

Meeting of: COLUMBIA HEIGHTS CITY COUNCIL
Date of Meeting: January 6, 2020
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 7:00 pm

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

Staff Present: Kelli Bourgeois-City Manager, Lenny Austin-Police Chief, Erik Johnston-Police Captain, Kevin Hansen-Public Works Director/City Engineer, Jim Hauth- Utilities Superintendent, Liam Genter- City Forester, and Nicole Tingley-City Clerk/Council Secretary.

Others Present: Andrew Virden- Director of Census Operations & Engagement (State of MN), Kt Jacobs- Complete Count Committee Chair and resident, Amada Marquez Simula- resident, and Frost Simula- resident.

1. Census Worker Access to Multi-Unit Structures

Mayor Schmitt introduced Kt Jacobs the Complete Count Committee Chair for Columbia Heights. Jacobs introduced Andrew Virden the Director of Census Operations & Engagement for the State of Minnesota. Virden stated that currently there is not a statewide law providing access to multi-unit buildings for census workers.

Virden stated that access to apartment buildings are important for the census because populations that are hard more often live in apartments including less affluent, communities of color, immigrants, and children under 5. Additionally, they move around a lot.

Virden stated that the state tried to pass a law last session providing census worker access and will try again this year. He noted that counties do not have the authority to pass an ordinance to the entire county.

Virden explained that the law is based on the candidate access law. There are requirements of both the building management and the census workers desiring access.

Virden stated that passing the ordinance could give Columbia Heights a competitive advantage over other cities as state and federal funding amounts are dependent on population. It was noted that it is estimated that 4,435 people will be missed in the census in Columbia Heights.

Councilmember Buesgens inquired how to facilitate access as owners often do not live in their buildings or somethings not even in the state. Virden stated that letters should be send to the building owners asking what is the best way to access the building and who should be the contact.

Mayor Schmitt asked if there is a form letter to send to building management/owners. Virden responded that the State is working on it.

Mayor Schmitt inquired about enforcement. Virden stated that the focus is not enforcement, but workers would be following the law if there and police would be aware if the police were called.

The City Council discussed having staff facilitate access. It was concluded that ideally city staff would not be involved as it would be sufficient staff time, but maybe if there was a larger building that census workers were having difficulty with.

City Manager Bourgeois noted that there are a few edits including formatting, making the ordinance clearly only apply to U.S. Census workers and property owners (not residents). Additionally, she stated that it is proposed to have the first reading January 27th and the second reading during the first meeting in February.

Buesgens asked Police Chief Austin if letters could be given out at the land lord meeting. Austin responded that they could email a copy of the ordinance with a cover letter.

2. Staff & Command Training for CHPD Captain Erik Johnston

Police Chief Austin stated that education and training big part of the Police Department's strategic plan. One component of the training plan for the police captains is to attend the Northwest School of Staff and Command. Austin stated that the Eagan Police Department is hosting this 10 week course in the fall and that they would like Police Captain Erik Johnston to attend. Austin explained that it is both academic and practical covering topics such as human resources, planning, budgeting and statistical analysis and is complementary to the National Academy. He noted it was 15 college credit course at a cost of \$4,100. Captain Johnston would be off of the schedule during the 10 weeks.

The Police Department is hoping that Police Captain Matt Markham will be able to attend in the next year or two. It was also noted that both Captains Johnston and Markham are on the waiting list to attend the National Academy.

Mayor Schmitt asked if the tuition is in the budget. Austin responded that the budgeted an extra \$5,000 for it.

Councilmember Murzyn Jr. commented that he thought the course was a great idea and that the police department would gain from what Captain Johnston learns

3. EAB Management Plan Update

Public Works Director Hansen stated that the City received a \$100,000 grant for EAB management of public trees due to the hard work of Utilities Superintendent Hauth and City Forester Genter. Hansen explained that the City's EAB Management Program started in 2014. The City has a three part approach: rating the trees, treating those with a high value, removing those with a low value, and replacing those removed. Approval grant will be coming before the City Council in the next month or two as the City is waiting for the contract.

