

**City of West St. Paul
Open Council Work Session Minutes
May 13, 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 Mark Juelfs
Asst. City Manager/HR Director Sherrie Le
Finance Director Char Stark
Parks & Public Works Director/City Engineer Ross Beckwith
Asst. Park & Recreation Director Dave Schletty
Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn
Asst. Community Development Director Ben Boike
Community Development Coordinator Melissa Sonnek
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

Council approved the Regular Meeting Consent Agenda, as presented.

4. Agenda Item(s)

A. Consider Installing Basketball Hoops in Haskell and Oakdale Parks

Assistant Park and Recreation Director Schletty provided some history for Council on the removal of basketball hoops in West St. Paul parks. In May 2005, the City Council made the decision to remove the basketball hoops from Haskell Park after complaints from neighbors about noise, gangs, and drug activity around the basketball courts. This was a 180 day test. In the fall after a follow-up meeting with neighbors, the Council voted to leave them down permanently, given that the removal completely solved the problems that had been occurring. In May 2006, the exact same problems occurred at Oakdale Park, with the same solution and outcomes. Over the 2007-08

summers, similar problems occurred at Emerson, Harmon and Weschcke Park basketball courts. At the time, a decision was made to use Police and Police Reserves to increase patrols and attempt to control the problem activities. The Harmon court was eventually removed with the redevelopment of the park and one hoop at Weschcke was removed. There continues to be minor issues at Emerson, but they have gotten better over the years.

Over the past year, Schletty said that the Parks and Recreation Advisory Committee (PRAC) has been discussing adding one hoop back into each of Haskell and Oakdale Parks. At their March 2019 meeting, they held a public meeting and invited residents surrounding both parks to discuss the idea of bringing basketball back to the parks. There was overwhelming support to keep basketball out of those parks, with the fear that the same problems will redevelop over time. The committee tabled making a recommendation so they could gather further information. At the April meeting, the PRAC made a recommendation to reinstall one hoop at each park along with new signage about use and enforcement. They also recommend that both Parks and Police Staff monitor and enforce activities throughout the summer. An evaluation should be made after one year to determine if the hoops should stay or be removed forever.

There would be some additional cost associated with hoops going back up. The poles at both parks are still in place, but the backboards and baskets that were removed 14 years ago have either been used at other parks or used for parts to repair other hoops. New backboards and baskets would cost around \$1300 each. Signage for each park would be about \$100. Additionally, both courts are in need of resurfacing if basketball activities are to remain. The future cost for resurfacing each court would be between \$8-10k. The resurfacing amount would have to be added to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) for 2021 or 2022. Currently, there is no money budgeted for any of these changes in 2019.

Schletty said the PRAC recommended installing two at each park at a cost of \$1,300 each.

Councilmember Fernandez asked, if there is a full court already at the park, whether it would remain a full court or changed to half court. Schletty said there are two poles at Oakdale but it's not a full court in size. He said that Haskell is a little longer but narrow. He added that keeping it at half court will open it up for kids who live in the area and may not invite the same problems as in the past.

Councilmember Pace asked about resurfacing estimates. Schletty said each court would cost about \$8-10k. With Staff installing, the backboard and hoop cost \$1,300 each.

Councilmember Justen asked for an estimate on the cost of removing poles if we decide not to put the hoops back up. He said he would like to compare whether it costs about the same (\$8,000) to install the hoops or to remove the poles. Schletty said that Staff could cut the poles out for no cost. To remove the asphalt, however,

Staff could do it as they have time but there would be other costs associated, such as black dirt and seed. In the past 15 years, Schletty said some courts have been repainted for playing hopscotch and four square.

Councilmember Berry said there was an overwhelming number of residents who want the hoops put back up. She said that only those in close proximity to the parks were against it. She said the most interest was to return the hoops, with a little more than half wanting them back.

Schletty said residents were invited to come to the March 2019 meeting. Feedback showed residents in the area surrounding the parks were not in favor. For clarity, Councilmember Berry asked Schletty to correct the information Council received. She added, however, that we do not want to discount residents' concerns.

