

**WORKSESSION OF THE ANOKA CITY COUNCIL
ANOKA CITY HALL
CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION ROOM
JUNE 26, 2023**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rice called the worksession meeting to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present at roll call: Mayor Rice, Councilmembers Scott, Skogquist, Weaver, and Wesp.

Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee, Community Development Director Doug Borglund, Senior City Planner Clark Palmer, Assistant City Manager/City Clerk Amy Oehlers; Finance Director Brenda Springer, and City Attorney Scott Baumgartner; Police Chief Eric Peterson; Police Captain Andy Youngquist; Liquor Store Manager Kevin Morelli; Utility Director Del Vancura.

Absent: None.

3. COUNCIL BUSINESS and/or DISCUSSION ITEMS

3.1 Discussion; Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association (ARAA) Facility Proposal.

City Attorney Scott Baumgartner shared a staff report with background information stating Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association (ARAA) was present to discuss with Council a possible facility proposal at Gray Ghost Field. He outlined their proposal that included the site with MMPA utility lines across the area and their work to see what could fit the site, added they started in Ramsey proposing a dome structure there. He clarified the ARAA was not pitting two cities against each other and were transparent about their efforts in both cities but that they want to do what's best for the youth and serve their needs for years to come. He said they can't build both a dome and fieldhouse at Gray Ghost as the size of both would be too small and said they may consider partnering with the City on a community center in the future, adding they want to be in Anoka and create a sports hub.

Mayor Rice said it would be ideal to take advantage of the parking at the high school for any proposed structure.

Dustin Reed, ARAA, said they had an architect working on the Gray Ghost location with the north/south side being the fieldhouse and the east/west side as the dome but said both would have to be decreased in size significantly to fit resulting in four to five courts instead of their goal of eight. He said hardwood

courts were advantageous for expos too and they didn't want to be short-sighted in order to use the facility for years to come.

Jen Niska ARAA, said they currently serve approximately 4,000 athletes in 11 different sports, including lacrosse, football and soccer which are played at the same time so while four courts seems like a lot it really isn't based on all the usage. She said they were working with ISB on the project who provided proposed sketches for review.

Dustin said they didn't want to be presumptuous and explored every avenue through Anoka County GIS to identify available land, including the other side of Bunker Lake Boulevard but would like to construct a dome on Gray Ghost for either year-round or partial year use and do a larger footprint and fieldhouse elsewhere, which is their biggest need. He shared a proposal of 10,000 square feet on 5.12 acres which included parking and possible shared parking.

Councilmember Wesp noted the Gray Ghost property was City-owned and the 14 acres on the north side of Bunker is off the tax rolls but would be taxable if sold and that ARAA was tax-exempt. He said if they were to build in Ramsey can they fit everything on one site. Dustin said while they own the 13 acres in Ramsey there are some extenuating circumstances occurring and while the structures could fit the site may not work so they are exploring a split campus model to alleviate these concerns.

Mr. Baumgartner explained ARAA owns the site but concerns have been raised with regard to property and litigation against the City of Ramsey for capricious decision-making. He said he is currently representing ARAA in response to a property owner bringing forward a lawsuit which resulted in Ramsey taking a step back and placing limitations on what ARAA could use the dome for which doesn't coincide with their model. They said they can host practices but not tournaments which is what the need really is and not in their vision.

Councilmember Scott asked if the split campus concept still require the reallocation of the windmill at Gray Ghost. Dustin said their proposal is likely the maximum size that would be allowed by the MMPA which is outside the easement.

Councilmember Weaver asked how many football fields could be created in the dome and the idea of a split campus could be good then spoke about the storm water retention on the property. He said having the dome next to the high school for shared parking would result in an amazing addition to the athletic fields.

Dustin said they hope to have two football fields included, with lacrosse being a little smaller. He said the south metro has a large draw for athletics and this would be an opportunity for the north metro to have these events, adding they are already being contacted regarding sponsorships.