Hansen stated that the City currently funds 25% of diseased tree removal for private trees. He explained that this is a concern to keeping this program in place because as EAB spreads the cost share would absorb the entire forestry budget.

Mayor Schmitt inquired about the spread of private ash trees. City Forester Genter stated that he knows of one property with 15 ash trees. He stated that the private ash trees are very spread out with many having multiple and many having none.

Mayor Schmitt asked approximately how much it costs for homeowners to have ash trees removed. Genter answered that large, mature trees would cost approximately \$800-\$1,000 and smaller ash trees would cost a few hundred dollars. He noted that the City gets a volume discount.

Genter stated that he predicts that 90% of untreated ash trees in the City will die in the next 5 years noting that the disease is currently widespread and happens very quickly.

Utilities Superintendent Hauth noted that the department could bid out tree removal services for the residents to help provide a discounted rate, but we would need multiple contractors as the City's current tree service would not be able to handle the volume alone.

Hansen stated that the City also facilitates assessments for removals under the City's contract. It was clarified that in order to assess residents the city would have to facilitate the contract so it may be something that would only be used in extreme situations.

Hansen stated that the City would like to get the message out soon about whether the cost share program is in place or another mechanism. He stated a decision ideally would be made in the first quarter of 2020.

Genter added that the City would not necessarily have to do bids. He stated that the City of Roseville has a preferred removal partner. This would remove the city from being an administrator and facilitating the bids. Using the preferred removal partner would not be a requirement, but an option.

The City Council provided direction to look into the impact of preferred removal partner arrangement and bring back to City Council.

4. 53rd Avenue Grant Application (Street & Pedestrian)

Public Works Director Hansen stated in follow up to the successful HSIP Grant Award from Central Avenue to Medtronic, there has been discussion with the City of Fridley on pedestrian connections on 53rd Avenue.

Hansen shared that on Saturday, October 26, staff from the City of Columbia Heights and the City of Fridley jointly held a public information meeting to gauge interest for sidewalk or trail connections. At that meeting there was an 80% support for a trail and/or sidewalk from Medtronic to University Avenue.

Hansen provided an overview of two of the options that were presented at the meeting. Option 1 includes keeping parking on one side of the north side street (currently there is parking on both sides). There would be an off-street trail on the Columbia Heights side (south side) and a sidewalk on the Fridley side. Option 2 involved removing parking on both sides, narrowing the street, and putting a sidewalk and a trail in with that also. For option two, a sidewalk would work better on the Columbia Heights side and a trail on the Fridley side.

Hansen explained that these options would be used for a grant application. Option 1 would cost an estimate of \$1.1 million and option two would cost an estimate of \$1.3 million with the cost difference between pulling the curb out and changing the curb line.

Councilmember Buesgens asked if the costs would be shared with Fridley. Hansen responded that the grant being applied for is up to 80% funded and the rest (20%) would be split evenly.

It was clarified that the City would maintain snow removal of the sidewalk or trail.

Councilmember Novitsky shared that he attended the meeting and that like those that attended he preferred having a walking path on both sides.

Hansen stated that the grant application is due in April and a decision on awarding would be made this summer. If awarded the earliest it would be funded is 2024.

5. Local Speed Limits- 2019 Law Change

Public Works Director Hansen stated that cities can now pass local street speed limits provided they have a procedure in place. Previously this had to be requested by MnDOT by supporting it with an engineering and traffic study.

Hansen commented that this is certainly beneficial for safety, but may cause some problems with consistency in speed limits from city to city. Additionally, there may be issues with enforcement.

Hansen stated that he believes that more time is needed to digest the new law and that the League of Minnesota Cities and the Minnesota Engineers Association is working on putting out guidance on this.

