



Council Worksession
March 7, 2023
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

Guests in Attendance: Jacqui Sauter, Ellen Weber, Liza Allen, Beck Slabiak, Cathy Forbes, Leah Kuipers, Kristin Hicks, Carlos Herrera, Lynn Hilsen, and Lloyd Hilsen

Commission Applicant Interviews

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas welcomed Jacqui Sauter.

Councilmember Axberg asked Ms. Sauter to provide the Council with a brief history on how her personal and professional experiences will help her be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Ms. Sauter stated she lives in New Brighton and loves New Brighton. She noted she was very active in her neighborhood and she hosts a National Night Out party each year. She explained as a professional she was a real estate agent for Keller Williams. She indicated she serves on the Twin Cities North Chamber of Commerce as the Chair of the Board.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Ms. Sauter to continue serving on a City Commission.

Ms. Sauter stated she feels like she just started and she wants to continue her serving. She explained she has enjoyed completing business visits and she would like to continue making those personal connections.

Councilmember Dunsworth stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Ms. Sauter what she would do if she disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Ms. Sauter explained she would bring it to the commission and the staff liaison. She noted she would also have an open conversation with the Mayor.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Ms. Sauter speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Ms. Sauter stated one of the opportunities facing the City was to build on what New Brighton does well, such as Stockyard Days and the ice castles. She believed New Brighton was doing a lot of things well and noted she

was willing to help the City in any way possible.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Ms. Sauter for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Ellen Weber.

Councilmember Axberg asked Ms. Weber to provide the Council with a brief history on how her personal and professional experiences will help her be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Ms. Weber stated she has served on a commission before. She noted this gave her some experience. She explained professionally she has worked with youth, has been a case manager, has been a coach, worked with families involved in child protection. She indicated she now works at Augsburg College as the operations program assistant. This position focuses on communication and telling stories. She stated personally, she was attending an antiracism whiteness class with her mom, where she was learning about generational trauma. She believed she has learned how to be a better communicator from this class.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Ms. Weber to want to continue serving on a City Commission.

Ms. Weber commented equity matters and now that she was a homeowner in the community, she wanted to make a difference. She wanted to make sure she felt like she belonged, along with her neighbors around her. She wanted to learn more about how the City works and to make it more accessible to others.

Councilmember Dunsworth stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Ms. Weber what she would do if she disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Ms. Weber stated she would ask questions and reach out if she had an issue and would want to learn more about why the policy was in place.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Ms. Weber speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Ms. Weber explained as the population and demographics change, she wanted to see the City addressing what it means to belong and how are things accessible. She appreciated the fact the City was willing to apply for grants in order to further advance the City, like with the banners, which would assist in creating a sense of belonging. She stated a challenge was to combat systems of oppression that continue to marginalize folks.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Ms. Weber for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Liza Allen.

Councilmember Allen excused himself from this interview.

Councilmember Axberg asked Ms. Allen to provide the Council with a brief history on how her personal and professional experiences will help her be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Ms. Allen stated she does not have any experience with public safety but being a former commissioner on the Planning Commission she learned a lot about processes. She believed this would help her. She stated she wanted to learn more about the City through a new position.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas asked what motivated Ms. Allen to serve on a City Commission.

Ms. Allen explained when she first applied, she wanted to serve on the Public Safety Commission, but was appointed to the Planning Commission. She reported the Planning Commission was a lot to learn and process, which she greatly enjoyed. She indicated she would now like to gain more experience by serving on a different committee.

Councilmember Dunsworth stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Ms. Allen what she would do if she disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Ms. Allen commented she would bring this to her fellow commissioners first and would have a discussion, where she would try to reach a consensus with the members.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Ms. Allen speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Ms. Allen stated the City has an awesome public safety department. She indicated she has never had an issue with public safety and they have great responses. She explained she was not certain of what challenges the public safety department was facing, but she looked forward to learning more about this organization.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Ms. Allen for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Becky Slabiak.

Councilmember Allen returned to the meeting.

