

**WORKSESSION OF THE ANOKA CITY COUNCIL
ANOKA CITY HALL
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS
JULY 26, 2021**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rice called the worksession meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

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

Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee; Community Development Director Doug Borglund; City Planner Clark Palmer; Public Services Director Mark Anderson; Assistant City Manager Amy Oehlers; Police Chief Eric Peterson; Communications Manager Pam Bowman; Public Services Administrator Lisa LaCasse; City Attorney Scott Baumgartner.

Absent: None.

3. COUNCIL BUSINESS and/or DISCUSSION ITEMS

3.1 Discussion; Woodbury House.

Community Development Director Doug Borglund shared a staff report with background information stating staff recently met with Tim and Liz Koch of the Mad Hatter who lease the Woodbury House from the City of Anoka. The City has been working to sell the property to the Kochs also known as TLK Enterprises LLC. The Kochs would like to move forward and close on the Woodbury House in 2021. He shared information regarding the status of this real estate transaction that said the Woodbury House appraised for \$807,000.00 in 2018 and that the City approved a purchase agreement and contract for deed at that amount. He said the purchase agreement has been signed but not the contract for deed and that closing has not occurred or schedule due to a title issue the City was working on in addition to the pandemic. He said since March 2018, the City invested an additional \$26,618.00 in additional repairs/maintenance and that the buyer currently operates and rents the Woodbury House on a lease that is out of date paying month to month lease under the old agreement. Mr. Borglund said the property was reappraised in July and valued at \$875,700.00. He shared more about the timeline of events and said items had been prepared for closing and noted items not addressed were a potential lease of The Carpenters parking lot stalls and trash enclosure. Mr. Borglund outlined the property repairs and maintenance improvements to date and asked that Council provide direction to staff.

Councilmember Barnett commented on the increased valuation and concerns about selling at the original purchase price but said she would be open to selling at some sort of discount in recognition of the Kochs and their work such as paying for the completed work at a rate of the City's cost plus an additional 1.5 rate.

City Manager Greg Lee noted an argument could be made that an agreement was in place but not executed due to title work and the pandemic and was no fault of the Kochs.

Councilmember Weaver said he was not opposed to continuing with the original agreement as the property couldn't close without clean title and noted the maintenance items were all deductible anyway and would continue over time. He said the City had a willing buyer and that we should continue as a willing seller.

Councilmember Barnett noted if the value of the property had decreased the Kochs likely would have requested a discounted sale price. Tim and Liz Koch, The Mad Hatter, shared comments on the work they did to stay open during the pandemic and that the parking was a separate issue than purchase of the house.

Councilmember Skogquist asked about the maintenance items and if they were the landlord's or tenant's responsibility and how The Carpenter's Hall ownership would work. Mr. Borglund said discussion was held on maintenance items and the number of stalls used at The Hall which would be included in the lease agreement but still needed to be finalized prior to any closing.

Council consensus was to proceed with sale at \$807,000 and work on lease agreement for parking at The Carpenter's Hall for formal consideration.

3.2 Discussion/Presentation; Community Education Restoration of Funding for Community School Programs.

Public Services Administrator Lisa LaCasse shared a staff report with background information stating support from the City of Anoka has enabled Anoka-Hennepin Community Education to maximize access to enrichment opportunities for students at elementary and middle schools within the City. She shared demographics of the middle school and three elementary schools located within the City and enrollment data and how from 2005 – 2012 cities have slowly discontinued funding and how in 2018 use of Anoka's funding changed. Community Education staff identified a trend of reduced participation in programming and felt that socio-economic factors were the cause so beginning that year \$27,000 of Anoka's funds were earmarked to provide scholarships for class fees so that more children could participate in the programs/activities. The remaining funds were split to provide additional programming at the four schools located in Anoka with the largest amount going to Franklin Elementary. Children who qualify for free/reduce fee lunch automatically receive reduced fees on a sliding scale when they register for classes/activities. The City of Coon Rapids

provides Anoka-Hennepin Community Education with \$100,000 to support programming at the seven elementary and two middle schools located within that city. For the 2021 budget year, school year the budget amount requested to support program was \$68,001. Funding was eliminated beginning in January 2021 with the agreement to finish the school year, a total of \$34,500 was paid to Community Education through June 2021. No additional payments will be made in 2021.

