

**WORKSHOP
OAKDALE CITY COUNCIL
February 23, 2021**

The City Council held a workshop on Tuesday, February 23, 2021, at Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Avenue North, Oakdale, Minnesota. The meeting began at 5:00 PM.

Present: Mayor Paul Reinke

Council Members: Jake Ingebrigtsen
Susan Olson
Colleen Swedberg
Kevin Zabel

Also Present: Christina Volkens, City Administrator
Jim Thomson, City Attorney
Brian Bachmeier, Public Works Director/City Engineer
Susan Barry, City Clerk
Loren Cota, Forestry Superintendent (virtual)
Jeff Koesling, Parks Superintendent (virtual)
Alyssa MacLeod, Communications Specialist
Bahea Manasra, Administrative Intern (virtual)
Chelsea Petersen, Administrative Services Director
Emily Shively, City Planner
Bob Streetar, Community Development Director
Julie Williams, Recreation Superintendent (virtual)
Kevin Wold, Fire Chief

Patty Kettles, BakerTilly (virtual)

LONG TERM FINANCIAL PLANNING

Patty Kettles, Financial Consultant – BakerTilly, provided an updated financial forecast for the city for 2021 to 2031. She reviewed the city’s need for a forecast: fire department transition to career full-time, new police department building, new public works department building, city hall remodel, and economic development. Ms. Kettles reviewed projected staff additions, scenarios that include local sales tax and those that do not, in addition to next steps.

Community Development Director Streetar noted that the project staff additions, aside from fire personnel, related to new growth, including Willowbrooke and Helmo Station, and that staff could be added concurrently with the growth.

In response to a question from Council Member Zabel, Community Development Director Streetar explained that the number of rental units in the city would increase by 2,000 over the next 10 years, possibly necessitating an additional rental license inspector.

Mayor Reinke recommended moving the hiring in the Building Inspections Department from 2023 to 2022.

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City Administrator Volkens recommended moving the hiring in the Police and Public Works departments from 2023 to 2022.

The City Council and staff discussed future staffing needs in more detail.

Council Member Zabel inquired about contractual options or sharing inspection services with another community.

Mayor Reinke asked that the proposed human resources position (clerical – HR generalist position) listed in 2023 be reviewed after seeing how the new finance director affects human resources.

In response to questions, Fire Chief Wold provided an overview of the volunteer firefighter situation and commented on the proposal to hire six full-time career firefighters in 2024, applying for a SAFER grant to help fund the positions, funding to be made available when the Oakdale Fire Department Corporation dissolves, and the need for a dedicated fire marshal/command position.

After more discussion, Mayor Reinke asked for consensus to hire six firefighters in 2023 rather than 2024.

Council Member Zabel suggested hiring three of the firefighters, including the fire marshal, in mid-2023 and three in mid-2024.

City Administrator Volkens and Fire Chief Wold were asked to bring back a proposal on hiring six firefighters with minimal impact on the budget by hiring earlier and consideration of getting the SAFER grant.

Council Member Zabel expressed concern with overestimating revenue from the local sales tax in the early years.

City Administrator Volkens noted that additional development had not been factored into the latest financial forecast and that is future opportunity.

PROPERTY TAX APPEAL PROCESS

City Administrator Volkens provided an overview the property tax appeal process and the closed and open appeal petitions for property in Oakdale. She noted that property owners must continue to make payments on taxes during an appeal process.

PROPOSED POLICY: Donations to Parks, Memorials, Installation, and Maintenance

Administrative Intern Manasra reviewed a proposed policy, requested by the City Council, relating to donations made to city parks by the public and related maintenance. She added that following input from the City Council, the proposed policy would go before the Parks and Recreation Commission, and then come back to the City Council.

Upon review, the City Council asked that Parks and Recreation Commission make suggestions for reword Section 2.4 to more clearly state when donations cannot be accepted; also to determine locations in parks where memorials may be located and including language for returning donations when projects do not proceed and for assuring donations for multi-year projects.

OAKDALE NATURE PRESERVE – FOREST GARDEN

Public Works Director/City Engineer Bachmeier provided an overview of the vision of the forest garden in the Oakdale Nature Preserve.

Council Member Swedberg expressed concern with the lack of maintenance at the Lions Club garden near the forest garden and asked that a maintenance plan be developed. She asked that the Lions Club signage be removed.