Discussion was held on the new fields constructed in Maple Grove and what could be done in Anoka and the many traveling sports that exist and the need to provide the same opportunities for youth in this area, especially to families who may not be able to afford it.

Councilmember Wesp asked what was requested from Ramsey and what does ARAA want from Anoka. Jen responded they requested nothing and where they're at now is we'll have to ask as the one plan is not viable without assistance.

Dustin said they're just bringing the idea forward for discussion, adding they are not developers and not looking for handouts as that is not their nature. He said seed money comes from charitable gambling but also registration and said they already pay rent on many facilities and that would be redirected to be self-sustaining as they don't want to lean on charitable gambling funding for the site.

Councilmember Wesp said there will be some contention from the neighborhood with regard to addressing increased traffic but noted that would occur with any development in this area. He said while we still may want a grocery store on the site, we don't have to give the site away and a community center may be a good use if we can build without the City owning it and create a good partnership instead. He said he would like to see us look at how we can get traffic to flow through this area.

Councilmember Weaver said he was excited to consider this opportunity.

Councilmember Skogquist said he liked the use of Gray Ghost fields to use the existing parking then added tournaments and traffic will be a concern to be addressed. Dustin responded shuttles could be utilized from the field house to the high school as one example and said they have good relationships with Anoka and Ramsey to address.

Councilmember Weaver commented how stay to play is huge and encouraged ARAA to partner with Twin Cities Gateway. Public Services Administrator Lisa LaCasse said staff receives calls regularly from TC Gateway for tournaments and opportunities for weekend use including pickleball courts and suggested partnerships for when the facility is not used by ARAA.

Mayor Rice said we'll need to figure out what we want for either a purchase price or payment in lieu of taxes or other options but confirmed the City was interested in exploring this partnership.

Mr. Lee suggested the City work with architect Kathy Anderson and Hakanson Anderson to create a plan and come back to Council with options for the site.

Mr. Baumgartner asked what Council wants from ARAA as they need to know before they get too far in the planning so those elements can be part of discussions

and meet the City's expectations, adding they are not pitting one city against another but just want to do the best for the youth.

Jen explained the reality of how during tournaments people stay nearby resulting in significant economic demand from families between games.

Finance Director Brenda Springer said the City Assessor reviewed property values in this area and has started to create estimates regarding potential tax capacity and other factors.

Councilmember Weaver suggested shared uses for parking too and the need for another discussion on expectations sooner rather than later for ARAA.

3.2 Discussion; Rum River Silt Issue; Assessment and Options.

Public Services Director Mark Anderson shared a staff report with background information stating following the high flood waters and a quicker spring thaw, the Rum River channel downstream of the Anoka Rum River dam city is showing an increased amount of sediment along the river bottom. Based on a biometric survey completed this June, the majority of the channel has silted in the entire way to the Mississippi River, in some areas as much as four feet. The additional deposit of the sediment has restricted the navigation up to the public dock systems and had made the public boat landing at Akin River Park almost non-operational. This past spring, the sediment was removed at the Akin River boat landing per the City's Public Access agreement with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR). Staff is also preparing for the dredging maintenance work and/or a proposed dredging project in the Rum River if initiated by City Council. He outlined two proposed projects, dredge maintenance work and proposed dredging project in detail and the financial impacts to both and asked for Council input.

Councilmember Weaver disagreed with some of the elements of the report then shared the areas that were in very poor condition because of the sand that results in pontoon dragging and thanked staff for the topography report. He commented on the Soil and Conservation District report which didn't include the upstream area of the sand deposited up and down the river and the importance of knowing where the sand came from to address. He noted the sand was very fine and not silt and would actually be great to create beach areas. He said a hydrologist can't make or waive the permit process and suggested asking DNR Commissioner Sarah Strommen to tour the river and show how Anoka did not create this issue and but that there's an erosion problem that needs to be addressed quickly.