District staff members Al Ickler, Michele Trelstad, and Kristen Keller provided a presentation that shared information on the community schools program and discussed the possibility of re-establishing funding support for midyear of 2021/2022 school year.

Councilmember Weaver commented how childcare for first responders was affected during the pandemic and where Andover, Ramsey, Champlin and Blaine were in the program. Mr. Ickler said he would like to see those cities engaged as well and hoped they would reconsider based on their current program offerings. Ms. Keller shared comments on the benefits of partnering to assist with programs and field use.

Councilmember Barnett asked for clarification on how the funds would be used and if the school district provides funding for these needs as the more appropriate resource. Mr. Ickler explained how free-reduced lunch recipients help provide a benchmark for funding and how items such as turf come from capital funding and not classroom funding and direction of resources used and how most school districts do not provide funding for community education.

Councilmember Skogquist commented how many cities chose to do their own programming because of staffing and how leveraging with the school district could help stretch funding further.

Mayor Rice said the City has had a proud tradition of assisting and that Youth First was one way to accomplish that but how they felt the organization had strayed a bit from the City's core values and that community education tied more with the City's values.

Borgie Bonthuis, Anoka, asked questions regarding funding and if funds from the City were for scholarships and go to Anoka residents only.

Councilmember Barnett asked how much funding was provided through the Round-Up program. Mr. Lee responded \$15,000 was provided annually through the program.

Councilmember Wesp asked if the district provided services for all elementary schools within the district. Councilmember Barnett proposed not including

funding as part of the budget but instead through other funding sources through reallocation.

Councilmember Skogquist asked instead to dedicate funding towards school programming and leverage other resources and try to be creative to solve this budget gap for the district.

Council consensus was to continue to identify funding possibilities during the upcoming budget discussions.

3.3 Discussion; Human Rights Commission.

Assistant City Manager Amy Oehlers shared a staff report with background information stating there were several things related to this item that the Council needs to discuss and provide direction on regarding the upcoming ballot question regarding the Human Rights Commission. She reviewed the timeline of actions in detail and said it was important to frame the wording so that it is clear to the voters and also provided a true answer to the Council on whether the future of Human Rights Commission exists under the guise of the City or be its own entity.

City Attorney Baumgartner outlined further direction needed from Council that included if the Commission exists what form should the Commission exist and how it would be likely result in three ballot questions that included should a Commission exist, should it be a City-funded Commission, or be a separate non-profit Commission.

Mayor Rice suggested both staff and the petitioners propose a question for consideration by Council and noted if the ballot question is defeated there was nothing preventing a non-profit from forming anyway.

Councilmember Barnett expressed her support for a one-part question for clarification and agreed a non-profit could continue and be supported.

Mr. Baumgartner noted repealing of the City Code had to be part of the question and therefore would still have to address the three topics however they were worded. He suggested working with the petitioners with the hope to have a joint representation of the proposed question.

Councilmember Barnett noted the phrase Human Rights Commission could be construed as one-sided and suggested the language be referred differently and fully explained as part of the ballot question. Councilmember Skogquist said City code currently states to the Human Rights Commission and could not be changed.

Mayor Rice said that could be addressed as part of the question negotiation discussions.

David Bonthius, Anoka, shared comments on the Commission's purpose and to have a clear understanding of the work they would do for the civil rights of citizens in Anoka specifically.

Councilmember Wesp spoke about how instead the question should be removed from the City Charter and disagreed that we will likely reach consensus on the question itself. Mayor Rice said it would be essential to reach consensus and noted if we ask the wrong question it would result in unclear direction and possibly another ballot question.

Ms. Oehlers asked for direction on voter education of the resulting ballot question that included a timeline of events and promotion through social media and other channels.

Councilmember Barnett stated it was important to share all facts of the issue and suggested information be included in the City Hall lobby as well as a video production that reflected City costs as well. Councilmember Skogquist cautioned that more detail could result in confusing voters.

Mayor Rice stressed the importance of impartiality of any City education of the ballot question but noted there will likely be groups who will also be working to educate voters.

