

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
January 6, 2025
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King, Council Members Paul Fischer, Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Michael Postma, Joyce Poshusta, Rebecca Waller and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Police Chief David McKichan, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Assistant City Engineer Andrew Sorenson, Park and Rec Director Jason Sehon, City Attorney Craig Byram, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Human Resource Director Trish Wiechmann, and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald

Administrative Services Director Tom Dankert administered the oaths of office for Mayor Steve King, Council Member Rebecca Waller, Council Member Michael Postma and Council Member Paul Fischer.

Mayor King called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving the agenda. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving Council minutes from December 16, 2024. Carried.

AWARDS AND RECONIGITON

Public Works Director Steven Lang introduced the new Assistant City Engineer Andrew Sorenson.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, approving the consent agenda as follows:

Licenses:

Temporary Gambling (raffle): NWFT Cedar River Longbeards Chapter on January 24th, 2025

Massage Establishment: Green Touch Doula Care LLC, Austin, MN
Massage Therapist: Chrissy Stiehm, Austin, MN
Massage Therapist: Mu Kue Kue, Albert Lea, MN
Tree Service: New Growth Forestry LLC, Kasson, MN
Tree Service: Travis's Tree Service, Albert Lea, MN
Tree Service: Adam B. Meyer Construction Co. LLC, Austin, MN
Edible Cannabinoid: Everest Apollo Gas LLC, Austin, MN
Edible Cannabinoid: Everest Apollo Gas & Liquor LLC, (901 W. Oakland) Austin, MN
Edible Cannabinoid: Everest Apollo Gas & Liquor LLC, (903 W. Oakland) Austin, MN
Edible Cannabinoid: Radhe Shyam Corp., Austin MN
Edible Cannabinoid: BAPA Lifestyle LLC, Austin, MN
Edible Cannabinoid: RAS Enterprise LLC, Austin, MN
Edible Cannabinoid: Superior Cannabis Company LLC, Austin, MN
Mobile Business: Dream Big Hospitality LLC, Rochester, MN
Mobile Business: Classis Kitchen, Austin, MN
Sign Installer: Atwood Electric, Inc., Sigourney, IA
Right of Way: MTC Services, LLC, Medford, MN
Right of Way: Husemoller Excavating, Inc., Austin, MN

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

Timothy Rietz to the Library Board – term expiring December 31, 2027

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of Bills
- b. Financial Report

Carried.

AWARDING BIDS

Director of Parks and Recreation Jason Sehon relayed they had completed the bidding process for the Ash Tree and Stump Removal project. They received 15 bids. This work includes removal of ash trees, stump grinding, and ground restoration of (325) trees. The work is planned to be completed by December 31, 2025. The project will be funded using a matching Hormel Foundation Grant and Capital Improvement Revolving Fund.

Staff would recommend awarding the bid to Carr's Tree Service in the amount of \$183,428.14.

Council Member Postma asked how many trees they are trying to remove.

Mr. Sehon relayed approximately 1600 trees are to be removed. They will also be using the in-house tree removal crew. The trees being removed would be located on City maintained property.

Council Member Fisher asked if the first 325 trees to be removed were the worst trees in the City and is that why this number was picked.

Mr. Sehon stated this is partially the reason but the main reason is these are boulevard trees.

Council Member Baskin asked about qualifications and if the company chosen was qualified to perform the work.

Mr. Sehon stated there are no concerns, the Park and Recreation department have been in communication with this company about the information they need to provide to the City to complete the work.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, awarding the bid to Carr's Tree Service. Carried 7-0.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council adopt a resolution designating the City's deposit and investment accounts for 2025. He stated there are no changes from 2024.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution designating depositories for checking and investment of public funds for 2025. Carried 7-0.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council approve budget adjustment number one. The adjustment would include the Hormel Foundation grants awarded to the City. These include grants for the Police Chaplaincy Program, Police Drones, Todd Park playground equipment, Hormel Nature Center education programs, and ADA walkways. The total of these grants is \$138,785.

Also, the City received a grant from the Hormel Foundation in the amount of \$250,000 and this will be placed in the Capital Improvement Project Revolving Fund to assist with the removal of Ash trees. Finally, the City would like to move \$1,000,000 of City General Fund, Fund Balance to the Capital Improvement Project Revolving Fund to assist Park and Recreation with the removal of the Ash trees.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution approving budget adjustment number 1. Carried 7-0.

Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert requested the Council set the mileage reimbursement rate for 2025 at 70 cents per mile per IRS direction.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution setting the mileage reimbursement rate for 2025. Carried 7-0.

Mayor King requested a motion for the approval of the Cannabis Ordinance.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated he missed the last Council meeting but wanted to know if there were any buffers placed into this ordinance as he had requested.

City Attorney Craig Byram confirmed there were not. Mayor King also confirmed that it was back to the original ordinance that was discussed with no buffers.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Fischer, for preparation of the Cannabis ordinance. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, for the adoption of the Cannabis ordinance. Council Member-at-Large Austin is not in favor of this ordinance and voted against it. Motion failed 6-1 (Austin-Nay) as the ordinance must pass unanimously in the first reading. This ordinance will be carried to the next meeting for a second reading.