Councilmember Vitelli said he is not in favor of reinstalling the hoops. He said these are neighborhood parks bound by residential homes in close proximity. He added that he has received phone calls during his years on Council regarding problems in those areas. Councilmember Vitelli said he would support hoops at the Sports Complex at Oakdale and Wentworth but that residential areas close to parks are not a place for hoops.

Councilmember Justen said he feels like Council had this same conversation at the last OCWS meeting and suggested that it go to a vote. He questioned if this would need to be on to the Regular Council agenda. Councilmember Justen said we have new information available tonight but that he does not think it will change anyone's mind at this point.

Councilmember Fernandez agreed with Councilmember Justen and said that no one is going to change his or her mind. He added that he wants basketball courts put in, new ones and more, and said we need to move on and get it done.

Councilmember Pace said we could move on; however, he said it is also important to answer to our constituents why we are taking a certain position on it and be able to explain why we think that way. He said he received at least six emails today on this topic so it is important to talk about it here for those who are attending the meeting, as well as those who will read the minutes. He said he is not in favor of just moving on it at this moment.

Councilmember Pace said he wishes we could have received the Police Report he asked for back when there were problems, which would have given everyone a clearer idea of what happened at that time. He said he is on the same page as Councilmember Vitelli. Councilmember Pace said he would like to see one big basketball court at the Sports Complex and one at Marthaler because those are large parks that have the least conflict with surrounding housing. He said he is not in favor of going from zero to wide open at every park.

Councilmember Justen clarified when he said he would like to move on, that he is not saying that we need to just get this over with. Procedurally, he said he feels like we are spinning our wheels discussing this for two Open Council Work Sessions in a row. He said what he is asking is what the next step is, if do we need to add it to a meeting agenda, and what the preference is on it.

Mayor Napier said to look back 14 years is a mistake because times and demographics have changed. As far as issues coming up with basketball hoops, our parks will sit there with blank poles. \$2,600 is a low investment to see if we can make a park active for the right reasons. Mayor Napier said this is healthy discussion and that he would like to discuss this further before voting on it.

Councilmember Vitelli said he is not against basketball but that he believes Haskell and Oakdale parks are not the appropriate place for it. He suggested the Sports Complex as a better location, being that it is wide open.

Councilmember Justen said the problems could be addressed by the standard rule for all parks. He suggested a cause and effect situation where if there are problems, the hoops come down for 15 days, then 30 days and so on, and it would self-police itself.

Councilmember Vitelli said he is concerned about the rights of the residents who live near the park. Councilmember Justen said if they report a problem, it should be handled similar to any other situation.

Mayor Napier said that basketball hoops are a park amenity but Harmon Park had trouble all the time. He suggested doing a one year pilot.

Schletty said he reached out to the Cities of Mendota Heights and South St. Paul who said they have no issues with basketball hoops in their communities. Mendota Heights would like to add more hoops.

Schroeder said he received one call about the process on the decision and the caller requested that the Council not make a decision at OCWS but that there be a published notice and the neighbors notified. Mayor Napier said he likes the idea of public testimony on this subject.

Councilmember Pace asked why we are only considering Haskell and Oakdale Parks. Schletty replied and said that Weschcke Parks has a half court, Marthaler Park has hoops, and Southview Park has a half court.

Councilmember Fernandez questioned if the hoops were in the parks when nearby residents moved into their homes.

Mayor Napier said the issues that were there 14 years ago may not be issues today.

Councilmember Berry said there are many people who use our parks from outside the community. She wondered why we would want to keep non-residents from using our parks.

Mayor Napier said we need to act on this. Councilmember Fernandez agreed and said he hopes it will be soon during warm weather.

Schroeder said it does not need to be a Public Hearing, but Schletty will notify the neighbors that this item will be on the Council's agenda in two weeks.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne said a lot of these issues seem to be public space issues. She said she is in favor of reinstalling the hoops and that the emails she has receive have also been in support of it.