Councilmember Axberg asked Ms. Slabiak to provide the Council with a brief history on how her personal and professional experiences will help her be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Ms. Slabiak stated she was a mother of four with kids ranging in age from 11 to 2. She noted she frequented the City's parks a lot. She indicated prior to having kids she was an executive at Target, helping team members with conflict and with guest services.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Ms. Slabiak to serve on a City Commission.

Ms. Slabiak stated her neighbor Brian Krohn recently began serving on the EDC and he encouraged her to apply for PREC. She noted she was also interested in public safety, especially because she has little kids. She noted she lives by a stop sign that people pass through. She noted she was a little flustered because she had not done an interview in over 11 years.

Councilmember Dunsworth stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Ms. Slabiak what she would do if she disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Ms. Slabiak stated she would talk with her peers and see what their opinions were and would figure out who she could address the issue with, if she still had concerns.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Ms. Slabiak speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Ms. Slabiak stated she loves her neighborhood and her community, but she believed there was a lack of community. She believed the City could advertise events and activities more. She supported the City making their registration process easier for residents. She suggested the City keep finding more and more ways to bring people together.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Ms. Slabiak for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Cathy Forbes.

Councilmember Axberg asked Ms. Forbes to provide the Council with a brief history on how her personal and professional experiences will help her be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Ms. Forbes stated her professional background was that she worked as a dietician in the UK. She noted she had to communicate complex information in a way that is easy to understand. She would hope to bring this into her position. Having worked in health services, she learned the value of working as a team and working with other people, also involving stakeholders. She noted she led a successful change project where she had to receive stakeholder buy in. She commented on how important it was to measure progress and change. She stated after moving to the US she took on a new role and learned about Medicare. She explained she was able to learn something new, was able to listen to people's thoughts. She commented as a parent, she saw how important it was to improve what was out there and to safeguard what was already working well for the next generation. She reported as an immigrant there was an experience of being different, having a different background and culture.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Ms. Forbes to serve on a City Commission.

Ms. Forbes stated she moved to New Brighton in November and she believed serving on a commission would be a great opportunity to give back to the community. She indicated she previously lived in New Jersey where she served on the historical society helping with their social media promotions, in order to assist in creating a sense of community. She hoped to use her experiences in a positive way in New Brighton.

Councilmember Dunsworth stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Ms. Forbes what she would do if she disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Ms. Forbes explained the first thing would be to understand the background. She would want to review minutes to understand why something came about. She would want to speak to the other commissioners and after that, if there was still an issue, she would raise a question to an administrator or other person for further discussion.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Ms. Forbes speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Ms. Forbes commented the fact that this City was so popular was a real opportunity for New Brighton, but this also meant there was very little housing and a lot of pressure was being put on the City's services. She believed the City had to make sure it had the proper infrastructure in place to serve its residents. She understood the community was engaged, which was both good and can be a concern at time. She believed the City had to continue to find its own identity as a suburb of Minneapolis. She anticipated the City could also address generational transitions and the priorities for the different generations in the community. She believed she was a good listener and she would work to serve and improve the community.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Ms. Forbes for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Leah Kuipers.

Councilmember Axberg asked Ms. Kuipers to provide the Council with a brief history on how her personal and professional experiences will help her be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Ms. Kuipers stated she works as a family practitioner and was also a mom. She appreciated serving on the public safety commission because she understood the importance of making life and death decisions. She noted she was part of the Minnesota Medical Reserve Core before COVID and during COVID she was administering vaccines. She explained she was also working on becoming a training for mental health. She noted she was part of the first compassion clinic, which was a grant opportunity for providing wholistic care in another way.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Ms. Kuipers to want to continue serving on a City Commission.

Ms. Kuipers explained she believed people had a duty to serve. She noted there has been a lot of news about policing and she wanted to be involved with policing in New Brighton. She indicated she was reapplying because she felt comfortable in her position after building a foundation of knowledge over the past three years.

