



Council Worksession
January 11, 2022
5:00 pm

Present: Mayor Kari Niedfeldt-Thomas
Councilmember Abdullahi Abdulle
Councilmember Graeme Allen
Councilmember Pam Axberg
Councilmember Emily Dunsworth

Absent:

Staff in Attendance: Devin Massopust, Craig Schlichting, Jennifer Fink

Guests in Attendance: Jody McDevitt, Energy Management Solutions (EMS)

Discuss Proposed Electric Vehicle Charging Station Plan

Massopust stated the City was considering having electric vehicle charging stations in New Brighton. He reported this topic was considered by PREC last week. He explained the City has had a focus on sustainability initiatives and maintains a Step 5 in the Minnesota Green Steps City program. He reported in the last year the Council expressed interest in wanting to further its sustainability initiatives and the proposed electric vehicle (EV) program was in alignment with this effort.

Schlichting explained the City was slated to be part of a pilot program with Xcel Energy to have electricity installed at City Hall for EV stations. He estimated the cost for this installation would be \$48,000 to \$58,000 and would be covered by Xcel Energy. He reported staff then looked into the cost for fast charging EV stations which was almost \$85,000 per station. He indicated this cost led him to consider other options for the City. He then introduced Jody McDevitt from Energy Management Solutions (EMS) to the City Council.

Jody McDevitt, Energy Management Solutions (EMS) representative, thanked the City Council for their time and described the work EMS was doing throughout the country to identify, prioritize and implement strategies that will conserve energy, and lower utility bills. He commented on the City's sustainability efforts which included an electric vehicle charging station program. He estimated the sale of electric vehicles would overcome the sale of gas vehicles in 2038. He commented on how this shift would affect property owners and municipalities in order to provide an infrastructure with enough charging stations. He reported Carbon Solutions Group (CSG) was offering a no cost, no risk electric vehicle charging program that would provide charging stations to the City of New Brighton with revenue streams. It was noted the charging stations could be co-branded and would provide an attractive amenity for the community. He reviewed the development timeline and noted the term for the proposed EV stations would be 10 years. He described how Carbon Solutions would be working to partner with municipalities to get charging station infrastructure into communities. He discussed how having an EV fleet and EV stations would assist in lowering greenhouse gas emissions. He commented on the communities Carbon Solutions Group was already working with in the metro area.

Schlichting reviewed a map of the City of New Brighton noting the locations that were proposed to have electric vehicle charging stations. He explained staff would be walking each park and visiting each City facility in order to see how many parking stalls could be designated for EV charging stations. He then discussed the five electric vehicles the City would be receiving as part of this agreement.

Councilmember Abdulle asked if the proposed parking spaces were all on City owned property. Schlichting reported this was the case. He indicated staff was not proposing to locate any EV stations on City streets.

Councilmember Allen questioned what the term would be for the EV charging stations. Mr. McDevitt reported the term of the agreement would be 10 years with two five-year renewal options that were mutually agreed upon. He believed that 10 years would go really fast and technology would continue to evolve over this time and CSG was willing to take on this risk.

Schlichting explained the City would have the option to purchase the electric fleet vehicles after five years at a price of \$7,500 per vehicle. Mr. McDevitt discussed the cost to maintain electric vehicles versus the cost of maintaining a gas powered vehicle.

Councilmember Allen indicated the cost for maintaining the electric vehicles would be in replacing the batteries. Mr. McDevitt commented Chevy Volt's were getting 300,000+ miles on their models and some models were hoping to have their vehicles last for 1,000,000 miles.

Councilmember Abdulle stated he supported the proposed contract. He understood EV cars were the future for the community. He supported the City taking this first initial step and the City encouraging residents to purchase electric vehicles. However, he understood this may not be accessible to all residents.

Councilmember Allen asked EV stations could be added in the future. Mr. McDevitt stated the overall goal for CSG would be to reduce the kilowatt hour cost. He noted they would be interested in installing two stations at locations now versus having to add a single EV station in the future.

