

Meeting of: COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL
Date of Meeting: September 5, 2017
Time of Meeting: 7:00 PM (Following the EDA Meeting)
Location of Meeting: Conference Room #1
Purpose of Meeting: WORKSESSION

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL - The meeting was called to order at 7:22 PM

Present: Mayor Schmitt, Councilmembers Williams, Murzyn Jr., Buesgens and Novitsky
Also Present: Walt Fehst; City Manager, Kelli Bourgeois; Human Resource Director/Assistant to the City Manager, Joe Hogeboom; Community Development Director, Keith Windschitl; Recreation Director, Joe Kloiber; Finance Director and Katie Bruno; City Clerk

K-12 School Space Requirements

Community Development Director Joe Hogeboom indicated that earlier this summer, the City Council was presented with a Site Plan proposal that included two K-12 schools. The site did not meet the lot area requirements of the zoning code. City Council directed staff to research spatial requirements for K-12 schools in surrounding schools, and determine whether or not Columbia Heights' ordinance should be amended. Staff researched zoning regulations, as they pertain to school site size requirements, for surrounding communities. Of the fifteen cities contacted, only the cities of Hilltop and Mounds View had spatial requirements for K-12 schools. The Minnesota Department of Education has established the following criteria for new public school buildings: Elementary Schools: 10-15 acres, Middle Schools: 25-35 acres and High School: 60+ acres. Based on the information obtained from the Department of Education, staff recommends that school sites continue to accommodate significant outdoor space, and that no changes should be made to the Columbia Heights City Code at this time.

Councilmember Buesgens suggested leaving the current restrictions in place, and explore an additional zoning classification of "Institutional Use." Mayor Schmitt agreed.

Director Hogeboom indicated the Comp Plan would be an appropriate place to research various changes to zoning classifications.

City Newsletter discussion

Recreation Director Keith Windschitl reported staff has obtained price quotes for a full color Heights Happenings Newsletter. The newsletter is sent out four times each year. We currently are printing a 24 page black and white document that costs \$3,483 to print and postage that costs about \$1,667 each quarter. Full color pricing would be \$4,358.28 plus postage, an increase of \$875 per issue, \$3,500 annually. Windschitl indicated he would like to see the newsletter reflect the updated website. Mayor Schmitt reminded the council that they can submit an article for the Council Corner section of the newsletter. The council all agreed a full color newsletter is preferred.

Summary presentation on 2018 City Manager's Proposed Budget

Finance Director Joe Kloiber gave an overview of the City Manager's 2018 Budget Message. He reviewed the process, the proposed expenses, the proposed revenues and addressed some questions he received from Mayor Schmitt.

He indicated the preliminary levy will be voted on at the September 11th regular City Council meeting. Work sessions in October and November will allow for detailed departmental proposals, and provide an opportunity for discussion.

Kloiber reported labor agreements and market adjustments contribute significantly to the increase in operating expenses. City Manager Fehst stressed the importance of keeping salaries in line with what the

market is paying. Other increases include the addition of staff for a Communications Coordinator, increased technology costs, the operating cost of the new library, and the 2018 election.

Kloiber reported the proposed levy increased \$529,079 (4.9%) from last year. Kloiber indicated the proposal includes the use of \$200,000 of existing Fund Balance, \$120,000 in Local Government Aid, and the 4.9% property tax increase. Director Kloiber gave an overview of the fiscal disparities program, indicating the program is variable and cyclical.

Director Kloiber indicated capital items include a long-term vision for a new City Hall. For several years the council has set the fund balance target of 45% of the following year's budget, currently it is about 65%. Some of that could be transferred as a one-time use to the building fund (\$1.4 million) towards a new facility.

Mayor Schmitt stated she would like to have cash on hand to pay for a City Hall. Kloiber indicated that is a possibility.

Mayor Schmitt reminded the council that they are eligible for mileage reimbursement if they travel out of the city for city related business. Members were given reimbursement forms. Councilmember Buesgens questioned the process for attending a NLC conference. Manager Fehst said he would check the budget, and expressed his opinion that the NLC conference is valuable.

Mayor Schmitt questioned how the recent change to the newsletter would affect the budget. Kloiber stated that will be discussed at the departmental budget meeting.

Mayor Schmitt reminded the council that the preliminary levy can decrease at the time of final adoption, it cannot increase.

Discuss special assessment policy for private tree removal

Finance Director Joe Kloiber reported currently the City provides for a one year assessment period for private tree removal costs. The assessed amounts ranged from \$159 to \$2543 in 2016. Because of the potential for a large dollar amount, a ten year assessment period is proposed for assessments over \$500. Kloiber indicated the assessments can be paid off early if desired.

Discussion of City Council Handbook

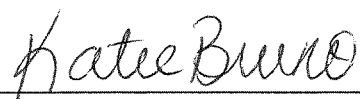
Human Resource Director/Assistant to the City Manager Kelli Bourgeois asked if there were additional suggestions for changes to the draft Council Handbook distributed at the last work session.

Councilmember Buesgens asked if a timeline for the budget process should be included. Bourgeois noted chapter five does address the budget and levy process, but will add clarifying language related to the overall schedule. Councilmember Buesgens requested clarification on the role of a councilmember as a commission liaison. Mayor Schmitt suggested only responding to questions, or providing clarification.

Adjournment

Motion by Councilmember Murzyn, Jr., seconded by Councilmember Novitsky to adjourn the meeting.
Meeting Adjourned at 9:32 PM

Respectively Submitted,



Katie Bruno, Council Secretary/City Clerk