Councilmember Scott said the waterways south have some bad areas and asked if that means the entire area needs dredging. Councilmember Weaver said he's lived on the river for 65 years and through a paddle survey shared the areas that

are bad including the Stonehouse and Gilligan's Island from the Mad Hatter to the Pumphouse. He said there's one nice area to launch boats then they hit ground.

Councilmember Skogquist commented about the number of clams in the sand and how areas either side of the walk bridge are bad, then noticed some buoys on the east side would be better on the west side as it gets pretty shallow. He said the quickest way to get something done will be the end of summer and agreed with providing a tour and consider a permit as part of the entire project.

Councilmember Wesp agreed we should reach out to the Commissioner and asked Councilmember Weaver to do so then spoke about the need for public safety response in the event of emergencies such as the plane crash that occurred in the past then asked if anything can be done lower of the Rum River.

Councilmember Weaver said he was disappointed in the response and how none their representatives were present and that we need to find out where the sand came from in order to address it.

Councilmember Skogquist suggested creating a City beach by the former boat landing with some of this material.

Mayor Rice said Anoka benefits from this navigable water and that the City spent \$6 million on a parking ramp, docks, and other amenities to create an environment for the public to benefit our businesses. He said this is a river city and there's an investment to maintain this area which is significant and while he thought we could wait until next year we can't and suggested reducing the level of the water for the spring runoff.

Councilmember Weaver said we don't have to spend a lot but need to obtain a permit with maintenance to be able to maintain the area.

Mr. Lee said we need to return to 40 feet wide at the base with 6 feet at the top to be navigable and have at least 4 feet of water.

Mayor Rice said changes in hydrology has changed the Coon Rapids Dam as well as this is unmaintained shoreline north of us and that the sand is not from Anoka.

Mr. Lee said getting a permit from the DNR will be easy as we will not ask to excavate but just maintain the channel all the way.

3.3 Discussion; Review of City Policies.

Mr. Lee shared his support for policies for consistency as well as flexibility and said staff will be reviewing proposed policy amendments with Council.

Assistant City Manager/City Clerk Amy Oehlers shared a staff report with background information stating staff will be reviewing City policies adopted by Council every other year in June. Councilmembers were previously provided a link to our website where all current policies can be accessed. Staff requested that Councilmembers review and inform staff if there were any specific policies the Council wanted to review. Staff did not get any notifications from the Council on any specific policy. Staff reviewed all policies related to their department and submitted the policies they felt should be amended or deleted. She reviewed the proposed policies in detail, including the remote meeting policy, special events policy, social media policy, and others, and asked for Council input.

Councilmember Skogquist asked questions about the remote meeting policy and the need to clarify remote if employed as military or in a health care emergency then suggested adding the word commenter in the social media policy as this did not just protect employees and elected officials. Mayor Rice suggested adding any threatening language instead.

Ms. Springer reviewed the financial policy that included a list of organizations the City supports so we know year to year how they are supported and included the State's auditor's opinion on how cities can donate money. She spoke about the utility financial reserve policy and available for use and if acceptable then reviewed tax exempt financing.

Councilmember Skogquist asked about logic for having the electric utility at 120 days and the sewer/water utility at 60 days then inquired about the recent audit and if there's ever been \$10 million in the bank and should the policy be followed or changed. Ms. Springer said the number of days was based on a previous baseline then said the largest portion of internal loans for the utility if paid would result in more than \$10 million.

Councilmember Skogquist suggested the criteria for organizations we support should include basic human needs instead to encompass single persons who need assistance and remove the term families. Councilmember Weaver said he likes the terms families, children, and seniors as it better explains and helps encourage people to donate. Mayor Rice suggested seniors, families, and others.

Ms. Springer reviewed the investment, credit card and purchasing policies and addressed purchases over \$25,000 is outlined in Statute.

