

June 7, 2017

The City Council conducted a Work Session on the above date. The following were present: Mayor Christine Maefsky, Council members Bob Hegland, Steve Kronmiller, Chris Ness and Jim Schneider. Staff present: City Administrator Neil Soltis, Public Works Director Adam Hawkinson, Fire Chief Mike Hinz, and Deputy Clerk Brenda Eklund.

Mayor Maefsky called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA

Two additions to the agenda were announced: 2.a) Presentation by Natalie Warren, St. Croix River Association; and 12.a) Parks and Recreation Committee resignation. **Ness, seconded by Schneider, moved to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried 5-0.**

NATALIE WARREN – ST. CROIX RIVER ASSOCIATION

Natalie Warren shared with the Council a brochure from the Association titled “Landowner’s Guide to the Lower St. Croix Riverway” with information on rules and protections of the river as a resource to increase awareness of regulations in place. Panel cards were also printed with contact information for the agencies involved with regulations for protection of the riverway. Warren encouraged open communication with the National Park Service, DNR and Army Corps of Engineers, and said that she can be reached as a liaison for working with the agencies regarding the rules along the river.

HIRING OF PROBATIONARY FIREFIGHTERS

Fire Chief Mike Hinz recommended the hiring of three applicants recently interviewed for positions on the fire department. A fourth was interviewed but withdrew her application due to family commitments. One candidate had to delay the physical testing due to a recent medical procedure, and Hinz recommended he be hired contingent on passing the physical when he is able. Additional medical testing is scheduled for the candidates in June at the Osceola Medical Center.

Council member Ness questioned if the response time should be increased to draw more candidates, but Chief Hinz said that a previous 10-minute response time was too long for firefighters to make the departure from the station, and they dropped out. The current response time is 8 minutes.

Kronmiller, seconded by Ness, moved to approve hiring Jesse Bizzotto, Adriane Krager, and Jeremy Johnson as probationary firefighters effective July 1, 2017 contingent to passing medical evaluations and the physical test. The motion carried 5-0.

DISCUSSION ON CHANGES TO THE PUBLIC STREET SIGN POLICY

Public Works Director Adam Hawkinson recommended changes to the 2013 Street Sign Policy which establishes the standards for replacing public street signs within the City’s right of way. Hawkinson explained that allowing the use of posts with pre-existing holes or quick punch holes will save money on the purchase of the posts and time for installing signage. He said these posts are used by both the state and county.

Ness, seconded by Hegland, moved to amend the Public Street Sign Policy to include the use of square posts with pre-punch or quick punch holes without the reference to a specific manufacturer of posts. The motion carried 5-0.

**DEVELOPMENT AGREEMENT WITH NEW ENERGY EQUITY LLC FOR
OLDFIELD AVENUE COMMUNITY SOLAR GARDEN**

Administrator Soltis explained that the Greenmark Ameresco, the original developer approved for a Community Solar Garden at 236th Street and Oldfield Avenue, is seeking to close an agreement with New Energy Equity LLC for ownership and operation of the facility. City Attorney Pratt prepared the required Developer's Agreement based on the terms and conditions of the resolution approving the conditional use permit that was passed by the Council. Terms of the agreement included dedication of road right-of-way, collection of escrow for landscaping requirements, and the fencing requirements.

Soltis reported that the solar garden has been downsized from a 5 megawatt system to a phased project that will initially be sized as 2½-3 megawatts. If phase 2 is not pursued, the owners may subdivide the remaining property. Council member Kronmiller suggested the developers locate the solar garden site off the hill portion of the property because visibility was a major concern of surrounding residents. Soltis said that the developers can abide by the site plan approved in 2016 for the project, but he can make that request to them.

Ness, seconded by Hegland, moved to approve the Developer's Agreement with New Energy Equity, LLC for the Oldfield Avenue Community Solar Garden. The motion carried 5-0.

CODE ENFORCEMENT PRESENTATION BY ECKBERG LAMMERS LAW FIRM

Joe Van Thomme, Prosecutor with Eckberg Lammers Law Firm, presented information on code enforcement for cities. Topics covered the types of violations, keys to compliance, and the process for taking action through the court system. Van Thomme stressed that the keys to compliance are establishing a process, documentation, notice, and action and that the identification of a Code Enforcement Official is critical to ensure the process works. Van Thomme also reviewed the timing and cost for seeking civil remedy to compliance versus utilizing criminal prosecution.

