

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

St. Francis Area Schools District Office 4115 Ambassador Blvd. NW

April 15, 2024

6:00 p.m.

**1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The regular City Council meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Joe Muehlbauer.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Joe Muehlbauer, Councilmembers Kevin Robinson, Crystal Kreklow, and Sarah Udvig.

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Deputy City Administrator/City Clerk Jenni Wida, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, Fire Chief Dave Schmidt, Finance Director Darcy Mulvihill, City Engineer Craig Jochum (Hakanson Associates, Inc.), Police Chief Todd Schwieger, City Planner Beth Richmond (HKGi),

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: KREKLOW APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Ayes: Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

**4. CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. City Council Minutes - April 1, 2024
- B. Police Department Policy Manual
- C. City Coalition Letter Retaining Local Zoning Authority
- D. 2024 Street Sweeping
- E. Dust Control Maintenance
- F. Stahl Construction – Pay Applications No. 7 – Labor & Material
- G. Rental License Approvals
- H. Payment of Claims

Mayor Muehlbauer shared that they will be discussing Item C before approving the Consent Agenda.

Robinson explained that the coalition letter retaining local zoning authority is a letter from the City of Ramsey that is opposing State legislation to restrict zoning abilities of cities. He said the letter's intent is to support solutions instead of mandates from the State. He noted the legislature is pushing for the removal of

zoning controls from cities. He gave an overview of the letter written by the City of Ramsey. He called attention to House file 4009, Senate file 3964, House file 4010, Senate file 3980, House file 1667, and Senate file 1370.

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: KREKLOW APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA

Ayes: Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

**5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Mayor Muehlbauer asked City Clerk Wida if they had anyone wanting to speak. She said they did not.

**6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE**

**7. PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE**

**8. OLD BUSINESS - NONE**

**9. NEW BUSINESS**

A. MOU between City of St. Francis and LELS 411 Sergeants

City Administrator Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report in regard to the MOU between the City and the LELS 411 Sergeants.

Kreklow asked why this process has taken so long, as this process started before her time on the Council. Thunstrom explained that LELS has a complicated system and this process takes more time to complete.

Robinson asked with the new rules on leave from the State if any of this is intermingled with these changes. Thunstrom explained that ESST is a State mandate that they are required to honor. She added that they have provided LELS with their personnel policy and how they transitioned all of their sick leave into an ESST policy; however, the LELS attorneys are in the process of reviewing the personnel policies to determine if they are in agreement with it. She said they are waiting for the final decision on this so there may be one more housekeeping item that will come back forward to the Council.

Robinson asked if they foresee the union also asking for these requests. Thunstrom said the unions have opportunities to expand on the minimum benefits.

MOTION BY: KREKLOW SECOND: ROBINSON TO APPROVE THE UPDATE TO THE COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT AS PROPOSED.

Ayes: Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

**B. Support for Federal Appropriations**

**Resolution 2024-13 Supporting a request for Federal appropriations**

Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report concerning the City's request for Federal appropriations. She shared their two requests for this year are the area from Cree to Ambassador and Ambassador to 241st.

Mayor Muehlbauer thanked Staff for their hard work on this.

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: KREKLOW TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-13 SUPPORTING A REQUEST FOR FEDERAL APPROPRIATIONS.

Ayes: Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

**C. Serenity at Seelye Brook Final Plat**

**Resolution 2024-14 Approving the final plat for the Serenity at Seelye Brook Subdivision**

City Planner Richmond reviewed the Staff report in regard to the final plat for the Serenity at Seelye Brook development.

Robinson thanked Staff for their work on this. He added that he is glad to see this happening.

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: UDVIG TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2024-14 APPROVING THE FINAL PLAT FOR SERENITY AT SEELYE BROOK SUBDIVISION WITH CONDITIONS AND FINDING OF FACT AS PRESENTED BY STAFF.

Ayes: Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

**10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - NONE**

**11. REPORTS**

**A. Police Department First Quarter Report**

Police Chief Schwieger reviewed the Police Department report for the first quarter of 2024. He shared they started off the year by adding a new Police Officer to the department who appears to be doing very well in his field training. He shared there were 1,617 crime reports for the quarter, including 627 traffic stops. He added that 103 citations were issued during the quarter, with 23 incidents being turned over to the department investigator. He shared that officers and Staff complete 143 hours of training during the quarter. He added that the spring and summer are busy times for community partnership events, including Winning with Cops, the Citizen's

Academy, and the Bike Rodeo. He said Staff is doing a very good job and staying busy with training and outreach events. He added that he is very fortunate to have the staff that he has.

The Council shared their appreciation for the hard work of the Police Department and their wonderful relationships they have with the community.

Robinson shared that he has heard that the FBI is reporting crime to be down on a national level. He asked if these statistics are true or if there are factors that are skewing these results. Schwieger said that the FBI's data collection is likely very accurate. He said this can vary from city to city; however, the FBI is likely the most trustable source when it comes to national data on crimes.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked about the turnout for the Citizen's Academy. Schwieger said they had 7 participants at the most recent event which was a good turnout.

