

**City of West St. Paul
Open Council Work Session Minutes
March 11, 2019**

1. Roll Call

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

Present: Mayor Dave Napier
Councilmembers Wendy Berry, Lisa Eng-Sarne, Anthony Fernandez,
John Justen, Bob Pace and Dick Vitelli

Absent: None

Also Present: City Manager Ryan Schroeder
City Attorney Kori Land
Police Chief Manila Shaver
Fire Chief Mike Pott
Assistant Fire Chief Mark Juelfs
Assistant City Manager/HR Director Sherrie Le
Finance Director Char Stark
Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn
City Clerk Shirley Buecksler

2. Review and Approve the OCWS Agenda

Council added Item D, Gas and Electric Franchise Ordinance, and Item E, Dakota Broadband Board Appointments, to the OCWS agenda and approved the agenda, as presented.

3. Review the Regular Meeting Consent Agenda

Council approved the Regular Meeting Consent Agenda, as presented.

4. Agenda Item(s)

A. Request to Allow a Banquet Hall at Signal Hills Shopping Center

Staff recently received a request to open a new 10-15,000 square foot banquet hall/conference center at 1201 Robert Street (Signal Hills Shopping Center). The proposed business would host both personal and business events including, but not limited to, weddings, receptions, retirement and anniversary parties, business conferences, etc.

The property is currently zoned B4, Shopping Center. The B4 District does not currently allow this type of use. Should the Council be in favor of allowing the proposed use at the proposed location, the B4 District language would require

amending to either allow Banquet Halls as a Permitted Use or as a Conditional Use in the B4 District.

The owner has no plans currently to hire kitchen staff to prepare meals for customers and events; rather, they would need to hire a licensed caterer for meals and non-alcoholic beverages. The owner intends to sell alcohol as needed by customers and will require that security be present at those events with alcohol or with more than 100 people. A staff member will be present at every event.

The hours of operation proposed are 9:00 a.m. and 12:00 a.m. Monday through Sunday, depending on customer needs. The owner's preferred space size is approximately 10,000-15,000 square feet with a maximum occupancy of 300-400 people.

Councilmember Justen inquired about the liquor license.

On behalf of the applicant and her client, Sarah Rose Chang of Creative Results Real Estate Agency addressed the Council. She said her client will need a liquor license.

Councilmember Fernandez asked which space(s) the banquet hall would occupy. Ms. Chang said it's the empty space on the west side of Signal Hills, next to the buffet restaurant.

City Attorney Land said they are talking about using a Catering License for all of the food and alcohol, so there would be no City-issued license.

Ms. Chang said anyone who needs a large scale venue could use this space as an event space. She said there is no kitchen at this time so clients will have to go through a licensed caterer. She said alcohol is dependent on whether or not the applicant can use the space, they may pursue a Liquor License.

City Attorney Land said it would have to be a restaurant in order to have a Liquor License.

Councilmember Pace asked if the applicant has any other venues in the Twin Cities that they operate. Ms. Chang said no, her client has had a grocery store and has been an insurance agent for 30 years. She said he is good at business but an event center would be new for him.

Councilmember Justen said this is not a residential area but the noise ordinance would have to be watched since there is one adjacent tenant. He said that tenant should be informed that there may be noise.

Councilmember Fernandez said the adjacent restaurant closes at 9:30 p.m. so there shouldn't be much overlap.

Councilmember Vitelli asked Chief Shaver if he has any concerns. Chief Shaver said it depends on the event and whether it will require Officers. He said he would need to discuss with the applicant to mitigate any concerns.

Councilmember Fernandez asked how much the build-out will cost. Ms. Chang said they will do a complete build-out that will take an additional 30 to 60 days. Once they get the okay from Council, she said she will talk to the listing agent to come to an agreement and see if they can design the property with her client's intention.

Councilmember Fernandez asked about the lease and if it is for five years or more. Ms. Chang said yes. Councilmember Fernandez said it's important for Council that the applicant has done their homework and come in with information to back up their request. Ms. Chang said if Council looks at the listing, the listing agent has it as \$12-15 per square foot. She said the plan is to negotiate that but they cannot do that until they figure this out.

Councilmember Justen said, in the best interest of her client, the applicant would want to get the liquor sales worked out before moving forward.

Councilmember Pace asked if the applicant has a hard timeline to meet. Ms. Chang said he would like to get in as soon as possible but there is the 30 to 60 days wait on the listing side.

Councilmember Pace said he would prefer to have the owner come in to discuss the business with the Council. He said he would rather postpone the discussion until the owner provides a solid business plan. Ms. Chang said he will be back on March 14.

Mayor Napier said this would need to be rezoned. He said it is not an ideal location but is a business type that is needed in our community. However, he said this doesn't seem like an attractive location for it.

Councilmember Justen said the Planning Commission will want to see a lot of this so we may be putting the cart before the horse by rezoning it before the Planning Commission sees it.

Hartshorn said this will come back to Council, at which time Council could turn down the rezoning at that time, if needed.

Councilmember Vitelli said he doesn't feel this should be moved forward at this time. He said the next Planning Commission meeting is in April.

Ms. Chang said her client would like to get in as soon as possible. She said she doesn't believe there are any other venues like this in West St. Paul. She added that they like

the location, parking is sufficient and the space is enough for what her client has envisioned. She said the location isn't the issue and that they will work with the City. She said her client can come in to meet with Council, and she asked what Council would like to see from him.

City Attorney Land pointed out that this is a potential rezoning of all B4 Shopping Center Districts. She said Council would not just be considering this one site but the entire city. She said the application would be made by the City not by the tenant at this site. It would be for all B4 Shopping Center Districts, so Council would not receive specifics. City Attorney Land said the Planning Commission will not ask for it and is not entitled to their business plan and business model. She said Council needs to base their decision on whether you want to change all B4 Business Districts.

Councilmember Vitelli said the big question is alcohol. If they want alcohol, he said they can be granted a Liquor License. If not, they would be totally locked into a catering venue from a licensed On Sale Liquor License holder within the city of West St. Paul and nowhere else.

Mayor Napier said the caterer does not need to be from West St. Paul. City Attorney Land agreed.

Councilmember Justen asked how many B4 Districts are in West St. Paul; City Attorney Land said there are four or five.

Councilmember Justen said this wouldn't get on the Planning Commission's agenda until April. If timing is critical, he said this should be brought to the owners attention.

Councilmember Fernandez said this is a large rezoning in this city and is not important to push through right now. He said it will take a study of the entire city. Councilmember Pace seconded that and said he is not in favor of moving forward because a lot of research needs to be done. If we rezone, Councilmember Pacer said anyone could put one in any B4 District. He said it might work out well but we cannot decide this quick.

Councilmember Vitelli asked if we can refer this question to the April Planning Commission meeting so they can look at the possibility of an event center in B4 Districts. Council agreed.

Councilmember Pace asked if there is any way to allow a Conditional Use Permit in that location instead of rezoning. City Attorney Land said no, that this use is not allowed in a B4 District so this use would have to be added to that list.

Mayor Napier said we will let the message go back to the prospective owner that we need to do more homework and we need him to come talk with Council.

Mayor Napier asked City Manager Schroeder to send this to the Planning Commission for review.

Mayor Napier and Council thanked Ms. Chang for coming. Mayor Napier asked Ms. Chang to let her client know that we are interested in having a banquet hall in our community.

B. Council Initiatives and Strategic Planning

On March 3, the West St. Paul City Council and management team held a strategic planning session to identify strategic priorities for 2019 and 2020. The group began by reviewing and discussing important background information such as input received at the recent neighborhood meetings, financial and other reports prepared by the City Manager, and accomplishments and issues encountered in undertaking the 2018 strategic priorities.

The group was then divided into three smaller groups of City Council and management team members with the charge to identify the top five or six strategic priorities likely to face the City in the coming two years. The groups were asked to consider the importance, urgency, resource availability and any obstacles that might exist addressing those strategic priorities.

The lists from each group were then combined and, as expected, several of the same or related strategic priorities appeared on each list. After considerable discussion, the City Council agreed that the consolidated list represented the priorities it wishes to pursue for 2019 – 2020. The following is a non-prioritized list of the priorities:

- Continue with rebranding/communication.
- Invest in infrastructure and public facilities (Note: There was considerable discussion, but not apparent consensus, as to whether the term “infrastructure” should include staffing needs. The group seemed to conclude that staffing was more of a means to achieve a strategic priority, rather than a goal in its own right.)
- Ensure recreational opportunities for all ages and abilities are available and maintained.
- Develop a plan to maintain and improve parks.
- Improve housing stock.
- Identify ways to strengthen and expand inclusion and diversity outreach. (Note: It was recognized that this priority is also embedded in several others such as improving housing stock and transportation accessibility.)
- Actively pursue all resources to facilitate Council initiatives in recognition of current fiscal constraints. (Note: The group had a lengthy discussion about the need to ensure that adequate and realistic financial resources would be available,

whether from internal or other sources. In particular, the need to reduce overall debt was discussed.)

- Develop a creative and constructive plan to actively deal with vacant properties and eyesores.
- Improve Accessibility Regarding Walking, Biking, Wheelchairs, Bike Routes

At the end of the session, staff was directed to schedule this list for further council discussion and approval.

2019 COUNCIL INITIATIVES

(Edited by Staff 3-05-19)

	COUNCIL INITIATIVE (not in order of priority)
1	Develop a Rebranding Plan/Process
2	Invest in Infrastructure and Public Facilities
3	Provide Recreational Opportunities for All Ages and Abilities
4	Increase Maintenance of Parks and Plan for Improvements
5	Improve Housing Stock Through New Housing Plan
6	Identify Opportunities to Bolster Diversity and Inclusion Outreach
7	Actively Pursue All Resources to Facilitate Council Initiatives in Recognition of Current Fiscal Constraints
8	Create Active Plan to Deal with Vacant or Blighted Properties Think Creatively and Constructively to Rejuvenate
9	Improve Accessibility Regarding Walking, Biking, Wheelchairs, Bus Routes

Schroeder asked Council if this list is close to what they wanted. He said it will come back with metrics and objectives but we want to make sure we are close with this list.

Mayor Napier said Council needs some dedicated time to work through it at a work session with Department Heads. He said public can attend, also. Mayor Napier said this is the next step to narrow it down to something we all believe in and he said that there are things Council committed to focusing on at the Neighborhood Meetings that may not have made it into here. Councilmember Pace agreed.

Mayor Napier said Jim Miller’s energy at the Strategic Planning Meeting wasn’t high enough to instill excitement. He said his knowledge was there and he was engaged but he would have hoped for more energy.

C. Cinco de Mayo 2019 Parade

The City was recently contacted by the Saint Paul Festival and Heritage Foundation regarding the upcoming 2019 Cinco de Mayo Parade. West St. Paul participated in the parade in 2018 and a number of our residents were in the crowd watching. The 2019 Cinco de Mayo Parade is scheduled for May 4.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne said our participation fits around one of our potential goals. She said this could be a great time to debut a new outreach piece in another language. She said it is an opportunity for Council to meet goals.

Councilmember Berry agreed that Council should participate in the parade. She asked if we can engage the community beforehand to march with us.

Councilmember Pace said he agrees with all of this and asked Councilmember Fernandez what he thought of being in the parade in 2018.

Councilmember Fernandez said it was a good time and fun to be a part of it. He said people in parades are in it to market themselves. He said there is so much crossover between West St. Paul and St. Paul because there are so many people who go and watch the parade. He said we marketed the City's Open House last year, which was our purpose. Regionally, Councilmember Fernandez said he thought building a brand was the purpose. He said we used one of our new Public Works trucks. He said it was simple and we had t-shirts to wear for unity. He added that it's a City activity, not a Police or Fire activity, so we used a City vehicle. He said the reception was very warm and it made sense to people. Councilmember Fernandez said he heard people say, "That's our City – that's where we live." He said City Manager Schroeder was also interviewed by a Mexican radio station. Schroeder said we also had a banner.

Mayor Napier asked if a subcommittee should be formed to get the ball rolling. Councilmember Fernandez said the application should be submitted right away.

Councilmembers Fernandez, Berry and Eng-Sarne will meet as a subcommittee to provide recommendations for Council.

Mayor Napier said he believes we should be doing this and that it will be great.

D. Proposed Gas Ordinance and Electric Ordinance Amendment

The City has been in discussions with Xcel regarding a new gas franchise ordinance for close to a year. Xcel has said that they would be comfortable with an ordinance so long as the City amends its current electric franchise.

Council was provided with copies of four draft ordinances for discussion regarding gas and electric franchises. City Manager Schroeder said if Council is comfortable

with proceeding, an option would be to place the first reading of these ordinances on the Regular Council agenda.

Schroeder said this item is rushed in order to meet deadlines such that ordinance changes to take effect in July. Xcel Energy just received these drafts and has not had time to react. Staff is making this request upon the belief that discussions would continue with Xcel prior to the second reading which could occur on March 25.

Schroeder said if Council is open to it, we ask for a first reading of the four ordinances. To get the franchise document done, he said we budgeted for a gas franchise in 2019 but it is not done, yet. The earliest we can get it done is July so we won't see half the revenue. Schroeder said Xcel asked for amendments to the existing electric franchise. He said we weren't interested because it had five years left but in order to get this done, these draft ordinances have been submitted for Council review.

Councilmember Vitelli said he is okay with it.

Councilmember Pace said he will personally rely on City Manager Schroeder and his knowledge because he is looking out for the best interest of the City. He said he is confident that Schroeder has the best interest of the City for both the short and the long term.

Mayor Napier said the key is to ask as many questions of Schroeder so Council has answers for constituents. He agreed that Schroeder is very thorough.

Councilmember Vitelli asked the amount of the franchise. City Attorney Land said it is six percent (6%). Schroeder said it is different math. He said the combination of the gas and electric will get us where we want to be.

Council agreed to move forward and added the four ordinances to the Consent Agenda for approval of the first reading.

E. Council Appointments to Dakota Broadband Board

Mayor Napier agreed to reverse the order of Council appointments to the Dakota Broadband Board. Councilmember Vitelli will now be the primary representative and Councilmember Berry will be the alternate.

5. Adjourn

Motion was made by Councilmember Vitelli and seconded by Councilmember Justen to adjourn the meeting at 6:07 p.m.

All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

David J. Napier
Mayor
City of West St. Paul