Councilmember Allen indicated Minnesota has the largest temperature variations in the United States and asked how electric vehicles were doing in the extreme cold. Mr. McDevitt reported EV's have been around for approximately 10 years and the batteries were being tested in extreme heat and cold. He stated if a charging station were to fail in the extreme cold this would be the responsibility of CSG.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas commented she was fully supportive of this plan and thanked staff for exploring this option. She believed this was the right direction for the City and she appreciated the fact New Brighton would be a leader if this initiative were pursued. She questioned how CSG would manage EV stations that were underutilized. Mr. McDevitt stated CSG wants to be a low cost provider and if charging stations were not being used, or the price was too high, CSG would have to make an adjustment in order to receive a return on their investment. He explained CSG had a vested interest in providing the latest and greatest technology to ensure their charging stations were being utilized.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas questioned what installation costs the City would have to incur. Schlichting reported some of the locations that have been identified were slated for improvements in the next five years and the City would work with CSG to ensure that EV stations were not installed and then had to be moved or replaced. He stated Hansen Park may need to wait to have EV stations installed, due to the enhancements that are planned.

Councilmember Abdulle asked if CSG had relationships with apartment complexes or other types of housing providers. Mr. McDevitt explained he would welcome an invitation to an apartment owner and stated this would be a partnership that CSG would welcome.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas commented there was a huge opportunity to look at the multi-family housing in New Brighton and see if EV stations would be a good fit. She thanked Mr. McDevitt for his presentation this evening.

Discuss Street Art Initiative

Schlichting reported the City of New Brighton has an opportunity to have street art and storm drain art completed this summer. He explained this project would be in coordination with the Evangelical Lutheran Church in America (ELCA) who would be holding a gathering for 15,000 youth. He noted the participants would be in the City and surrounding areas on July 25 through July 27. Staff was proposing to have these students work three to four hours each morning in groups of 20 to 50 to provide street art in New Brighton. He indicated this art would assist with creating a sense of place for the intersections or parks that were chosen. He stated this information was presented to PREC and EDC last week and both groups supports this initiative. It was recommended staff work with volunteers, the DEI coordinator, schools, local artists and that a joint meeting be held between the EDC and PREC.

Councilmember Abdulle stated he believed this was a great idea, especially the asphalt art because it would make the community unique. He supported the City asking local artists and volunteers to give back to the community. He suggested staff seek grant opportunities to assist with this initiative. He recommended high traffic areas be selected for this type of art.

Councilmember Axberg encouraged staff to consider how to foster this art project in order to create a broader goal for the City that creates a sense of place for the community. She indicated she would like to see more done than just tagging storm sewers, noting the girl scouts or boy scouts could be approached to take on this task.

Councilmember Allen stated he supported the City pursuing street art this summer and explained he looked forward to seeing what would come from this initiative.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas agreed this was a great idea and would be a wonderful way to bring the community together. She encouraged staff to find ways to include all members from the community in this project. She recommended the City be mindful to include local residents and students in this process. She suggested artists that are based in the City be contacted to participate in this project. She recommended a long-term maintenance plan also be considered by staff.

Schlichting thanked the Council for their input and comments.

Massopust reported the Council was meeting remotely at this time and asked if the Council wanted to continue in this capacity.

Councilmember Allen stated with the recent uptick in COVID cases, he supported the Council meeting remotely in order to limit exposure for the Councilmembers. He commented the responsible thing to do would be to allow the Commissions to also meet remotely.

Councilmember Abdulle agreed stating he was opting to stay home as much as possible in order to limit his exposure at this time because he has small children that could not be vaccinated. He supported the City Council and Commissions meeting remotely because the number of COVID cases were extremely high at this time.

Councilmember Axberg stated she was required to report to work every day, but noted she could flex her schedule in order to accommodate hybrid meetings. She stated the surge was expected to last another four weeks.

Councilmember Dunsworth explained she supported the Council and Commissions being 100% remote given the fact the City had the technology in place to allow this to occur. She supported the City reducing or mitigating the risks of exposure to COVID.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas supported the Council and Commissions being remote as well. Massopust stated he would put this in place and the topic would be revisited mid-February.

Worksession adjourned at 6:29 pm

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink, reading "Terri Spangrud". The signature is written in a cursive, flowing style.

Terri Spangrud
City Clerk