Councilmember Wesp inquired about the credit card policy. Ms. Springer said the City issues purchasing cards to individual employees such as supervisors to help in tracking receipts and provide rebates through US Bank then commented on a report with the audit that required obtaining competitive bids even though there was only one vendor to choose from.

Ms. Lacasse reviewed the updated sign policy categories, mounting, and installation requests.

Councilmember Wesp asked about the procedure for the 8th Avenue stop sign. Police Chief Eric Peterson responded staff analyzed traffic accidents and traffic counts for this area which didn't fit the policy well but that staff felt a stop sign would still be helpful in this area.

Mayor Rice referred to a stop sign with solar and red flashing lights to signify a new stop sign and how vegetation near signs needs to be addressed.

Councilmember Skogquist referred to a typo on Page 1 of the traffic policy then asked about traffic layers and how to get a stop sign on 8th Avenue and whether it would be worth including yield signs. He also asked for clarification in the Councilmember policy regarding matching State law regarding calling special meetings to ensure consistency.

3.4 Discussion; Election Judge Pay.

Ms. Springer shared a staff report with background information stating with every election it becomes more and more difficult to find people that want to serve as an Election Judge. She explained efforts to recruit people through advertisements, social media, QCTV, reaching out to schools and colleges, but there never seems to be much interest and noted other cities are encountering the same issue and felt increasing pay could assist with this concern. She outlined the work election judges do on election day as well as prior with tasks such as Public Accuracy Testing, communicating with their judges and their precinct locations and setting up the precinct for voting then shared current pay for election work: Election Assistant \$13.50; Absentee Judges \$13.50; Head Judges \$12.00; Assistant Head Judges \$11.50; Regular Judges \$11.00. She shared the intent to include in the 2024 budget increases to Election Assistant \$18.00; Absentee Judges \$18.00; Head Judges \$16.00; Assistant Head Judges \$15.50; Regular Judges \$15.00. She reviewed the overall increase in the Elections budget due to the recent Election Law changes and the fact that 2024 is a Presidential Election year in addition to the Primary and General Elections. She outlined the amended dates for early voting by Direct Ballot from 7 days to 18 days before an election which will create additional work on every day to reconcile as well as the expanded early voting hours to be open for voting. She spoke about need for increased overtime and additional help then reviewed estimates of time spent and costs for 2024.

Councilmember Skogquist confirmed the increased cost would be annually and not per election year and if the presidential primary was partially covered. Ms. Oehlers responded a portion of those elections were covered.

Mayor Rice suggested the need to move away from odd-year elections.

3.5 Discussion; City Council Salary Review.

Ms. Oehlers shared a staff report with background information stating in 2019 the City Council adopted an Ordinance (ORD-2019-1708) that increased the salary of the Mayor and City Councilmembers. At that time, it had been 11 years since there was a salary adjustment in these positions. The Charter Commission met and discussed this topic several times over the years and have strongly opposed that they be responsible for setting (or making future recommendations) for the Mayor/Council salaries and feels that it is the responsibility of the Council to set the salaries. In December of 2021, the City Council unanimously adopted an Ordinance (ORD-2021-1753) amending the City Charter (Section 2.07) to require that the Mayor and Councilmember salaries shall be reviewed by the City Council in June of every odd numbered year. Minn. Stat. §415.11 authorizes a City Council to set their salaries by adoption of an ordinance. This same Statute states that an increase to the salaries of a City Council may not become effective until after the next municipal election. Adoption of such an ordinance would require a 4/5s vote the City Council. Staff shared a survey of other similar size cities in Anoka County that showed a range of salaries between the cities with some paying additional money for members who serve on their EDA, healthcare coverage and dental coverage at City cost. She outlined current salaries of \$9,700/yr for Mayor and \$8,000/yr for Councilmembers and said since there isn't a standard method amongst cities on how to determine these salaries, staff is recommending that Council approve an automatic salary increase on January 1 of every odd numbered year that would be equal to the COLA increase given to staff, using a combined COLA of what was given to staff in the previous even numbered year, plus the current odd numbered year COLA. She noted any change in Mayor/Council salaries cannot become effective until after the next municipal election, which will occur in 2024. Changes would become effective on January 1, 2025.

