

MINUTES

1. CONVENE CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MEETING

Mayor Labadie called the meeting to order at 6:00 P.M.

A. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Labadie; Councilmembers Maddy, Sanschagrín, Gorham, and DiGruttolo;
City Administrator Nevinski; Planning Director Darling;

Absent: None

B. Review Agenda

Sanschagrín moved, Gorham seconded, approving the agenda as presented. Motion passed 5/0.

2. MOUND/ST. BONIFACIUS FIRE PARTNERSHIP

City Administrator Nevinski reminded the Council that discussions had been taking place among the communities that are part of the Mound fire contract with the Mound Fire Department and the St. Bonifacius Fire Department. He explained that they were in discussions about the potential for some type of merger and noted that they were currently considering creating a Joint Powers Agreement. He stated that Shorewood was a very small part of this operation because they have about one-hundred thirteen parcels on the islands that are protected by the Mound Fire Department. He noted that he felt that the Mound Fire Department has done a good job with this and explained that the Excelsior Fire District just cannot get to them in a reasonable amount of time. He stated that there was information included in the meeting packet that outlined the amount and types of services calls from 2015 through 2024. He explained that he and Councilmember Maddy had been attending the meetings where the potential fire partnership had been discussed and felt that the conversations they had had were collaborative and productive. He noted that as their conversations have been getting a little 'meatier', he and Councilmember Maddy felt it would be a good idea to touch base with the full Council in order to see what their direction would be with regard to the potential for a JPA.

Councilmember Maddy noted that the City currently gives the Mound Fire Department about thirty thousand dollars per year for their services to the islands, which is only a small percentage of their overall budget. He explained that as their possible partnership discussions continued, he did not believe that Shorewood would be part of the Joint Powers Agreement, unless they really wanted to be, and noted that he felt it was most likely that the City would end up as a contract City for them.

Mayor Labadie noted that the City, through its police JPA, is involved in one of the oldest agreements in the State and was also involved in another very successful JPA as part of the Excelsior Fire District, but cautioned that disagreements do arise, even in a successful JPA.

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Councilmember Sanschagrín asked if Shorewood was the only City that was partially covered by this fire department.

City Administrator Nevinski stated that the way it was currently set up is that Mound covers the northeastern quadrant, the southeastern quadrant of Minnetrista and St. Bonifacius covers the balance of Minnetrista but noted that they also respond in mutual aid situations.

Councilmember Sanschagrín asked if this JPA would unify all the other cities, except for Shorewood.

City Administrator Nevinski stated that he did not really have a good sense about what the City's costs would be under the JPA and reiterated that as those discussions began to get more serious, they wanted to get an idea of where the full Council was on this topic regarding the level of involvement, they felt the City should have.

Councilmember Maddy noted that both fire chiefs' kind have shrugged and said that thirty thousand dollars a year for essentially three calls meant that Shorewood was not really getting their money's worth out of the contract. He stated that he would describe Shorewood's role in the financial discussions as being 'lightly involved' but stressed that they do want to make sure that the one hundred or so homes on the islands have adequate fire services coverage.

City Administrator Nevinski explained that he believed the cities involved were hoping that by the middle of 2025 there would be some form starting to take place where the cities would need to begin doing some budgeting and considering possible operational changes, but did not know how far out the full transition may be.

Councilmember DiGruttolo stated that she would not necessarily say that the City was not getting their money's worth out of this situation because there were only three calls and compared it to car insurance premiums that need to be paid, even if you do not have any accidents. She stated that she would like to know some of the pros and cons of a JPA, especially, if what the current arrangement was working. She stated that if it was not currently working well for the City, she asked if there were things that would change with a JPA that would make it work better for the City.

Councilmember Maddy clarified that the City was currently not in a JPA with them right now and were just under a contract.