Administrator Soltis noted that Building Inspector was previously responsible for code compliance and that no one is specifically identified as the Code Enforcement Official. Discussion on the complaint policy and the process will be discussed at a future Council meeting.

DISCUSSION ON DOG ORDINANCE

Administrator Soltis presented language to amend the dog ordinance based on previous discussions. The proposed revision would change the definition of "restraint" and would change the penalty for having an "at-large" dog from a misdemeanor, which is a criminal offense, to a petty misdemeanor. Council member Hegland said that Scandia is a rural area where it is common to have dogs off-leash and not under restraint, meaning most owners would be in violation of a crime.

It was recommended to amend the definition of restraint, to make it a petty misdemeanor for having a dog at-large, and to make multiple convictions of a dog “at-large” a misdemeanor. Staff will work on an amended ordinance to be reviewed at a future meeting.

DISCUSSION ON COMMUNITY SOLAR GARDEN ORDINANCE

Mayor Maefsky said that the incentives for solar garden installations have been extended into 2019 and she has concerns about the number of community solar gardens in Scandia and how it would change the landscape. She recommended a pro-active discussion to address issues that may arise with the development of those solar gardens that have already been approved.

Administrator Soltis noted factors that the 95% requirement for screening and the limited points of connection to Xcel’s distribution lines are likely to limit future applications in Scandia. Council member Ness remarked that as a GreenStep City, Scandia supports alternative energy, but landscaping the sites for visibility impacts to neighbors is key.

Staff will research the allowed time frame that a moratorium on solar development could be in place and report back at a future meeting, along with information on the tax assessing structure of the solar garden sites.

DISCUSSION ON ESTABLISHING A SISTER CITY IN SWEDEN

Lynne Moratzka and Sarah Porubcansky, Gammelgarden Museum, provided a history of a joint effort to establish a sister city relationship with New Scandia Township and Lessebo, Sweden in 1988. There is interest in reviving this connection and promote the friendship through local beekeepers as the theme. Moratzka asked if the City would become an advocate to promote this idea along with the Museum. One way is to request signage from MnDOT to reference this sister city entity at the entrances to Scandia.

Council was in consensus to explore the idea on an informal basis, with the Mayor and Gammelgarden reaching out to Lessebo officials. Council member Kronmiller advised that the Sister Cities International organization may have a fee for use of this wording and to research that possibility.

DISCUSSION ON ESTABLISHING A GOOD NEIGHBOR AWARD

Mayor Maefsky proposed her idea to recognize good people in town, similar to WCCO’s Good Neighbor award. Council was in consensus to pursue this action and to have Maefsky bring back more information on a nomination process that would select a citizen on an impromptu basis.

DISCUSSION ON 2018 STATE CAPITAL INVESTMENT PROJECT REQUEST FOR THE GATEWAY TRAIL

A proposal from Scandia resident John Herman was presented in which he would volunteer his efforts to pursue state funding to move the design process forward for the Gateway Trail connection through Scandia. Council was in consensus that Herman advance efforts for funding that would have no initial costs to the City.

UPDATE ON WEBSITE

Administrator Soltis presented a mock-up of the newly designed home page for the City's website that staff has prepared with GovOffice using local pictures and a simplified navigation screen. Council members remarked that it looked good, and suggested that photos from area residents could be solicited for use for the rotating images.

PARKS AND RECREATION COMMITTEE RESIGNATION

Administrator Soltis reported that Jodi Feldman submitted her resignation from the PRC due to family and work commitments. Council directed staff to advertise the position through the City's website and facebook page, for appointment at a future meeting to fill her term.

PROPOSED 2018 BUDGET SCHEDULE

Administrator Soltis provided a schedule of meeting dates for the Council to work on the 2018 budget. The Capital Improvement Committee has a goal to have the CIP ready for a public hearing with the Planning Commission at their September 5th meeting.

ADJOURNMENT

Ness, seconded by Hegland, moved to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brenda Eklund
Deputy Clerk