Councilmember Dunsworth stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Ms. Kuipers what she would do if she disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Ms. Kuipers commented on the number of catalytic convertor thefts that were occurring in the community and how this was becoming a criminalized crime in New Brighton. She discussed how criminalizing minor thefts has not been super effective in creating upstream change. She stated she had a discussion with Chief Paetznick regarding this matter and felt very heard. She appreciated that both parties could agree to disagree and she understood the State was considering legislation to address this matter on a broader level.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Ms. Kuipers speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Ms. Kuipers stated she hoped the City could gain an embedded social worker within the Public Safety Department. She discussed how Ramsey County was working to address how calls are dispatched by police and fire, which would bring about positive change. She noted use of force was a concern for her and she had discussed this matter with Chief Paetznick.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Ms. Kuipers for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Kristin Hicks.

Councilmember Axberg asked Ms. Hicks to provide the Council with a brief history on how her personal and professional experiences will help her be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Ms. Hicks stated she has been a resident of New Brighton since 2015. She explained she has experience with how the City has grown over the past eight years and how the City navigated through the pandemic. She noted she has two kids ages 9 and 6. She explained her kids enjoy participating in the City's parks programs. She indicated she was a huge park and rec nerd, ever since she was a kid. She reported she was a corporate chain manager for an agricultural company. She assesses impact of technological changes and communicates with

leadership on how this will impact others.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Ms. Hicks to want to continue serving on a City Commission.

Ms. Hicks stated the City didn't have a DEI Commission when she applied for PREC. She noted she has really enjoyed serving on PREC and was impacted by the great work this department was doing on behalf of the community on a daily basis.

Councilmember Dunsworth stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Ms. Hicks what she would do if she disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Ms. Hicks stated she has learned that it was important to keep an open mind. She explained she would begin by asking questions of the Commission members, along with her Council liaison. She understood it was important for residents to speak up when they have concerns, but also to keep an open mind and to do this in a respectful manner.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Ms. Hicks speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Ms. Hicks stated the City has so many opportunities at this time. She appreciated how the 2040 park plan was moving forward. She saw how the City was working to make a positive impact on the community by improving parks. She wanted to see this being done in a fiscally responsible manner. She commented on how the community was becoming more diverse and she wanted to see the needs of all of these community members being met. She indicated she appreciated the fact that sustainability was a part of PREC.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Ms. Hicks for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Carlos Hererra.

Councilmember Axberg asked Mr. Hererra to provide the Council with a brief history on how his personal and professional experiences will help him be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Mr. Hererra stated he was not a professional, but he knows a lot about life. He explained when it comes to experience, he has indicated he has learned a lot while serving on the Equity Commission. He indicated he wanted to learn more about why people can't get along.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Mr. Hererra to want to continue serving on a City Commission.

Mr. Hererra explained he wanted to continue learning.

Councilmember Dunsworth stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Mr. Hererra what he would do if he disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Mr. Hererra indicated he would have to talk to others on how to address this problem. He stated he would consider the problem further and would think of ways on how to make it work. After the problem was discussed, he would work to solve the problem.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Mr. Hererra speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Mr. Hererra stated he believed the City was doing a good job. He explained he gets along with people and talks to a lot of people in the community. He appreciated how New Brighton was changing and progressing. He commented on a conversation he had with a resident that just moved to New Brighton from Brooklyn Center. He was of the opinion New Brighton was in good shape when compared to other communities. He appreciated the traditions in place in New Brighton.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Mr. Hererra for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Lynn Hilsen.

Councilmember Dunsworth left the meeting.

Councilmember Axberg asked Ms. Hilsen to provide the Council with a brief history on how her personal and professional experiences will help her be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Ms. Hilsen explained professionally she was an accountant and she manages teams big and small. She believed both her finance background would help her partner with businesses and be able to talk with people.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Ms. Hilsen to serve on a City Commission.