B. Housing Plan Review

In a continuing effort to assess and improve the status and condition of the West St. Paul housing stock, Staff began writing the housing action plan in late 2016. This process was prompted by the completion of a general housing condition survey done in 2015, where an intern performed window surveys of residential properties and ranked each structure on a scale of one to five (one being in excellent condition and five in deteriorated condition). The plan was intentionally delayed due to the Comprehensive Plan update, which includes a chapter on housing. Staff wanted to make sure that the Housing Plan did not conflict with the goals outlined in the Comp Plan. Now that the Comp Plan draft has been completed, Staff felt it was time to review the draft with Council.

The Housing Plan is intended to highlight how housing can play an important role in shaping a community. Throughout the plan there are detailed items such as history, goals, and community character, how the housing inventory and its supporting population is expected to change, what the City is doing to maintain its current housing stock, current and future development trends, and funding programs and opportunities available to both the City and its residents.

Assistant Community Development Director Boike said the process on the Housing Plan has been delayed to be sure it aligns with the comp plan, which will come to the Council in June. Boike introduced Community Development Coordinator Sonnek.

Mayor Napier welcomed Sonnek to the meeting and thanked her for her work in regards to what we are trying to accomplish in West St. Paul.

Sonnek said that things may be changing in the market and we want to be ready for whatever may come our way. In order to attract and retain residents, Sonnek said we should expect to see increased diversity in housing stock options (duplex, multi-family, mixed use, etc.). She added that 44 percent of houses were built before 1960 and that residents have a huge sense of pride in their properties, which may lead to

retro-fitting their existing homes. Multi-family (10+ units) makes up 39 percent of the housing stock and one third of those are nearly 50 years old.

Existing program for housing address property maintenance, rehabilitation, and redevelopment issues through the following:

Quality Housing Program

- Code Enforcement
- Rental Licensing
- Property Recognition Programs
- Home Improvement Loans and Property Fix-Up
- Housing Replacement Program

The Dakota County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) typically awards \$90,000 a year. This allows five to seven homes to make necessary home improvements such as windows, roof, siding, furnace, and kitchen and bath remodels. Since 2009, the CDBG has helped remodel or improve 65 homes in West St. Paul and has put over \$700,000 back into our housing community.

Since 2010, our City has had 44 new homes built totaling over \$15 million in value and has issued over 5,000 residential alteration permits.

Housing Plan Needs and Goals

- The housing stock in West St. Paul is aging, and residents will have increasing maintenance and upkeep requirements in the coming decades.
- The existing housing stock of West St. Paul must be maintained or improved, thus improving the quality of existing neighborhoods while maintaining its affordability.
- The City supports actions that make it possible for West St. Paul residents to age in place.
- West St. Paul, along with many urban communities, is at risk of losing its naturally occurring affordable housing to redevelopment.
- More than one in four West St. Paul households are cost-burdened, and nearly 40 percent of these households are at or below 50% AMI.
- Strategic development of housing can offer access to services and amenities to provide populations without a personal vehicle a method of transportation.
- Monitoring and updating City ordinances can help to produce flexibility and diversity in housing opportunities.

Housing Plan Recommendations

Housing Growth:

- Encourage the development of housing that offers access to services and amenities to provide populations without a personal vehicle a method of transportation,
- Investigate rehabilitation funding options for aging apartment complexes, and
- Rental housing at all income levels is needed to provide for the increased rental demand.

Affordable Housing:

- Continue to work with the Dakota County Community Development Agency to support new and existing programs available to West St. Paul residents,
- Consider housing alternatives to best accommodate all life stages and all incomes, and
- Work with lenders and social service agencies to provide financial literacy and other programs to encourage homeownership within West St. Paul.