Mayor Rice supported the salary amendments because as elected officials they are quasi experts and should be reimbursed even if a member wants to donate their salary to an organization for example.

Councilmember Skogquist agreed, stating if we don't stay current with salaries we would eliminate a pool of good people. He noted on non-Council meeting weeks he works 6-10 hours per week and that doubles on meeting weeks and it was important to make this accessible to everyone and have people contribute and not always be independent business owners serving. He suggested a standardized increase every year for the next year and review other measures such as COLA. Councilmember Weaver disagreed and said the Council does not do this for the salary.

Councilmember Scott said he was supportive of the increase as well as there is time spent for meetings, attending events, and doing City business and that 10-20 years from now with inflation it will be important to draw a good pool to public service.

Ms. Oehlers said the increase has to be approved by Charter as it currently just says salary has to be reviewed so it will be up to the Council to select the amount.

Mr. Lee encouraged that the process remains as non-political as possible.

Councilmember Scott said other cities include medical and other benefits. Ms. Oehlers said Fridley offers health benefits.

Mr. Lee reviewed COLA increases for 2022 and 2023 and how any increase would be approved after a majority vote. Mayor Rice supported the COLA as a good indicator and measure. Councilmember Weaver encouraged staff to come up with other proposals.

3.6 Discussion; 2023 Legislative Actions Recap.

Mr. Lee shared a staff report with background information stating the League of Minnesota Cities conducted a webinar which covered the 2023 Legislative Session Changes. He shared a presentation with the Council on the 2023 Legislative Session Overview and Legislative Summary and Outcomes from Metro Cities News and asked for input on the items and changes that will impact the City. He noted there are still a lot of unknowns on some of these new law changes, especially related to cannabis that staff will not have all the answers to.

Councilmember Weaver asked about the new paid family medical leave and its effect. Ms. Oehlers said most of it is unknown at this time on how cities will have to manage. Mr. Lee said this was out of the City's hand and that we may have to provide up to 5 months off through the new family leave act, adding it is not up to the City to say an employee qualifies. He expressed concern about people taking advantage of this new law.

Ms. Oehlers spoke about how some cities didn't recognize Juneteenth as a holiday and their work to have the MOU acknowledge the holiday instead of using vacation time and how staff in Public Services were using it as a bargaining tool.

Mr. Lee reviewed the current cannabis and dispensary law and the current cash operations and how the law allows for municipal dispensaries as well and that the Council may wish to consider that option.

Mr. Baumgartner outlined the number of licenses required based on one for every 12,500 in population but that a city can allow as many as it wants then commented on the difficulty of testing policies.

Chief Peterson noted people can't smoke in public places unless permission and the difficulty in enforcing outdoor smoking, including vaping.

Councilmember Wesp inquired about cannabis use by employees. Ms. Oehlers responded how the City will address those using TCH such as those with CDL licenses.

Councilmember Scott asked with licensure on cannabis is there some oversight of the licenses. Mr. Baumgartner said based on the law it is almost like municipal consent and said the City may want to do an interim ordinance to review zoning, locations, types, and dispensaries, including growing.

Mr. Lee spoke about the minimum number of plants an individual can grow. Councilmember Weaver suggested the need for a worksession just on this topic.

Mr. Baumgartner said the LMC is still reviewing the law too then spoke about how possession was legal, same as paraphernalia but can't be transported over state lines.

Councilmember Weaver referred to Ambi Wine event which caused concerns and said we need to figure this out.

Councilmember Wesp asked if paraphernalia was legal will some of those products come back. Councilmember Weaver said that only pertains to a dispensary. Mr. Lee said the ordinance will have to be amended before 2025.