Public Works Director Steven Lang presented a feasibility report to Council for street improvements on 6th Street NE (30th Avenue to 36th Avenue NE), Project 19106. Mr. Lang stated the project is feasible and will have a total cost of \$160,000. He reviewed the project and requested a public hearing be held for the improvement on February 18, 2025.

Council Member Fischer wanted to know why this project would be assessed 100% to the residents of this neighborhood.

Mr. Lang stated when the development was annexed into the City the condition of the road was not up to City standards. Typically, when a development comes into Austin it is required that the developer build the roads up to City standards.

Council Member Baskin stated the last time Council talked about this street improvement project, there was an objection from the citizens in this neighborhood to this. He would like to know if the road has deteriorated even further in this neighborhood.

Mr. Lang stated yes, at this time the road has gotten worse. Before they would have been able to do a mill and overlay but in its current state this would not be feasible as the road has deteriorated.

Council Member Fisher asked about the development to the north.

Mr. Lang stated they would dead end the project right where the houses end and the other development begins.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution receiving feasibility report and calling for a public hearing for February 18th for street improvements on 6th Street NE (30th Avenue to 36th Avenue NE), Project 19106. Carried 7-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang presented a feasibility report to Council for street

improvements on 21st Avenue SW (4th Drive to 12th Street SW), Project 25102. Mr. Lang stated the project is feasible and will have a total cost of \$950,000. He reviewed the project and requested a public hearing be held for the improvement on February 18, 2025.

Mayor King would like the letters that are sent to citizens to be clearer about if they are getting sidewalks and what the costs will be.

Council Member Postma would like to know why they are only adding one small section of sidewalk.

Mr. Lang stated this would complete a section of sidewalk.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Council Member-at-Large Austin, adopting a resolution receiving feasibility report and calling for a public hearing for February 18th for street improvements on 21st Avenue SW (4th Drive to 12th Street SW), Project 25102. Carried 7-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang presented a feasibility report to Council for street improvements on Oakland Avenue (1st Street NE to 12th Street NW) 1st Avenue SW (South Main Street to 12th Street SW), Project 25103. Mr. Lang stated the project is feasible and will have a total cost of \$15,000,000. He reviewed the project and requested a public hearing be held for the improvement on March 3, 2025.

Council Member Baskin asked if there is anything we can do to get a waiver or an extension on this project since we have so many other projects going on at this time.

Mr. Lang stated if we were to move this project, they would have to push the project back to 2027. At this time, they have approximately six different grants awarded to them. The grants are going to be received in 2025, 2027, and 2028. Mr. Lang hasn't asked that question but he stated moving a project is very difficult to do when grant money is involved. He stated if a community doesn't use the grant money, the State will look for another community to use it.

Mayor King stated we are going to ask for the public's patience at this time as this is the price of progress. He would not like to jeopardize two thirds of this project.

Council Member Baskin would like Mr. Lang to look into this. He would like to know if this is a use it or lose it situation.

Council Member Helle stated by waiting for two years, we going to be paying more in construction costs. It's going to be a pain no matter what.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated people are getting adaptable and are figuring out ways to get around town. Traffic flow has changed in the last month.

Council Member Fisher asked Mr. Lang with this project, if they are making a sidewalk 8ft are they taking parking lot spaces away from businesses.

Mr. Lang stated they are narrowing the road three feet and are adding that to the sidewalk. They are staying within the right of way. They are currently getting easements from property owners. They are not taking property from any of the property owners. Mr. Lang is making the recommendation that the City only assess for the street portion of this project and not the sidewalk.

Council Member Baskin asked if they think this project is going to come in higher than \$15 million, are there aspects of the project that can be removed.

Mr. Lang stated this is a standard roadway. It will become difficult to find areas to cut.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution receiving feasibility report and calling for a public hearing for March 3rd for street improvements on Oakland Avenue (1st Street NE to 12th Street NW) 1st Avenue SW (South Main Street to 12th Street SW), Project 25103. Carried 7-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang presented a feasibility report to Council for street improvements on 6th Avenue NE (18th Drive to 19th Street NE) and 18th Drive NE (5th Avenue to 6th Avenue NE), Project 25106. Mr. Lang stated the project is feasible and will have a total cost of \$900,000. He reviewed the project and requested a public hearing be held for the improvement on February 18, 2025.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Poshusta, adopting a resolution receiving feasibility report and calling for a public hearing for February 18th for street improvements on 6th Avenue NE (18th Drive to 19th Street NE) and 18th Drive NE (5th Avenue to 6th Avenue NE), Project 25106. Carried 7-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang presented a feasibility report to Council for street improvements on 25th Street SW (Oakland Avenue West to 7th/8th Avenue SW), Project 25107. Mr. Lang stated the project is feasible and will have a total cost of \$200,000. He reviewed the project and requested a public hearing be held for the improvement on February 18, 2025.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution receiving feasibility report and calling for a public hearing for February 18th for street improvements on 25th Street SW (Oakland Avenue West to 7th/8th Avenue SW), Project 25107. Carried 7-0.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

City Administrator Craig Clark invited Council to attend the Comprehensive Plan Open House at the Hormel Nature Center on January 15, from 4 p.m. to 6 p.m.

Council Member Fischer thanked all the City staff for their hard work.