City Forester Cota explained that staff has been working with the Lions Club and Master Gardeners to remove Goldenrod plants that carpeted the area and to plant other species, such as fruit trees that were planted in 2020. He further explained that in the Spring, staff would be able to assess which plants remain. City Forester Cota estimated maintenance costs to be under \$1,000 over the next 10 years.

Mayor Reinke indicated that as the maintenance costs would be below \$1,000, the city administrator would have approval authority and reiterated that staff was working in concert with the Lions Club and Master Gardeners to revitalize the gardens.

Council Member Swedberg asked that the gardens not be allowed to become overgrown.

FIRE STATION LAWN CARE

Public Works Director/City Engineer Bachmeier reviewed current costs for contracting lawn care at the two fire stations compared to city crews doing the lawn care. He supported using contractors in limited instances, such as lawn care at the fire stations.

Council Member Zabel supported having city staff provide lawn care at the two fire stations.

Council Member Ingebrigtsen inquired about contracting out all park lawn care.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Bachmeier indicated that the city has the equipment needed, has control over maintenance schedules, and is able to retain accountability.

In response to a question from Council Member Ingebrigtsen, Fire Chief Wold supported continuing to contract for lawn care for the two fire stations.

In response to a question from Council Member Olson, Public Works Director/City Engineer Bachmeier explained that the lawn care contract has been in place for many years, with the latest contract in place since 2017, with no cost increases.

Staff was directed to go out for bid should there be a price increase on the next lawn care contract.

POLICY AMENDMENT: Boards and Commissions Appointment, Reappointment, Service

Administrative Intern Manasra provided an overview of the amendments being proposed to Policy MIS-013: Boards and Commissions Appointment, Reappointment, and Service. She noted that amendments included setting the number of members and terms for the Tree Board and several housekeeping changes.

Council Member Ingebrigtsen commented on the need to enforce the section relating to attendance.

Staff was directed to bring the policy, as written, to the regular March 9 City Council meeting for formal approval.

PROPOSED CODE AMENDMENT: Chapter 25 – Zoning, Signs

City Planner Shively reviewed a request to amend Chapter 25 – Zoning of the city code to create new signage standards for big box retailers.

Staff was directed to bring the code amendment, as written, to the regular March 9 City Council meeting for formal adoption.

The meeting recessed at 6:44 PM.

The meeting reconvened at 7:20 PM.

CAPITAL PURCHASES

The City Council reviewed the remaining capital purchases being requested: additional facility upgrades (touchless water bottle fillers and bathroom fixtures), furnishings for the new finance director's office, vector truck for the Public Works Department, and an online timecard system.

Council Member Zabel asked that touchless light fixtures be available in the restrooms.

City Administrator Volkens explained that the vector truck would be originally paid for using \$34,000 from the 2021 Utility Replacement Fund and \$46,000 from the Public Works General Operating Budget. She noted that cost estimates were much higher than first anticipated and suggested that the remaining \$90,000 also be paid for from the Utility Replacement Fund.

Council Member Zabel cautioned against setting precedent by utilizing funds from operational budgets for purchases.

City Administrator Volkens indicated that the funding sources would be clarified when the item is brought forth to the City Council for formal approval.

Mayor Reinke asked that staff use caution and thoroughly research purchases before bringing forth requests so estimates are more accurately predicted.

Referencing the online timecard system, Administrative Services Director Petersen explained that the online system was thought to be a component of the city's financial software upgrade but was not part of the quote. She spoke to the many benefits an online timecard system would provide to staff.

Staff was directed to bring the capital purchases to the regular March 9 City Council meeting for formal action.

COUNCIL TOPICS

Council Member Ingebrigtsen shared that one of this roles as a council member is to set policy and for staff to then implement the policy.

City Administrator Volkens was asked to get direction from City Attorney Thomson on who can purchase city park signs that are going to be sold via auction.

In response to a comment from Council Member Swedberg relating to a good presentation at the League of Minnesota Cities elected officials conference, City Administrator Volkens indicated that the video would be provided to the City Council and Department Heads.

Council Member Zabel announced that the Saint Paul Realtor's association would be launching a program to connect Realtors and local government.

Mayor Reinke asked that the City Council become fluent on the proposed police department and public works department projects in order to respond to questions.

Mayor Reinke asked that the City Council and staff refrain from texting/emailing during meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

The workshop adjourned at 7:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
Susan Barry, City Clerk