Code Enforcement and Rental Licensing:

- Continue to monitor property maintenance practices and inform owners of compliance issues and methods to correct any forms of non-compliance,
- Closely monitor rental properties, owners, and tenants through consistent enforcement of license requirements and training requirements,
- Encourage open communication between City Staff and rental owners and tenants, and
- Consider hiring additional code enforcement staff to help management of increased complaint volume.

Redevelopment and Reinvestment:

- Encourage community reinvestment, housing rehabilitation, and retrofitting to accommodate both new and existing residents,
- Initiate the improvement and preservation of the existing housing stock in addition to considering redevelopment opportunities in the future,
- Regularly update the Housing Inventory to track and reassess the conditions of the housing stock followed by targeted programs for areas where problems are identified,
- Encourage green building practices, energy efficiency, and sustainability throughout the City of West St. Paul
- Encourage diversity and a variety of housing options within neighborhoods to avoid high concentrations of low and modest income housing in any portion of the city.
- Identify multi-family properties in need of updating and will work with the owners of the property to improve site and building conditions,

- Partner with agencies and community groups to institute quality of life improvements within distressed housing sites and encourage reinvestment in older properties to maintain character, functionality, and value, and
- Create and publish a remodeling booklet or handbook to encourage property re-investments.

Life Cycle Housing:

- Continue to examine additional redevelopment and rehabilitation programs to increase funding levels and improve upon existing programs,
- Educate all residents of the First Time Home Owner funding opportunities, and
- Continue to plan for an aging population by encouraging development that is accessible to all ages.

Welcoming Community:

- Create outreach and educational materials for new homeowners and residents of West St. Paul,
- Consider hosting a new resident event to introduce new residents to council, commissioners, local business owners, and other community stake holders,
- Explore the feasibility of hosting an annual housing fair to educate potential homebuyers and to show case properties that are currently for sale, and
- Promote the organization of neighborhood groups to organize residents, identify and address potential issues, and advocate for neighborhood preservation and enhancement.

Mayor Napier commented that a lot of work went into this plan and we need to keep it very active because it is a great document. He said it fits into the Council's Strategic Plan. Mayor Napier also said that people in our community want to reinvest in their properties so we need to market this as best we can.

Mayor Napier thanked Community Development Coordinator Sonnek for all her work on this project.

Councilmember Fernandez asked how the data is entered into the database once it's collected and whether the City has the capability at this time to overlap it into a map. Sonnek said the data was divided by sections and wards and will eventually be transferred into a map. She said the City has this capability through a contract with Dakota County.

Councilmember Fernandez asked how much Staff time it would take to do the survey. Sonnek said she thought one intern did it over the summer. Boike added that the intern was unpaid.

Councilmember Fernandez asked if the survey is necessary about every five years. Sonnek said yes.

Councilmember Fernandez said that he thinks it is crucial that we offer more of these programs. He added that he would like to see something like this on the website for public consumption, with a tab created specifically for housing. Schroeder said that either Boike or Sonnek recently asked GIS for a database on structure values. It is a tax value as opposed to actual value but it is close. Schroeder said we have a database plus a map that shows where the structure values are, which will give us a start as to where there might be some deferred maintenance.

Councilmember Pace said that he thinks it is important to get our housing stock up. Not everyone can afford what he or she would like to do but there appears to be hundreds of programs available. He asked how Staff envisions trying to address property owners who refuse to invest in their properties. Sonnek said there is the obvious tool of code enforcement if they are in direct violation. In addition, if all of the property owners around them are reinvesting in their properties, peer pressure can have a great effect.

Councilmember Pace asked if there is a way suggest politely to owners what programs are available when code enforcement has to write a ticket. Sonnek said that code enforcement letters were recently edited with a line at the bottom specifically for veterans if they need help maintaining their property. She added that a supplement could also be added to direct them to the City's website or to Staff for further direction and information.