Mr. Lee clarified the need for an overall summary comprised by both the City and petitioners would be important for transparency and then make available all factual resources including minutes, meeting videos, etc.

Mike Erickson, Anoka, shared comments that saying the Commission was funded by the City is misleading. Mr. Baumgartner clarified the agreed upon statement would only include why the ballot question was coming before the voters and not opinions on the question.

Ms. Oehlers asked during this interim period how the Commission should continue to function through activities such as appointments.

Councilmember Barnett inquired about the process to suggest the removal of the current chairperson due to insubordination. Discussion was held on how removal could occur and how to appropriately address the issue while protecting the individual's privacy.

Councilmember Skogquist noted how difficult it would be to recruit for new members during this interim period. Councilmember Wesp asked about the possibility of all members being dismissed and appointing new.

Ms. Oehlers clarified history on how meetings would occur on an as-needed basis and that the remaining topics not be concluded until the purpose has been

finalized because of difficulties with requirements of the number of members on the Commission per Charter.

Discussion was held on how meetings and agendas would continue during this interim period. Councilmember Skogquist suggested contacting all members regarding their intent to continue participation point. Councilmember Wesp disagreed, stating the Commission should be informed they would not meet until final direction was concluded.

Jody Anderson, shared comments about her thoughts on the Human Rights Commission **AUDIO TOO FAINT TO CLEARLY HEAR**

Mr. Erickson shared concerns about irrational comments being made by certain Councilmembers. Councilmember Wesp strongly disagreed and said those types of statements would result in limitations in communicating throughout this process.

Councilmember Barnett offered to share emails sent regarding the topic of sanctuary cities which was one of her main concerns regarding the Commission and the chairperson.

Bjorn Skogquist, previous Anoka Mayor, commented about the nature of the Commission and whether it was an authority or an advisory board and if the Council was bound to heed any vote or recommendation from any board or commission. He expressed disagreement that the Commission must request to meet via staff and should continue to meet as they deemed necessary. He disagreed with how the Commission was viewed as unable to complete any work as the meeting requirements appeared to be by design and therefore restricted their activity. Mr. Skogquist shared comments regarding sensationalism and not being allowed to do work and **(UNABLE TO CLEARLY HEAR DUE TO AUDIO)**

Ms. Judy Anderson spoke about on behalf of the petitioners and asked the Council to consider all petitioners in the process so that something good could happen until the ballot question concludes

Council consensus was to direct staff and petitioners to meet to compose a proposed question for Council consideration, and that the Commission continue to meet on an as-needed basis based on staff liaison or Council direction, and to postpone advertisement until the number of vacancies has been determined.

3.4 Discussion; Council Representation (Chairpersons Communication Board, Social Media, Etc.)

Communications Manager Pam Bowman shared a staff report with background information stating Chairpersons Communication Board - The Chairpersons

Communication Board (CCB) was initially organized by former employees Bob Kirchner and Carolyn Braun for the purpose of a roundtable discussion so chairpersons from each board and commission had a chance to share information about what their board or commission was working on/involved with. It provided an opportunity, and continues to do so, for the representatives to learn of ways in which to work together on various projects, share ideas, and report back to their boards and commissions. In addition to the round table discussion, a “Hot Topic” (major city project, etc.) was included which typically involves a presentation from a member of the city staff. The CCB meetings initially occurred monthly, but after discussion with the chairpersons several years back, it was agreed that meeting on a quarterly basis was sufficient. She shared how the meetings have evolved over the years and notes were introduced, formerly known as “News You Can Use” and now simply was the Chairpersons Communication Board Meeting notes that were not formal meeting minutes but rather a synopsis of the updates and hot topics provided. These notes are placed on the city website and distributed via email to City Council, staff liaisons, department heads, and all members of the Boards and Commissions. Chairpersons have also requested that staff liaisons to each board include the notes on the following agenda of their board/commission meeting. Chairpersons who are unable to attend any of the quarterly meetings are asked to send an alternate representative from the board or commission. Ms. Bowman noted that as social media continues to evolve that staff should provide reminders about open meeting laws, public records, and use of social media by employees and elected officials. She said staff was working to update the City’s social media policy which was based on the League of Minnesota Cities model policy and would be brought before City Council at a later date for approval.

