

**City of West St. Paul  
Open Council Work Session  
May 23, 2016**

**1. Roll Call**

Mayor David Meisinger called the work session to order at 5:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor David Meisinger and Councilmembers Armon, Halverson, Bellows, Iago, Napier and Vitelli.

Others: City Manager Matt Fulton, Assistant City Manager and HR Director Sherrie Le, Community Development Director Jim Hartshorn, Police Chief Manila Shaver, Fire Chief Mike Pott, Finance Director Joan Carlson, Public Works and Park Director Ross Beckwith, Attorney Korine Land, City Planner Ben Boike and City Clerk Chantal Doriott.

**2. Review and Approve the OCWS Agenda**

Clpn. Bellows asked to add the following two topics if there is time: Park signage and Written Communication. Also the closed session will be removed as the consultant is not present.

**3. Review the Regular Meeting Agenda**

Council approved the regular meeting consent agenda with the following changes and additions:

- 9.A. Proclamation
- 12.H. to 12.E
- 12.A. to 9.B.

**4. Agenda Item(s)**

**4.A. Closed Session to Consider Two Robert Street Property Easement Acquisitions**

The meeting was not closed. This item was moved to June 13, 2016.

**4.B. Comprehensive Plan Update Process**

Assistant Community Development Director and Planner Ben Boike explained that staff is in the process of developing an RFP to solicit proposals from consulting firms to assist with the development of the required 2018 Comprehensive Plan Update. Met Council mandates that all cities in the metro area complete a Comp Plan update every 10 years. In doing so, the City is required to amend the current plan to adhere to the policies set forth by Met Council. The estimated cost to complete the update is \$80,000 which includes the coordination of meetings with the Planning Commission, City Council and the public. The process should take two years to complete.

Comments:

- Public involved includes open houses and something we can do ourselves instead of having a consultant. The Planning Commission is a good body to use for these types of information gathering means.
- Neighborhood meetings, website, social media, etc. are good means to gather public input.
- Have we joint ventured with another city to do this and could it be a consideration? Director Boike said this has not been done in the past but it could be explored. Manager Fulton explained there is a lot of collaboration done by Met Council as our plan has to be integrated with the surrounding communities. We are responsible for putting together our plan and the Met Council is responsible for the rest. Manager Fulton asked Council to think about what extent you want to include the public and other Commissions on this endeavor.
- Council in favor of Director Boike obtaining RFPs for the Comprehensive Plan work.

#### **4.C. Discussion of Emerald Ash Borer Mitigation Plan**

Assistant Parks and Recreation Director Dave Schletty gave an overview. As discussed previously the Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) beetle was discovered in West St Paul earlier this spring. The MN Department of Agriculture, assisted by City staff, has conducted two visual surveys of trees in the City. During the first they found three infested trees on boulevards in the north end of town. During the second investigation they did not find any more infestations, although they are sure there are more out there. Staff immediately had the three infested trees removed and properly disposed of. Staff is in the process of implementing the next steps of the EAB action plan. This will include injection treatments of healthy trees, more targeted takedowns and reforestation. Staff will be enlisting the services of a tree company to perform tree injections this year, but will explore the option of having City staff trained to do this in future years.

Staff will also be working with volunteers to complete an inventory of all the park trees this summer. Resident and former Environmental Committee member, Karen Zumach, has volunteered her time to coordinate and train other volunteers with this effort. This will save a lot of staff time.

Staff has also recently met with resident Michael Orange. Mr. Orange has developed a computer model which helps predict the cost of EAB infestation, and also puts a dollar value on the affected ash trees. Mr. Orange has volunteered his time to run the West St. Paul tree population through his model. Using only the current boulevard tree numbers, if we follow the EAB Action Plan and treat to save as many quality trees as possible, Mr. Orange's model predicts a cost of \$30,000 in 2016 and rises to \$42,000 in 2020. Mr. Orange also discussed many useful approaches to controlling the EAB infestation, which fit perfectly with our planned approach.

#### **Comments:**

- This is about a 10 to 15 year project. We may be able to stop and treat every three to five years eventually.
- What are our neighbors doing? Director Schletty said St. Paul is cutting down the ash trees. Could we go into St. Paul a block or two to protect our trees? Possibly

- Mr. Orange said the City of St. Paul will eventually replace all of their ash trees. They have discovered 4 times as many infestations this year as last year. They will treat at the peak and then plant new trees later.
- When a tree is treated and a beetle eats a treated leaf – it dies. You can spread out your tree treatment. He thinks it would be worthwhile to get with St. Paul foresters and coordinate our wise course.
- Staff will contact St. Paul to see if we can coordinate treatment.
- What is going on in South St. Paul? They have no place now.
- There is no sense in treating park tree areas. Let nature take over at this point. Same goes with Kaposia Park.
- Mr. Orange said it will be wise to work with the abutting municipalities and coordinate treatments. Unfortunately, legislature is not working with this issue. Staff and Council are glad to be working with Mr. Orange and expressed their appreciation.

