that it is important to acknowledge the expertise of the citizens and ensure that they are involved as it is their tax dollars that are used.

Councilor Lorberbaum agreed that the City needs to be transparent and let their citizens clearly know the issues as the building looks lovely. She commented that the improvements are not looks based but needs based, and therefore those conversations will be important.

Councilor Paper thanked the people that have been involved in this process.

Mayor Levine commented that when she was elected, Police Chief Kelly McCarthy took her through the police station. She commented that there were two computers for every ten people, with everyone working in the same room. She commented that this space was built 36 years ago, and they have outgrown that space. She commented that she toured the recently renovated New Hope city hall and police station and realized that these are matters of workplace and community safety. She explained that when people come in to report a crime there is not a safe, segregated place for those victims to provide their statement. She stated that she is proud of the City and its staff to continue to push this capital improvement forward. She commented that she is grateful of the representatives that are also willing to provide their support in this effort.

Councilor Lorberbaum moved to approve RESOLUTION NO. 2023-66 SUPPORTING A REQUEST TO THE 2024 STATE OF MINNESOTA CAPITAL BUDGET FOR THE CITY OF MENDOTA HEIGHTS POLICE DEPARTMENT AND CITY HALL RENOVATION AND EXPANSION PROJECT.

Councilor Paper seconded the motion.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

D) REVIEW OF SECOND QUARTER CITY FINANCIAL REPORT

Finance Director Kristen Schabacker provided the Council with an update on the second quarter financial progress report.

Mayor Levine referenced the significant decrease in revenues from permits and licenses.

Finance Director Kristen Schabacker replied that last year the building permits for Reserve 2 were pulled and this year there has not been a big project of that nature.

Mayor Levine thanked staff for preparing and presenting the quarterly reports as she finds the information helpful.

Councilor Lorberbaum noted that she also appreciates the new format.

COMMUNITY ANNOUNCEMENTS

Public Works Director Ryan Ruzek provided an update on the Victoria Curve and Orchard Hills project, noting that it is a little behind schedule. He noted that the original delays were related to delays with supplies along with changes recommended by Dakota County related to storm sewer work. He noted that substantial completion is due in the third or fourth week of October.

City Administrator Cheryl Jacobson announced upcoming community events and activities.

COUNCIL COMMENTS

Councilor Mazzitello echoed the comments that Commissioner Stein made about the outstanding staff members. He commented that the work of the Council and Commissions is made easier by the excellent members of City staff. He commented that October is Italian heritage month and provided some historical background.

Councilor Lorberbaum noted that Indigenous People's Day will be celebrated on October 9th recognizing that Native Americans were the first inhabitants of the country. She encouraged residents to visit Oheyawahe.

Councilor Paper thanked Daniel Boggs for his 11 years of service on the volunteer Fire Department. He also thanked Commissioners Stein and Tupper for presenting today.

Mayor Levine commented that last week she had the opportunity to tour Saint Paul Regional Water, noting that it is 100-year-old infrastructure that provides delicious, clean, safe water to the communities served. She commented that they are building a new facility which is the largest infrastructure project in Minnesota. She stated that she also had the opportunity to tour the Eureka recycling plant, which was a great educational experience.

ADJOURN

Councilor Mazzitello moved to adjourn.

Councilor Paper seconded the motion.

Ayes: 4

Nays: 0

Mayor Levine adjourned the meeting at 8:16 p.m.



Stephanie B. Levine
Mayor

ATTEST:



Christine Lusian
City Clerk