Councilmember Sanschagrín stated that the advantage of being in a contract situation is that it would give the City some flexibility to potentially go somewhere else, if they wanted to. He asked if they could do an evaluation of which fire services provided the best quality or the best potential coverage and what the cost would be. He stated that one of the statistics that he appreciated in the packet was the two-hundred sixty-five dollars per parcel on an annual basis.

Councilmember Maddy cautioned that they had to be careful with those numbers and noted that for every other surrounding fire department, their Public Works Departments manage a lot of fixed costs for their fire coverage, which was not included in their 'per call' information. He gave the example of Minnetonka being cheaper than Shorewood but noted that they have full-time staff and an entire department that manages their fixed costs, so that does not show up in the bottom

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line for the fire department. He stated that there was a substantial amount of mutual aid, so in that respect, they would be getting their money's worth.

Mayor Labadie gave the example of the home that was a total loss on Kathleen Court where there were five or six agencies there helping to fight the fire and get water to the area.

Councilmember DiGruttolo asked about possible trends and noted that when she spoke with Excelsior Fire District Chief Mackey during her orientation process, he told her that they were seeing a shift away from fires and more towards emergency services, which she felt could factor into costs. She explained that she would like to see more information about what they were seeing related to these kinds of trends and how they may affect this decision.

Councilmember Maddy stated that the shift away from fire calls has been happening for decades. He shared an example of a 911 call for a lift assist and how many times it is an 'all call' and everyone shows up, even though it would not all be needed. He stated that if they broaden the net of their fire services coverage, that means they can have duty crews and have firefighters who were all ready to go that could go take care of that kind of call without having to do an 'all call'. He stated that he saw opportunities for efficiencies by broadening the fire services net to include the duty crew model. He stated that he felt the idea of where Mound and St. Bonifacius were going was great but was not sure that the City wanted to be a voting member, on the front lines or if they should just contract for this service. He stated that a contract would also give the City the ability to switch fire service providers if things were not going well, for example, to Long Lake Fire Department. He noted that he felt that the City would be able to have good coverage for the islands, regardless of how they moved forward because he had faith in all the adjacent fire agencies.

Councilmember Gorham stated that it sounded like Councilmember Maddy was saying that Shorewood would be monitoring this situation, dipping their toes in a bit to help them along, but was keeping their options open.

Councilmember Maddy stated that he agreed and felt it was a great place for the City to be.

Councilmember Gorham explained that he did not want to over-negotiate and would like to make sure that there is a fall-back plan in order to make sure that Shorewood and the islands were not left behind.

City Administrator Nevinski noted that he was not sure what would happen with the situation between the Orono Fire Department and the Long Lake Fire Department and if they may be a viable alternative for the City to consider. He stated that he liked the idea of staying engaged and involved in the discussions between Mound and St. Bonifacius in order to get more information and see what the numbers end up looking like. He clarified that he had not intended this agenda item to be a protracted discussion but had wanted to be able to participate in the discussions in a way that aligned with Council.

Councilmember Gorham asked about the risk of bowing out of the JPA and then having no contract for services.

City Administrator Nevinski stated that the Fire Chief from St. Bonifacius has indicated that they cover some of the other townships, and that they were only interested in being under a contract.

He reiterated that staff just wanted to get some direction from the Council in order to know what they are actually driving towards when they are part of these meetings.

Councilmember Maddy confirmed that St. Bonifacius currently had two contract cities where they cover about one hundred structures similar to what Mound does for Shorewood. He explained that he had not formed an opinion on whether the City should be a full voting member of the JPA or if they should just be a contracted negotiation that could bid it out with more than one fire service but was leaning towards not being part of the JPA to have the ability to shop around.

Councilmember Sanschagrín stated that he felt having a contract made a lot of sense.

Mayor Labadie stated that she agreed.

Councilmember Sanschagrín asked about the resolution that was included in the packet.

Councilmember Maddy clarified that it was essentially a 'political' resolution and did not actually apply to anything.

