

South St. Paul City Council Work Session

Session Notes for April 28, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Francis called the City Council Work Session to order at 7:00 PM on April 28, 2025

No formal Council Action is taken at a work session meeting, this is a summary of discussion that took place.

Council Members Present: Jimmy Francis, Lori Hansen, Tom Seaberg, Joe Kaliszewski, Matt Thompson, Pam Bakken, and Todd Podgorski

Staff Present: Michael Healy, Planning Manager, Kori Land, City Attorney, Nick Guilliams, City Engineer, and Kelsey Gelhar, Assistant City Engineer

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Marie Avenue Reconstruction Project- Phase II

Mr. Guilliams and Ms. Gelhar provided an overview of deteriorating road conditions on Marie Avenue between 9th Avenue and 21st Avenue and explained the need for a street reconstruction project. Marie Avenue is already being reconstructed between 3rd Avenue and 9th Avenue and this Phase I project received a \$1 Million Safe Routes to School (SRTS) Grant and includes sidewalks and bike lanes. A second \$1 Million SRTS grant was awarded for the Phase II project between 9th Avenue and 21st Avenue. However, the City can only access the grant funds if Phase II is constructed with sidewalk on at least one side of the street and bike lanes in both directions.

Mr. Guilliams explained that the Phase II corridor has design challenges. There are short private driveways on the south side of the street that may be impacted if a sidewalk is installed on the south side. Those concerns are less present on the north side of the street but there are slopes that would require significant retaining wall work.

Mr. Guilliams stated that the project has not been designed yet and this Worksession discussion will need to be based on conceptual design elements. Mr. Guilliams presented two possible options for designing the Phase II project. One option would be to design the street to meet the terms of the grant with a sidewalk on the south side of the street and bike lanes in both directions. A second potential option would be to forfeit the SRTS grant and build a street with no new sidewalks or bike lanes. With this second option, existing sidewalks on the corridor would be replaced but no new sidewalk sections would be added.

There was general support for installing a sidewalk on the full length of the corridor but there was significantly less support for bike lanes. The Council consensus was that it would be best if a sidewalk could be on the north side of the street to avoid adverse

property impacts, even if this resulted in a cost increase for the project. Several Councilmembers stated that eliminating the bike lanes could result in 12 feet of right-of-way being freed up which would potentially give the City Engineer some additional flexibility to deal with the corridor's grading challenges.

Council asked Mr. Guilliams to prepare preliminary cost estimates for three options:

Option 1: Accept the SRTS grant and build a street with sidewalk on one side (ideally the north side) and bike lanes in both directions.

Option 2: Forfeit the SRTS grant and build a street with no new sidewalks or bike lanes.

Option 3: Forfeit the SRTS grant and build a street that does have a sidewalk for the full length of the corridor but has no bike lanes. The sidewalk should be mostly on the north side but could potentially cross the road at some point if this worked better with the grades.

Council is leaning towards Option #3 and the general feeling is that a sidewalk is important on this corridor, but bike lanes are not as necessary. Council asked Mr. Guilliams to consider conducting some early public engagement to get residents' thoughts about this and come back to another Worksession with updated cost estimates for the three options.

B. Update on Upcoming Planning Commission Review of Minor Comprehensive Plan Amendment

Mr. Healy and Ms. Land provided an overview of a minor comprehensive plan amendment that the City Attorney's office has requested be brought to the Planning Commission in May. The City Attorney's office is recommending that four City-owned properties that host municipal facilities have their future land use map guidance updated to better align with their existing and proposed uses and current zoning. The four properties being re-guided would be the Doug Woog Arena, the Public Works building at 400 Richmond, and two municipal wells with support buildings. The City Council was supportive of the City Attorney's recommendation.

C. Proactive Code Enforcement and Property Maintenance Code Discussion

Mr. Healy provided an overview of the City's existing code enforcement program and ways that the City could utilize existing staff to add additional proactive code enforcement that is focused on nuisance conditions in front yards which are visible from the public street. Mr. Healy explained that it would be possible to go further than this by hiring seasonal staffing or making structural changes to the City Code to add strict property maintenance standards for the condition of buildings (roofing, siding, windows, etc.). Currently, building maintenance issues are addressed in response to complaints using the City's reasonable maintenance ordinance. If the City adopted a strict building maintenance code, it might be possible to proactively address some issues but there is not an obvious solution for what to do with owner-occupied properties where the property owner does not have the financial means to pay for major repairs to their building.

The City Council wants Staff to move forward with the proposed plan to add more proactive code enforcement using existing staffing and a door hangar program. Specifically, the Code Enforcement Officer will proactively look at front yards and street side yards and identify the following violations in one of those yard areas:

- a. Long grass.
- b. Parking on the grass.
- c. Exterior storage.
- d. Junk vehicles

The City Council wants this new approach actively promoted while it is being rolled out including Facebook posts and a write-up in the newsletter. The Planning Manager will report back later this year regarding whether the new program has been successful and whether there is any staff capacity to add additional elements to the proactive code enforcement program.

The City Council also asked that the City Attorney investigate whether it is feasible to adopt a new policy of always declining to renew a rental license until all active code violations have been corrected. This would be a shift from the current policy of only targeting a rental license for revocation or non-renewal if the property owner has failed to resolve the code issue within 6 months of their initial compliance letter.

D. Discussion on Honeybees, Chickens, and Ducks on Residential Properties

Mr. Healy presented on two potential changes that could improve the chicken and duck licensing program which both have the support of the Sustainability Task Force. The City Council was supportive of both changes- eliminating the neighbor consent requirement and allowing chickens and ducks in a side yard if the rear yard is not usable and all setback requirements can be met.

The City Council discussed beekeeping and the consensus was that beekeeping should be legalized and but should require a permit from City Staff. The City Council wants to see setback rules, rules for fencing to reduce impact to neighbors, and rules to limit the number of colonies on small properties. The City Council did not feel it was important to require aspiring beekeepers to present proof that they have taken beekeeping classes since training materials are available online.

Staff will prepare a draft ordinance based on the Council direction that was given.

E. Council Goal Setting Follow-Up

Mayor Francis shared that he feels that the Council goal setting session was a success. These sessions have resulted in real actionable goals over the years and have been a worthwhile exercise.

3. COUNCIL COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

None.

4. ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business to come before the City Council at the regular work session meeting, Mayor Francis declared the meeting adjourned at 8:31 PM.

Respectfully submitted

/s/: Michael Healy, Planning Manager