In the document provided by Community Development, Councilmember Justen mentioned several items that may need to be editing:

- Page 32 - Partner Programs Offered to Residents of West St. Paul by Dakota County CDA in 2015 (chart):
 - In reference to the first line, "West St. Paul Rental Housing and Licensing," Councilmember Justen asked if we have that many rental properties.
 - Sonnek said they are listed by unit and that they do have at least two larger complexes with 100+ units.
 - Councilmember Justen said it is the only one not listed under program description so, right now in the document, he said he wonders if it is the total of residents that rent apartments. He requested that she clarify this.
- Page 33 - Family Scattered Site Program
 - Councilmember Justen said it reads, "Family must fall within a certain income category as seen below," but that the chart is not included.
 - Sonnek said she would add the chart.
- Page 36 – Mixed Use Housing
 - Councilmember Justen said the commentary reads that we are no longer the primary location for retail in Dakota County and that we no longer have the draw we once did. He said he would prefer not to see language in the housing plan that defeats the purpose.

- Councilmember Justen asked if it takes into account the Robert Street reconstruction. He would like to see that changed. Although Mayor Napier said it was fair back then, he and Councilmember Justen agreed that we have seen a lot of changes since that time.
- Councilmember Justen said there has been a lot of focus on senior housing. He said he would like to see if we could get more information, such as what the current senior housing is. He said the Westwood Sanctuary and DARTS project is 406. If we are building off of this, he said there are a couple of different things here.
- Councilmember Justen said that there are a lot of seniors age 65 and over who do not use senior housing. With our current stock and the plans going through right now, he said we are at 2,000 or 2,500 and he does not want to get to 3,000 or 4,000 or more. He said there are people who want to stay in their homes or want to leave voluntarily, which would be useful overall numbers. Councilmember Justen said if we could get where we are at now, and as we move forward with other senior housing projects, we may see us getting to a saturation point. He added that he does not want to see us cross that line.
- Sonnek asked if Councilmember Justen is referring to specific units. Councilmember Justen said he thinks so but it is also people-to-people. He said it is also the 4,000 people that could be married, which would essentially be 2,000. He said his concern is, although there is great demand right now, if it goes in the other direction, we may have a lot of housing that cannot be retrofitted or converted back from senior housing to more traditional multi-family housing.
- Sonnek asked if Councilmember Justen is looking for numbers in general or specific to this plan. Councilmember Justen said in general would be good for us to have as we move forward and then if we do get numbers that seem to move that line a little closer, we may want to de-emphasize. He said one of the largest takeaways in this is senior housing. Sonnek said she would work on it.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne asked if home scores would be available to property owners and if that information will be public data. She said she can see a problem if it is available to the public. Sonnek said this is a fair question.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne asked if property owners could request their score. Sonnek said there was a caveat in the previous survey that this is only one person's point of view and it is very subjective.

Councilmember Eng-Sarne said a note in the mail with it might be motivating for some to work at improving their score. She said she would like to see which ordinances would need updating. Sonnek said she does not have any right now that are potential problems and that she was just being mindful of what we have and to make sure it lines up with the market.

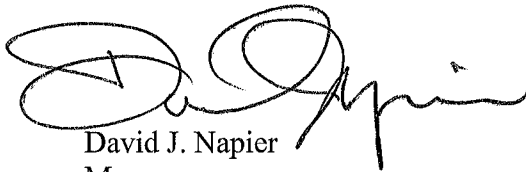
Councilmember Fernandez asked if Staff keeps a good running meter of the funds available. He said these things dry up quickly. In the future, he said he would like Staff to put links online for property owners to get to this information. He said it would be nice to have this information and keep track so we are not blindly sending property owners to links and information that is no longer available.

Hartshorn said no other funding for housing comes out of the Community Development Agency (CDA) except for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds. He added that West St. Paul is one of the few communities, along with South St. Paul, that uses all of our CDBG funds for housing.

5. Adjourn

Motion was made by Councilmember Vitelli and seconded by Councilmember Justen to adjourn the meeting at 6:23 p.m.

All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'David J. Napier', written over a printed name and title.

David J. Napier
Mayor
City of West St. Paul