City Administrator Nevinski explained that he had shared it with the Council because all of the cities had been asked to pass a resolution because they wanted to make sure that there was direction from each council to move forward with the exploration of a JPA. He noted that the resolution language could be modified to say that Shorewood was supportive of the exploration of a JPA, but that the City may not elect to participate in it. He stated that the input he heard from the Council tonight was that they want to remain engaged in the conversation and that they were probably leaning towards a contract rather than being part of the JPA.

3. SUBDIVISION REGULATIONS AMENDMENTS

Planning Director Darling stated that staff had been working with a consultant to complete an overhaul of the subdivision regulations and have submitted rough drafts of the sections related to applications and procedures, as well as park dedication. She explained that in order to complete these sections they were looking for some direction from the Council related to lot line adjustments/subdivision of two-family lots and if this could be reviewed by staff; protection of steep slopes and possible new regulations; and a possible requirement for extension of watermains for subdivisions. She reviewed the areas they were looking for feedback and outlined the advantages and disadvantages for each.

Mayor Labadie stated that she wanted to hear from Councilmembers Gorham and Maddy because they had both served, in the past, as Chair of the Planning Commission.

Councilmember Gorham stated that he felt that the idea raised related to the lot line adjustment would have been something that the Planning Commission would typically have given a green light to and did not see any issues with what was being recommended.

Councilmember Maddy stated that in his twelve years of experience on the Planning Commission there has never been any controversy over two private parties wanting to adjust a lot line between them and has always been essentially a 'rubber stamp' of approval. He stated that he felt that this type of thing would not need a public hearing and could just be handled administratively.

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Councilmember Gorham gave the example of a recent property that had bluffs and a steep slope and how this would have effected their request.

Councilmember Maddy stated that he felt it made sense to pay attention because the people that were downhill also have some skin in the game. He stated that he was not sure how much the City would want to give to this process.

Councilmember Sanschagrín asked Planning Director Darling if she remembered any situations were going through the Council changed the result of the application related to subdivisions.

Planning Director Darling stated that nothing had changed in those instances and noted that if the subdivision met all the requirements, the City did not have the ability to turn it down.

Councilmember Sanschagrín stated that he supported what staff had proposed because it sounded like a rubber stamp kind of situation.

Councilmember Maddy stated that regarding the possible requirement of watermains for subdivisions, there are a lot of external forces behind whether it makes sense to expand the water distribution network. He explained that he did not want to have a rule that would not be accommodating to what the City had already built. He stated that he did not believe that this was a 'one size fits all' conversation and asked if Planning Director Darling was giving the Council a recommendation on this item.

Planning Director Darling stated that staff was recommending that the City require municipal water with all subdivisions.

Councilmember Gorham asked if, in a situation where it was topographically outrageous to get water to the subdivision, whether there would be any mechanism in place where the developer could come to the City and ask for mercy in that situation.

Planning Director Darling explained that they could apply for a subdivision variance.

Councilmember Gorham stated that he felt it would be good for the City to start building tools in order to expand water and this could be the beginning.

Councilmember Sanschagrín asked if there were a lot of properties that would be impacted by this.

Planning Director Darling confirmed that there were a lot of properties that could be impacted by this and noted that only about fifty percent of Shorewood properties were hooked up to municipal water.

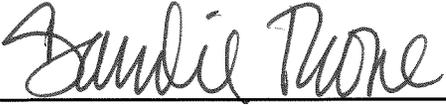
Councilmember Maddy stated that he was fine with what staff had proposed.

Mayor Labadie agreed and explained that she felt that the City needed to be more forward-thinking and start looking ahead.

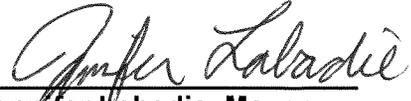
4. ADJOURN

Maddy moved, Sanschagrín seconded, Adjourning the City Council Work Session Meeting of January 27, 2025, at 6:50 P.M. Motion passed 5/0.

ATTEST:



Sandie Thone, City Clerk



Jennifer Labadie, Mayor