

Meeting of: COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL
Date of Meeting: March 4, 2019
Time of Meeting: 7 pm
Location of Meeting: Conference Room #1
Purpose of Meeting: Work Session

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL - The meeting was called to order at 7 pm

Present: Mayor Schmitt, Councilmembers Murzyn Jr, Novitsky, Williams, and Buesgens

Also present: Kelli Bourgeois; City Manager, Jim Hoeft; City Attorney, Gary Gorman; Fire Chief, Ben Sandell; Communications Coordinator, Elizabeth Hammond; City Planner and Katie Bruno; City Clerk.

Global Academy Discussion

Elizabeth Hammond, City Planner gave background information on the property located at 4065 Central Ave, explaining that a charter school called the Academy of Bioscience was permitted to occupy the space. In 2007, Global Academy moved in, and now, they will be moving out of the space and moving to New Brighton. Hammond explained that currently k-12 educational facilities are not a permitted use in the Central Business District; a zoning classification change for the Central Business District would be required for another school to occupy the space.

City Attorney Jim Hoeft stated he recalls the tenant may have modified the use from what was presented. The Community Development Director at the time rendered an opinion that it fit into the permitted use. Hoeft stated that it is clear that this is not an allowable use. If a mistake was made, the city is not obligated to allow the use to continue. The city would also have the option to change the code to allow for the use. The council agreed to enforce the code as written going forward.

Discussion regarding invocation at council meetings

Kelli Bourgeois City Manager stated that while the city has the right to have an invocation at the council meetings, we are in the minority. Bourgeois wanted to confirm with the council their thoughts for continuing the invocation. Mayor Schmitt would like it to continue, with the caveat that the ministerial group continues to manage the schedule and that the invocators are associated with Columbia Heights. Schmitt also stated that if an invocator is not present, there will not be an invocation.

City Attorney Jim Hoeft stated that cities can run into trouble when they pick and choose who can participate. Hoeft also reminded the council to be prepared for a variety of possibilities that may occur.

Councilmember Buesgens indicated she has had residents question the reason for it, and if given the choice, she would recommend not continuing.

Schmitt thinks many residents like the tradition, and being that there has not been any problems, she would like to continue. Councilmember Murzyn, Jr. and Williams agreed.

Recap of City Services Expo

Ben Sandell, communications coordinator reported that approximately 40-60 visitors walked through the inaugural City Services Expo and Town Hall meeting, 150 people viewed the Town Hall portion on Facebook Live. Staff reported good conversation and feedback from residents. City staff will evaluate the event and look at various elements when planning for next year.

Donation of Fire equipment to Anoka County

Gary Gorman, fire chief explained to the council that we have a SCBA fill station that we are no longer using, on a rescue truck that has been taken out of service. Anoka County Emergency Management Department has requested we donate the fill station to the Anoka County Dive Team. Gorman stated that any time the city calls the dive team, we would benefit from them having the equipment. The council agreed that donating the equipment and working with the county is a good idea.

Overview of Rental License Fees

Gary Gorman, fire chief reported that Robert Sibell requested an evaluation of the rental license fees. Gorman gave a historical review of the rental license/inspection fees, noting that the department has seen significant increases in inspections. Gorman shared a comparison chart of license fees for various cities. The recent increase places Columbia Heights as the 3rd highest; behind Minneapolis and Brooklyn Center. Mr. Sibell questioned if the city would consider using a tiered structure for inspection fees. Gorman indicated possibly in the future. Mayor Schmitt thanked Mr. Sibell for reaching out to the council.

Discussion regarding Green Sheet

Ben Sandell, communications coordinator reported that the Communications Committee discussed the green sheet; specifically the usefulness and frequency of the publication. The committee agreed that it is a useful tool, and recommended it be distributed twice a month, rather than weekly. Sandell stated that the necessity of photos has lessened with the increase in the city's presence on social media.

Discussion regarding joint meeting with School Board

Kelli Bourgeois City Manager spoke with ISD 13 Superintendent Kathy Kelly regarding scheduling a joint meeting. Bourgeois shared the following possible topics for the meeting:

- Meet & Greet
- Update on District construction projects
- Traffic near schools
- Possibly holding City Council meetings at the district center
- Volunteer program
- Recreation programming grant

Councilmember Novitsky requested they discuss the liaison piece.

Goal setting

Kelli Bourgeois, City Manager received a proposal from Phil Kern for the 2019 Goal Setting Session. Kern is proposing a 3-4 hour session and a presentation at the council meeting. Various dates for the session were discussed. Bourgeois will confirm with Mr. Kern.

Bourgeois suggested inviting a speaker in to review Open Meeting Law & Data Practices training. Mayor Schmitt recommended commission members be invited as well.

Discussion regarding changing location of City Council meetings

Mayor Schmitt expressed her concerns with the reliability of the elevator at City Hall. Kelli Bourgeois reported there were issues with the warmer weather, requiring the elevator to be powered off when not in use. Bourgeois reported this will be an expensive repair. Mayor Schmitt recommended moving to an alternate location for city meetings. Bourgeois will contact the librarian to see if there is availability at the library.

Meeting Adjourned at 9:03 PM

Respectively Submitted,



Katie Bruno, Council Secretary/City Clerk