Chief Peterson referenced public safety and research and said staff would like to earmark some funds for sworn staff retention such as a \$5,000 one-time retention bonus. He shared concerns about being outbid by another city but not use funding as a hiring bonus as it could be detrimental to smaller agencies. He spoke about the value to retain officers and how some agencies are down 5-6 officers. He said Anoka is not there yet but that he didn't want to be then referred to the need to high good equipment such as body worn cameras. He noted he takes these potential grant funds very seriously and if received will be planned very carefully for use but could include a request to Council for use in retention policies.

Mr. Lee noted we may have to do retention policies by default, adding the allotment of the funds may be \$780,000.

Mr. Baumgartner commented about current technology and how the new facility and gun range speaks volumes and that new officers want to work for well-equipped agencies.

Councilmember Skogquist shared about a conversation with a neighboring agency's training officer and how Blaine and Coon Rapids have brought on mental health positions for officers and that this may be well worth budget funds since Anoka County is not providing this help. He said this could be used as a recruitment tool as well. Chief Peterson said staff has been researching that already, noting mental health professionals are usually in larger agencies and how

Hennepin County offers each a social worker that cities pay a stipend for. He said Anoka County could improve upon that and still get the same services as larger agencies like Blaine and Coon Rapids, adding concerns are not just mental health but family-related issues as well.

Councilmember Skogquist spoke about the Metro Cities estimate on 4.25% sales tax for \$213,000 every year and asked what we've done for older homes or construction of affordable housing. He said condos are no longer feasible because of the lack of financing but should be reconsidered then spoke about his proposal for condos as part of the 7th and Main liquor store building and if we don't use these funds they will be returned. He said we should be looking at options as this is a good source of funding if used the right way for work force housing or buying down rent as a possibility.

Community Development Director Doug Borglund suggested partnering with the HRA's CARES program as a possible funding mechanism as it touches many of parts of the City's different areas and incomes and improves our neighborhoods.

Mr. Lee spoke about rates of penalties and how we may have to escalate higher end water user fees although we don't have much of that occurring in the City.

3.7 Update: Interim Ordinance to Protect the Planning Process While Conducting Studies to Consider Amendment to Chapter 78, Article V, Division 5, Transit Oriented Development District (TOD).

Mr. Borglund shared a staff report with background information the City recently adopted an interim ordinance regarding the TOD district and provided an update for Council.

Councilmember Weaver said the boundaries of the area were from Highway 10 to 4th Avenue, including the Anoka County Mission and that they had the same discussion about the 13 acres by the high school and suggested architect Kathy Anderson review these 24 acres and provide input and conceptual drawings

Mr. Baumgartner asked about the Council's vision for the area and the Comprehensive Plan as times have changed and impacts to the property around the area. He said staff will need direction of the Council envisions residential with a pocket of TOD or geared towards industrial where TOD might fit.

Mr. Borglund said we do have a master area for the plan which could be updated, adding the real estate market and uses have changed and should be evaluated. He outlined the process would include analyzing uses and whether to retain or remove them, draft potential amendments, then prepare the changes if desired. Councilmember Weaver noted the Miller building was left alone which is 1/3 of the area and said he did not want to see 24 acres of apartment units, adding

Kimley Horn could do a study as well. Mr. Baumgartner agreed but said the first step was to obtain the vision of the area then analyze the uses.

Mayor Rice said we need to decide on the vision because of the TIF district and determine what incentives we want to provide.

Councilmember Weaver said discussions about the Amtrak station could affect this area as well.

**UPDATES/REPORTS/COUNCIL SUGGESTIONS FOR TENTATIVE
FUTURE AGENDA ITEMS**

None.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Weaver, seconded by Councilmember Wesp to adjourn the Worksession at 9:55 p.m. Motion carried.

Submitted by: Cathy Sorensen, *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

Approval Attestation:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk