

**City of West St. Paul
Open Council Work Session Minutes
February 10, 2020**

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 (arrived at 5:32 p.m.), John Justen, Bob Pace and
Dick Vitelli

Absent: None

Also Present: City Manager Ryan Schroeder
City Attorney Kori Land
Fire Chief Mark Juelfs
Lt. Matt Swenke
Human Resources Director Debra Gieseke
Finance Director Char Stark
Parks & Public Works Director/City Engineer Ross Beckwith
City Clerk Shirley Buecksler

2. Review and Approve the OCWS Agenda

Council approved the OCWS agenda, as presented.

3. Review the Regular Meeting Consent Agenda

Mayor Napier said one correction was made to Item 10A of the January 27, 2020 Regular Council minutes.

Council approved the Regular Meeting Consent Agenda, as amended.

4. Agenda Item(s)

A. Public Safety Committee Recommendations

City Manager Schroeder said the Public Safety standing committee of the Council met on October 22 and December 3, 2019 and most recently on February 4, 2020. At this most recent meeting, the committee:

- Provides specific recommendations on which sidewalk and crosswalks should be of greatest priorities. Absent contrary Council direction, it is anticipated that each of these recommendations would be included in future budget and CIP discussions.

- Referring to the minutes, Schroeder said there are several items included on what the committee recommended, which will come back to a future OCWS, in particular Emerson sidewalk. There are some significant constraints along Emerson that should be talked through, including large trees.
- Suggests that the Engineer provide a recommendation for a No Parking designation on a portion of Kathleen Drive near Marie Avenue.
 - Schroeder said the City Engineer looked at it and there is a recommendation on the Regular Council meeting tonight.
- Suggests that no action be taken regarding traffic calming related to Carrie Street north of Thompson Avenue but that the future Thompson/Oakdale roundabout project be continued to be pursued and that pedestrian facilities continue to be pushed as a priority for this area.
 - Schroeder said that Staff would rather look at it after some of the development occurs in the area. The committee agreed that it wasn't timely.
- Made specific recommendations to expand housing rehabilitation program efforts.
 - Schroeder said Jason Peterson is here tonight for any questions during the EDA Work Session.
- Affirmed the suggestion on how best to narrow committee scope.
 - Schroeder said this is addressed in the committee minutes. If Council supports these changes, then we would come back with some document that puts this into place. There were four items that the committee agreed with the proposed scope of:
 - 1) Street and sidewalk/pedestrian project reviews
 - 2) Neighborhood scale traffic calming/signage request reviews and policy
 - 3) Code enforcement/rental housing/problem properties
 - 4) Review of public safety neighborhood hot spot issues

Schroeder said the committee also had a brief discussion that a future OCWS should be targeted to review the Rental Density Ordinance and that the City should research allowance of Accessory apartments.

Mayor Napier said he likes #7 of the committee's February 4, 2020 minutes and the idea of discussing the scope of the committee and narrowing it down to everything

related to public safety. He would also like to have ward representation from each ward, so this group should discuss that. We have one Ward 2 rep and two Ward 3 reps, with no representation from Ward 1, so he would like to go back and fix that. If we're talking sidewalks, Mayor Napier said he wants to ensure that group is represented, as well, so it's not perceived that Ward 2 and 3 are getting higher attention when it comes to sidewalk safety.

Attorney Land said it's a bit awkward unless someone currently on the committee is willing to step aside. If both Ward 3 reps want to be on the committee, you may need to draw straws.

Councilmember Vitelli said he doesn't feel slighted by not being on the committee and that he doesn't want to kick off either one.

Mayor Napier said it's more perception, which is reality for people.

Councilmember Pace said it doesn't matter to him.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne said she has the longest commute, which is hard to get to her other job, so she would be willing to step aside.

Attorney Land said it needs to be a motion at the table, either now or on the next agenda.

Councilmember Justen suggested that Councilmember Eng-Sarne could join the Public Works Committee and she could swap with Councilmember Vitelli. Councilmember Eng-Sarne said she is also on the Environmental Committee, and then it would be equal representation. Mayor Napier said he will look at it.

Councilmember Vitelli said parking on Kathleen Drive will be better if only on one side.

Councilmember Justen said he had some thoughts on the housing rehabilitation program and will wait for the EDA meeting. The limitations in #7 of the minutes make sense, Under #8, the idea of coming back to that committee about the rental density ordinance, he thinks we need full Council on any changes to the rental density ordinance.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne asked Councilmember Justen if he would add accessory apartments to that. Councilmember Justen said, if we are talking purely public safety related, I don't know if accessory apartments relate to public safety. Mayor Napier said he doesn't think so.

Councilmember Justen said we need to be careful what we lump into public safety, for public perception. For example, housing rehab being within public safety can

come across very wrong to some people and makes him uncomfortable to what the resident reaction may be.

On behalf of the committee, Councilmember Berry said she doesn't think it's the intent to bring something through without bringing it to Council to discuss.

Mayor Napier said the biggest thing for him, agreeing with Councilmember Justen, is trying to squeeze something that is not a public safety issue, necessarily, into a public safety committee. It might not give someone an opportunity to come and sit in on it.

Mayor Napier said his intent was not to have that go to the committee. He made a statement at the Council meeting that "Mayor Napier hopes Staff will find ways to implement NeighborWorks and see if it works for our City and bring forward to the Council for discussion." I was hoping Staff was going to work through it first. But Councilmember Eng-Sarne mentioned at the beginning of her statement that she thought this would be good to be discussed at the Public Safety Committee. So Mayor Napier said there was a misunderstanding and he didn't realize it was going to be discussed at that meeting. It was a great discussion but he had hoped Staff would have discussed it first.

Schroeder said he did work through it first but he had 15 or 16 items and they wouldn't make it through OCWS. He just wanted some input and the committee was meeting. Since they had already talked about it twice, he ran it by them again for feedback first before bringing it to Council.

Reading through #6, Mayor Napier said there is not a lot there that represents a public safety issue.

Councilmember Vitelli said he thinks it should be a work session item and doesn't know how you assign that to any specific committee.

Councilmember Berry said she thinks the problem is trying to find time to discuss all of those in an OCWS because they're all so packed into an hour and a half. There isn't enough time to figure everything out and it doesn't work. Public safety may not be the answer but there should be other options than just three hours a month to get through big things like this.

Mayor Napier said we can also talk about it at the Council table, too. We don't have to take action but can have an open discussion when we have a light agenda.

Councilmember Justen asked if there has ever been any thought, considering how much we have to get through, to having an OCWS that is not bound by a termination with a meeting following. As in, not prior to the actual Regular Council meeting but at a time when we can get through things. For example, one Monday is an OCWS and we go until we're done, the next Monday is the Regular Council meeting. He said he

shares the feeling that a lot of times we cannot get in deep enough into a conversation because we don't have enough time and need to get out to the Council table.

Mayor Napier said he would be fine with trying to do it on a separate day. He likes that tonight we have one item.

Councilmember Vitelli likes the idea of adding it to a light agenda and we could talk all night.

Councilmember Pace asked if the Mayor wished #6 wasn't part of the Public Safety Committee. Mayor Napier said he is questioning whether it fits. Councilmember Pace agreed with everyone's assessment to a certain point. This is the first OCWS in a long time where we have time for further discussion. He asked if it's as simple as calling it the Public Safety and Housing Committee and, when something like this comes up, let the safety committee vet some of this stuff for us.

Councilmember Vitelli asked if that isn't more of an EDA item. Councilmember Pace asked the Mayor if he is looking to have the housing item separate.

Mayor Napier said it was an hour and a half discussion at the Public Safety Committee. We could set a meeting aside and talk it out, he said. They've already done most of the work and have initiatives on paper.

Councilmember Justen commented that parliamentary procedures change at the table, so he doesn't know if we can have a brainstorming environment at the table. Mayor Napier said we can, but it's awkward. Sitting around the OCWS table is more conducive to working, he said.

Councilmember Fernandez said the way we are doing it is how he would like to continue. Certain things work better getting fleshed out in a small group, work on those things, and bring them to OCWS because sometimes what happens is that we wait for the right time to have the right meeting at OCWS. This is the exception tonight with a light meeting. It will never get done otherwise. At some point, some bodies have to get together to say we're going to do this or we're not going to do this. Action plans and steps have come out of this. We took this item to the small group and put wheels on it and brought it to this body. Having been in difficult things throughout life, he said that's how things happen in breakout groups. The fact is that we are actually looking at some things. At work shop, we have the City Manager and other City Staff there. A prime example is sidewalks. We're going to get sidewalks. It's not like we are pushing against one issue or another. Sometimes it takes that to find out what the feasibility of it is. You have to look at things through a microscope before you can pull the lens up and see the whole picture. That's how both this body and Staff make better decisions. I like it the way it is to flesh things out, he said.

Councilmember Justen said we are all on equal footing at this table and now we've taken a chunk of things to that subcommittee. He said he is not worried about a power

struggle but it seems odd to have half of the elected representatives cut out of the first stage of large scale planning like this. I think there is reason for everyone to meet on other days so things like this that need to get on the OCWS and can get worked out. The problem is if you start breaking it out into a subcommittee, where half of us aren't there, it seems like we are removing some people who may have equivalent ideas. Such as the housing items, there are some things that I may have questions or objections about, but now it's sitting in front of me in this fleshed out plan, and now those who were not on the subcommittee, we need to go back and dig out the items that were already proposed and pushed forward. My understanding is the original idea of the Public Safety Committee and the Public Works Committee was in reaction to something that happened. Right now it seems arbitrary to have three people making a larger portion of the lead-up decision making, other than the other three on the Council.

Any idea you have, Councilmember Fernandez said, don't be encumbered by this right here. No more than three Councilmembers was by design. All three on the committee are people who want to proactively get some things done. There is a long history of things stumbling. Ideas happen but they need more to get them going. If you have an idea like that, find some other Councilmembers and work on it to get it done. It's the only way we can get these initiatives done. We have to start getting creative because we are cash strapped. The City Manager is very open to that stuff and that's how we move forward. We can't have paralysis by analysis, Councilmember Fernandez said.

Mayor Napier said he wants to make it clear that we haven't sat on our hands. The City Manager was given initiatives at the beginning of the year and soon we will have a report of what we've accomplished so far. Everything costs money but the part of the pedestrian plan that is critical here is laying out a plan first of all, prioritizing areas, and how we are going to pay for it. The pedestrian plan is there, we know which sidewalks are dead-ended, which need to be fixed, or install new ones. Trying to get that prioritized and where we are going to go next, other than each street project that comes up and where we will add sidewalks, he asked Schroeder for his feedback.

Schroeder said on the Consent Agenda tonight is some discussion about that. It talks through, for the most part, where progress has been made. I agree that this Council has not been sitting on its hands. Both sides of this conversation are valid. I understand the concern that you cannot have a portion of the Council making decisions but that was not the intent. He said it may be his fault but he just wanted some input because there is quite a bit here on how do you design a housing rehab program. We have the CDA plan to rely upon but what this OCWS had said in January was to go back and create one that will take us to the next level. I could have written that up but I just wanted some feedback from somebody, and this committee was already meeting and was a good place to get some feedback. I understand that next time I will ask for either direction from OCWS or suggest that we create a separate task force because I understand the concerns. It is always a concern for any Council that everyone wants to be involved equally and respected equally.

Mayor Napier said the critical piece is identifying the scope of the committee and having that clearly laid out. He appreciates that the committee Chair suggested they look at it so that it is clearly laid out and understood by everyone and every resident as to what the scope of the committee will stay within.

Councilmember Vitelli said he, personally, does not have a problem with the Public Safety Committee looking at the housing rehab program. Is it a good fit, no. Is the Public Works Committee better, no. Perhaps it should be in Economic Development. It's not bad to be in the Public Safety Committee, he said.

Councilmember Fernandez said the only thing with the housing item is we are looking at areas with a high amount of summary abatement and issues we specifically studied. Do you not feel sidewalks and paths are public safety? The response was no, they are public safety. Councilmember Fernandez continued and said we are not too far off. This all kind of ties into one another. Sometimes it comes down to whether you want Staff in their offices doing it or when they have three Councilmembers voting to provide an idea on it.

Schroeder said he has his direction and understands where the Mayor and Council is on this. He said we will come back on the scope so that we have certified that. Mayor Napier said he appreciates everyone coming in early to work on the committee and wants to ensure we are all on the same page.

Councilmember Fernandez said that maybe there are certain things like 1010 Dodd that may need a special task force. Task forces still need to happen, that's how it's going to get done. If we stick to the regimented rules, we need to have that in our muscle memory. This is important, he said. It makes Staff's job much easier.

5. Adjourn

Motion was made by Councilmember Vitelli and seconded by Councilmember Berry to adjourn the meeting at 6:05 p.m.

All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

David J. Napier
Mayor
City of West St. Paul