#### **4.D. Review Art Park Development Plan & Budget**

Assistant Park and Recreation Director Dave Schletty gave an overview. In 2012 US Bank donated the vacant house and lot at Oakdale and Butler to the City with the stipulation that it could not be sold and developed. The lot was turned over to the Parks department to maintain as park land. The Parks & Recreation Advisory Committee has developed a plan to create an “Art Park” in this space to display public art in West St Paul. The Council approved a \$20,000 budget for this project in 2016. The concept for the park would include a sidewalk and patio within the lot. Along this sidewalk would be 5 backlit poster boxes in which publically submitted photos would be displayed. The park would also include a landscaped garden with possible park signage and water feature, as well as other added trees and plants. Another idea is to have the sidewalk lit with either embedded fiber optics or another material yet to be determined. The summary of the itemized budget is listed below. Since the total project is around \$50k and only \$20k has been budgeted for 2016, the priority items for 2016 have been noted below and should be within the 2016 budget amount. Additional funds will have to be identified and budgeted by Council to complete the remaining items in 2017 or sooner.

The itemized budget is listed below:

- Lot Survey \$954.00 \* Completed
- Electric Service \$5000.00 \* 2017
- Site Prep \$9312.00 \* 2016
- Concrete Walk/Patio \$7200.00 \* 2016
- Fiber Optic Sidewalk \$2000.00-\$5000.00 \* 2016
- Landscaping \$1000.00 \* 2016
- Light/Photo Boxes \$4000.00 \* 2017
- Park Sign \$3000.00 \* 2017
- Future Water Feature \$8000.00 \* 2017
- Water Service \$8575.00 \* 2017

Total cost is \$49,041.00 to \$52,041.00.

Comments:

- This piece of land can't be used for anything other than a park. It seemed to be a good place to highlight art because it's not large enough for a park. Clpn. Halverson hopes that this idea expands to other parks and is the start for something bigger and better.
- Clpn. Halverson said the water item can be "off the table".
- Discussion regarding tree removal and the sidewalk.
- Clpn. Armon thinks it will impact the community and art should be seen from your car, at this intersection. He thought we were around \$25,000 and now it's \$50,000. Mayor Meisinger said we are budgeting \$20,000 for this year. Director Schletty said some of the cost increases were due to a new review of what needs to be done at this park. There is also contingency built into the bid estimate and this estimate is generous. Clpns. Armon and Bellows thought \$50,000 was high but are in favor of \$20,000. This is more feasible. Clpn. Halverson was shocked about the \$50,000 and said that was not the initial intent as we don't need a water feature or bright lights. This is a starting point for something to expand on in the future. It's a grassroots endeavor.
- Clpn. Napier is in favor of pursuing this project at a \$20,000 budget. As one cost saving measure Clpn. Napier would suggest looking at solar lights. Dodge Nature Center recently installed them on entrance signs. The quality is excellent and the cost has really come down on solar lights.
- Clpn. Iago said she spoke with the high school and others about the pictures and art work. We did not go out to ask for donations and later budgeted. Clpn. Iago said he thought the school was to be a bigger part of this. The student group will participate with their art. What we want to do and what we can afford to do are two different things.
- Mayor Meisinger said he would like to see what the new lighting might be. Director Beckwith said this is a small project and the costs will be high. Staff will do as much as possible to keep costs lower. Mayor asked for numbers to be reviewed and this can be reviewed in a couple of weeks.
- Clpn. Vitelli asked if there would be a case or what? Clpn. Halverson said we imagined that there would be photos on a post - up high enough with lighting. Update the electrical numbers for this year. Clpn. Armon asked to see if there was a small job we can piggy back on with the school district.

#### **4. E. Park Signs (ADDITION)**

Clpn. Bellows understands staff is getting estimates for the park signs. Director Schletty said \$3,000 to \$10,000 for each sign and that was every park. Check with the Finance Director as this is not budgeted in the CIP for this year. He is concerned about the sign and would not be in favor of spending a significant amount of money. Nothing has come to the Council to this point. Manager Fulton said we have been looking at this at a staff level. Clpn. Bellows said this was brought up at a Parks and Rec meeting. Director Schletty said we started this on a staff level last year and we are looking to get a final design and budget for the future. Clpn. Napier has not heard about this issue. He asked about the Dome sign that was put off for many years. There is no sign that promotes activities and this should be revisited. Clpn. Napier said there is still money in the budget for this sign; Director Carlson doesn't think so. Clpn. Halverson said the proposed sign was very expensive; Clpn. Armon thought \$75,000. Director Carlson will check to see if there is money budgeted and this will be discussed at a future meeting. Maybe a new sign

design can be considered. Clpn. Bellows wished there was more in the Park and Rec meeting minutes about this issue. Manager Fulton will give an update in his Friday update.

#### **4. F. Written Communication (ADDITION)**

Clpn. Bellows wants to make sure there is no appearance of impropriety in regards to communication and the upcoming election. He asked the City Manager to make communication in writing and/or by email so it can be tracked. This is a way to avoid any confusion. Manager Fulton said he understands his responsibilities. Clpn. Bellows said it's easier to say things that you can track. Manager Fulton said he understands Clpn. Bellows point of view. Clpn. Bellows is more concerned about Instagram and Facebook and Twitter. Manager Fulton said to everyone - he understands his role and he appreciates the comments. Anyone wishing to receive city news should sign up for notifications on the city website.

#### **5. Adjourn**

The work session adjourned at 5:50 p.m.



David Meisinger  
Mayor  
City of West St. Paul