#### B. Fire Department Monthly Report - March

Fire Chief Schmidt reviewed the Fire Department monthly report for the month of March. He shared the frustrations with the implementation of the new records management system and changes in programming. He shared there was a decrease in the response times for the month to an average of eight minutes and 29 seconds. He noted this decrease could be related to having Station #2 open with Bethel on the east side of town. He shared there were 55 calls for service, with an average number of firefighters responding to each call of 5.8. He noted that the spring has been relatively dry this far which contributed to an increase in fire calls for the month. He reviewed the variance usage and noted that there were three ambulance response times that were over 20 minutes. He shared that there was a call where the ambulance response time was nearly 40 minutes. He added that there were 17 fire inspections for the month with 14 initial inspections and three re-inspections.

Kreklow asked about the ambulance call that was nearly 40 minutes and why this happened. Schmidt explained that there are a number of issues that contributed to this response time, including a worker shortage. He added that they have initiated quarterly meetings with the Medical Director at Allina to address these concerns. He shared that they are experiencing an overflow of patients at the hospital which is causing a backup with ambulances as well. He explained that as reimbursement rates drop for hospitals there is a lot of movement of hospitals between hospitals. He said there were 7,000 transfers last year between Mercy Hospital and Unity Hospital. He noted that the legislature is discussing the problems that are happening with EMS across the State. He said they are not sure if there is a perfect solution for this; however, it is promising that the legislature is finally listening to these concerns with EMS and will hopefully position them for a better future.

Robinson asked if there had been any recruitment of new firefighters from Bethel. Schmidt said they have had some inquiries and have sent two in for screening. He

shared they are staffed at 10 firefighters for this station. He added that they have made significant strides to make the Bethel station operate as it should. He said they have had great cooperation with the City of Bethel and he is encouraged that this is moving in the right direction.

Robinson asked if they are still comfortable in the temporary facility on the Public Works campus or if there are any issues they are facing. Schmidt said they had a small issue a few weeks ago where the heat failed. He noted that Public Works has been great at helping them coordinate any needs they have in the facility.

Robinson asked if there has been any progress on getting outside help for the frequent users of medical responses. Schmidt said this was a topic of discussion when they met with the Medical Director at Allina. He explained that there are a lot of different avenues where they can explore resources for those who are struggling within the community. He shared they have focused on education and connection where they have the ability to do so. He noted that they need third parties, like the County or the hospitals, to partner with them in this. He added that he sees this to be a growing problem.

Mayor Muehlbauer asked how this year has been going with Nowthen. Schmidt said they are continuing to try to generate some traction with Nowthen. He added that they met with the State Fire Marshall's Office which helped reaffirm the direction that Nowthen desires to go. He shared he hopes to see some progress as Nowthen works towards their independence for the time being.

Mayor Muehlbauer added that the hybrid City Hall and Fire Department employee has been helping out with getting more inspections done. Schmidt added that this employee has been very overwhelmed with the new records management system as he has taken the lead on this, which has been a tremendous help.

Robinson asked when Schmidt foresees Nowthen becoming independent and no longer needing the City's help. Schmidt said that part of the agreement with Nowthen for this year outlined what the year would look like. He noted that Nowthen has been overwhelmed in other parts of the city at times and their Fire Department was not getting the attention that it needed to move the progress forward for the year with what they had outlined. He shared that the goal was to have the Nowthen Fire Department functioning on their own by the end of the third quarter of 2024. He said he is unsure of whether or not they will be able to meet this goal; however, it is still the goal for right now.

Robinson asked if there is a plan B for if Nowthen is not ready to be fully independent by the third quarter of this year. Schmidt said that they have many backup plans if this happens. He noted that their intention is never to leave anyone in a vulnerable position. He said that Nowthen has the goals clearly outlined to them.

The Council thanked Schmidt and the Fire Department for all of their hard work.

**12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

The Council shared the meetings and events they attended in the past few weeks, as well as highlighting upcoming events.

Robinson thanked Thunstrom and the rest of Staff for all the work they have been doing for the new City Hall Fire Station.

Udvig shared the Miss St. Francis Ambassadors will have an informational meeting tomorrow, April 16 at 7:00 p.m. at Beef 'O' Brady's.

Mayor Muehlbauer thanked Staff for all of their constant hard work.

**13. UPCOMING EVENTS**

- April 17 - Planning Commission Meeting - 7:00 pm
- April 18 - Citizens Academy - 6:00 - 8:30 pm
- April 25 - Citizens Academy - 6:00 - 8:30 pm
- April 27 - Spring Recycling Event - 8:00 am - 12:00 pm
- May 02 - Citizens Academy - 6:00 - 8:30 pm
- May 04 - Free Dog License Day - 9:00 am - 12:00 pm
- May 06 - City Council Meeting - 6:00 pm

**14. ADJOURNMENT**

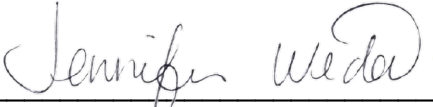
MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: KREKLOW TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

Ayes: Kreklow, Udvig, Robinson, and Mayor Muehlbauer.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 4-0

There being no further business, Mayor Muehlbauer adjourned the regular City Council at 6:40 p.m.

  
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Jennifer Wida, City Clerk