



Council Worksession
December 6, 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, Tony Paetznick, Gina Foschi, Jen Lehmann, Jennifer Fink, Craig Schlichting

Guests in Attendance: Representative Kelly Moulder, Representative Sandra Feist, Senator Mary Kunesh, Senator John Marty

Legislative Priorities Discussion with State Legislators

Massopust introduced himself to the group and asked that all staff members, councilmembers and representatives in attendance introduce themselves.

Massopust reviewed the City's priorities for 2023, noting local control was very important to the City Council. He explained the City was extremely proud of the license bureau but noted State policies were making this function more difficult. He requested the State work to make the license bureau operations more efficient. He noted the City also supported a base minimum for LGA and open meeting law flexibility. He reported the City was working to make the City a silent zone given the number of complaints the City received regarding train horns, along with additional funding for transportation and transit.

Councilmember Abdulle reported the City was interesting in BRT and other alternate modes of transportation for the region. He noted the closest park and ride was in Roseville.

Councilmember Allen hoped there would be a renewed look at mass transit for this area especially given the fact Arden Hills would be developing a large portion of land in the near future.

Representative Moulder stated she understood there was a big gap in mass transit in the north metro and explained she would be happy to work with the City Council to address this matter.

Massopust explained affordable housing was a priority to the City as well as the need for the City having local control over this matter.

Senator Kunesh asked if the City of New Brighton had large corporations buying up homes and turning them into rentals.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas stated this has not been a concern in New Brighton. She commented further on the City's efforts to inspect single-family residential rentals in the community in order to protect tenants.

Councilmember Abdulle discussed the naturally occurring affordable housing in the community and noted there was a need for three bedroom units that are at 50% AMI or less.

Councilmember Allen commented on the robust economic assistance and affordable housing programs that were in place in Bloomington and Minneapolis. He stated New Brighton was not large enough to have these same types of programs in place.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas reported the City has established a housing fund that would be available to help residents in the future. She explained New Brighton does not have an HRA.

Senator Kunesh stated there was a need for cities to protect affordable housing that were already in the place.

Massopust discussed how housing credits assisted the City with protecting current affordable housing units.

Councilmember Dunsworth reported the developers were driving the affordability levels for the units that have been recently developed.

Further discussion ensued regarding the recent housing developments that were constructed in New Brighton.

Massopust noted the City's forest was a priority and noted it would be a real cost to the City to address emerald ash borer. He asked that some program be set up at a State level to provide grants to assist with addressing EAB. He explained sustainability and the environment was a priority to the City. He noted the Council was currently working on a climate action plan. He reported the City Council supported stronger background checks being conducted on individuals with mental health histories for the safety of the public. In addition, the Council supported the State legislature recognizing PTSD as a treatable disease.

Paetznick discussed how difficult it was to train and retain officers at this time. He explained agencies needed assistance with additional mental health and social services.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas believed it was important for officers to have proper training and resources, especially for the officers that need help. She explained this would assist with avoiding other types of problems in the future.

Massopust requested the State revisit the THC matter and that municipalities be involved in the future conversations in order to better understand how they will be impacted by this product. He encouraged the State to consider addressing the theft of catalytic convertors.

Senator Marty stated he would be proposing legislation in 2023 to address this concern.

Jen Lehmann provided the representatives with a presentation on the activities occurring within the New Brighton administrative offices and discussed the projects she was currently overseeing.

Schlichting reviewed the initiatives he would be addressing in 2023, which included a zoning code update and housing study, climate action plan, single family home rental licensing as well as the reconstruction of Old Highway 8.

Foschi discussed her finance functions and discussed the projects she would be completing in 2023. These projects included continued management and oversight of the City's internal financing, evaluating financing options for Phase 2 of the Parks Comprehensive Plan, addressing REAL ID and continued enhancement of the license bureau and passport operations.

Fink reported on the items she would be addressing in 2023 noting the City has had an increased use of parks and outside spaces. She explained she would be completing capital projects over the next two years as part of the Parks Comprehensive Plan, working to retain employees, the increased need and opportunity to provide inclusive services and overall management of the City's urban forestry. She commented further on the plans for a splash pad and dog park.

Paetznick commented on the Public Safety services provided to New Brighton residents. He stated police officer recruitment and retention continues to be a concern given the competitive hiring environment. He reported employee safety, health and wellness remains a concern, as well as community engagement and crime reduction.

Representative Moulder thanked the City Council and staff for hosting this meeting and for all of the information that was presented from staff.

Worksession adjourned at 6:17 pm

Respectfully submitted,

Terri Spangrud
City Clerk