Ms. Hilsen stated her family has been volunteer-centric people. She noted this has not been government volunteering, but about a year and a half ago she served as an election judge and that rolled into her wondering more about City activities.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Ms. Hilsen what she would do if she disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Ms. Hilsen indicated she would talk to the people she has met while volunteering as to why this policy was in place. She would want to have a discussion about the purpose. If she still had concerns, she would talk to the Commission about how to further discuss her concerns.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Ms. Hilsen speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Ms. Hilsen stated she doesn't have a great answer to that. She explained she was excited to be on a commission to learn more about the City's challenges and opportunities. She noted her home town was Austin, Texas and then she lived in St. Paul. She indicated she has lived in New Brighton for the past seven years and she loved living in this community. She wanted to learn more about how her skills and abilities can help the community.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Ms. Hilsen for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward. She explained the next person to be interviewed was Lloyd Hilsen.

Councilmember Axberg asked Mr. Hilsen to provide the Council with a brief history on how his personal and professional experiences will help him be an effective commissioner, if appointed.

Mr. Hilsgen stated he was an electrical engineer and has worked on capital equipment projects for the past 20 years. He noted he was involved with the Lauderdale trains in Minneapolis. He explained he worked with ultra-cranes and also worked with a company that did laser cutting.

Councilmember Allen asked what motivated Mr. Hilsgen to serve on a City Commission.

Mr. Hilsgen explained he has done a lot of volunteering over the years. He noted he and his wife have fostered dogs. In his professional life, he has worked on projects that better the community and mass transit.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas stated each Commission is tasked with making recommendations to the City Council that comply with policies, rules or ordinances already adopted by the City Council. She asked Mr. Hilsgen what he would do if he disagreed with a policy or ordinance already in place.

Mr. Hilsgen indicated he would research to find out more about what went into making this decision in the first place. He understood that people made decisions for a reason and he would want to know why.

Councilmember Abdulle requested Mr. Hilsgen speak to the City's biggest opportunity and biggest challenges in New Brighton.

Mr. Hilsgen stated he wanted to serve the City in order to learn more about what the City needs help doing.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas thanked Mr. Hilsgen for coming in and applying for this position. She noted City Clerk Spangrud would be in touch with further information on how the Council was moving forward.

Discussion – Commission Appointments

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas requested the Council review the candidates that have interviewed in order to assist with placing the candidates on the City's commissions. She suggested the Council begin with the EDC. She noted four individuals applied for the EDC, one of which requested to remain on the Planning Commission and the remaining candidates were Jacquie Sauter, Paul Zisla and Lynn Hilsgen. The Council supported these three individuals being appointed to the EDC.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas discussed the three candidates who applied for the Equity Commission, who were Carlos Herrera, Ellen Weber and Jason Steffenhagen. The Council supported these three individuals being reappointed to the Equity Commission.

Councilmember Axberg explained she would support Cathy Forbes being appointed to the Equity Commission because there was one more open seat.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas suggested the Council keep this option open and move onto the appointments for the Public Safety Commission. She indicated she had recommended Leah Kuipers and Liza Allen be appointed to the Public Safety Commission, along with Kevin Dostal-Dauer.

Councilmember Allen stated he was willing to be the liaison for another commission in order to allow Liza to be appointed to the Public Safety Commission.

Councilmember Abdulle supported Cathy Forbes being appointed to the Equity Commission, if she was interested, since there was an opening. He noted he supported the Mayor's recommendations for the Public Safety Commission.

Councilmember Axberg commented she would have liked to have more households represented.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas stated there were several families in New Brighton that two members representing the City on commissions.

Councilmember Allen indicated he would abstain from making a comment on the recommendations for the Public Safety Commission.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas requested the Council consider the PREC appointments. She noted this group had four openings with five applicants. She supported the student commissioner being reappointed. The Council supported this recommendation.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas suggested the four PREC Commission positions be appointed to Pauline Alfors, Gary Bank, Kristin Hicks and Becky Slabiak. The Council supported these appointments.

Mayor Niedfeldt-Thomas reported the City still had four student commissioner positions open. She encouraged the Council to consider who may be able to serve in these positions.

The Council directed staff to have a conversation with Cathy Forbes to see if she was willing to serve on the Equity Commission. The Council stated if Cathy Forbes was not interested in serving, staff was directed to speak with Jamie to see if she would be interested in serving on the Equity Commission.

Worksession adjourned at 6:56 pm

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, reading "Terri Spangrud".

Terri Spangrud
City Clerk