Councilmember Murzyn, Jr. asked if changes in the speed limit would have to go through Traffic Commission or would it go directly to City Council. Hansen answered that that would need to be decided by the City Council.

Hansen stated that the City of Minneapolis is looking to start changing speed limits on local streets in April. He noted that 37th Avenue is a street that is being considered to be lowered to 25 miles per hour.

Hansen recommended that the City contacts Minneapolis and lets them know that we are not ready to move forward with this. The City Council agreed.

6. City Council Liaison and Council President Appointments for 2020

Mayor Schmitt and City Manager Bourgeois shared a list of suggested liaison assignments from the assignment requests submitted. The recommendations were as follows:

- Library Board- Novitsky
- Park & Recreation Commission- Murzyn, Jr.
- Planning Commission- Buesgens
- Traffic Commission- Williams
- Charter Commission- Williams
- Columbia Heights School Board- Delegate: Buesgens, Alternate: Murzyn, Jr.
- League of Minnesota Cities- Delegate: Schmitt, Alternate: Buesgens
- Metro Cities- Delegate: Novitsky, Alternate: Williams
- Mississippi Water Management Organization- Delegate: Schmitt, Alternate: Hilltop Representative
- Rice Creek Watershed Advisory Board- Delegate: Novitsky, Alternate: Kevin Hansen
- Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council- Delegate: Schmitt, Alternate: Lenny Austin

- Anoka County Fire Protection Council- Delegate: Murzyn, Jr., Alternate: Kelli Bourgeois
- Council President- Novitsky

The City Council had no further comments on the recommendation and provided direction to have this item on the January 13th meeting agenda.

7. Discuss Appointment to Columbia Heights Volunteer Firefighters Relief Association Board of Trustees for 2020

The City Council agreed that Councilmember Murzyn, Jr. and Kelli Bourgeois should be the appointed to the Columbia Heights Volunteer Firefighters Relief Association Board of Trustees.

8. Board & Commission 2020 Appointment Process & Interview Questions

City Clerk Tingley stated there are a number of terms expiring on boards and commission on April 1. She shared a proposed timeline for the recruitment process. Applications would be due March 6, interviews held March 16 or 23, and appointments made March 23. The City Council agreed with the proposed process.

Councilmember Buesgens suggested looking into term limits for board and commission members.

City Manager Bourgeois commented that incumbent commissioners sometimes feel entitled to the position and sometimes no one applies to positions. She stated that when you require an incumbent to apply it confirms their commitment and opens up the position to others.

Tingley shared a new possible set of questions for the board and commission interviews. The questions included common questions for all applicants and specific questions for each board or commission. The City Council provided direction to bring back these questions to the next work session.

9. Legal Newspaper for 2020

City Clerk Tingley stated that she asked for quotes for legal notice publication from Life, the Northeaster, and the Star Tribune. She stated that City Staff would recommend staying with Life. The City Council requested that Tingley obtain circulation numbers for each paper as well as a quote for a sample publication for the Council meeting.

10. Board of Appeal & Equalization 2020 Status

City Clerk Tingley explained that Anoka County will complete the Open Book Process for appeals to property valuations and classifications because the City did not have a trained board member at this year's meeting. Residents will have a two day period where they can go to Anoka County to visit the County Assessor instead of coming to a meeting at City Hall. Tingley stated that City can return to having a Local Board of Appeal and Equalization next year if someone on the City Council completes the online training by February of next year. She recommended having at least two councilmembers complete it.

The Council provided direction to bring this item back closer to the training deadline to determine which councilmembers will complete the training.

11. City Manager Performance Evaluation

Mayor Schmitt closed the meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05 subdivision 3(a) for the performance evaluation of City Manager Kelli Bourgeois. All individuals left the room besides the City Council. The City Council had a discussion regarding the City Manager's Performance Evaluation.

Mayor Schmitt adjourned the work session at 9:03 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Nicole Tingley, City Clerk/Council Secretary