Councilmember Weaver asked if there was an official Council designation for the Chairpersons group and if not, should there be one identified. He said there were good reasons for the group to exist but said it should not be a forum for influence from elected officials.

Councilmember Skogquist noted he likes to attend the meetings so he can learn about the topics being discussed.

David Bonthuis shared about the importance of these meetings and how he would prefer that Council not attend to allow for freer discussions amongst Chairpersons. Mayor Rice noted these meetings were public meetings and could be attended by anyone.

David Bonthuis noted the Chairpersons’ meeting minutes reflected that Councilmember Skogquist was in attendance on behalf of the Council.

Councilmember Barnett thanked Councilmember Skogquist for taking an active role in the meeting but said there was possible miscommunication having him attend based on formal direction and on behalf of the Council and was uncomfortable with this fact.

Mayor Rice suggested that any comments made by any Councilmember be clear that they were speaking on behalf of themselves and not the full Council.

Councilmember Skogquist said he did not attend all meetings of all commissions but felt the Chairpersons' meetings provided a lot of information and expressed concern about not being able to attend. He stressed how better communication is always good and the importance of updating each other on individual organizations.

Ed Evans, Anoka, shared comments about the importance of this group to share information across boards and commissions.

David Bonthuis encouraged anyone who wanted to learn about a particular board or commission to read the meeting minutes. Mayor Rice agreed but said he did not want to discourage anyone from attending any public meeting.

Councilmember Barnett suggested including this direction to staff as well so anyone's presence is accurately reflected for the record.

Councilmember Weaver agreed, stating the same intent should be included as part of the City's social media presence. Ms. Bowman shared the City was in process of updating the social media policy then encouraged Councilmembers to comment as themselves and not on behalf of the City.

Councilmember Weaver questioned Councilmember Skogquist's role as a moderator of the private Facebook Group Anoka Community page, which is separate from the City's social media page.

Mr. Baumgartner shared comments on public data requests and the importance of separating public and private data that could become part of a data request that included private social media accounts and personal cellphones, in addition to public perception.

Ms. Bowman shared similar comments about discussing City business among Councilmembers that could be subject to the open meeting law.

Councilmember Skogquist spoke about the difficulty of not being able to respond on social media without referencing Anoka and why that would not be beneficial to the citizens based on the proposed policy.

The Council discussed examples of how they could participate in responding to the public on social media and how they could respond in the event that an open meeting violation could occur.

Councilmember Skogquist noted this behavior would apply to boards and commission as well but needed to be balanced with being able to respond to citizens.

Ms. Bowman summarized that staff will review specific language of the proposed policy based on Council's input and then return for formal approval.

3.5 Discussion; Electric Vehicle Charging Stations.

Electric Utility Manager Greg Geiger shared a staff report with background information stating Minnesota Municipal Power Agency has offered to provide partial cost for an electric vehicle charging station to be installed in each of their member communities. MMPA will be responsible for the purchase and installation of the charger, management of payment processing and revenue distributions, maintenance and communications for the charger, and program reporting. Anoka Electric Utility will be responsible for bringing the infrastructure to the charger and paying for the electricity used by the charger. He shared this would be an opportunity to provide more services to our customers with very little financial impact to the city. The Electric Department met with the Parking Advisory Board and gathered information on their top choices for the locations and deferred to the Council on final locations but had recommended the two locations be either on the top floor of the HRRD ramp and a location very near to the Veterans Memorial site.

Councilmember Wesp shared his support of the initiative for consideration. Councilmember Barrett said she would be supportive of this initiative in the parking ramp as they would not take stalls away from Billy's or first floor.

Councilmember Weaver said he would support on the parking ramp third floor too but referred to concerns of validity during winter months.

Mr. Evans suggested including solar panels too as part of the infrastructure to make this fully supported.

Council consensus was to allow staff to move forward with the EV Charger on the 3rd floor of the parking ramp.

4. **ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Councilmember Wesp, seconded by Councilmember Weaver to adjourn the Worksession at 8:05 p.m. Motion carried.

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

Approval Attestation:

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Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk