

South St. Paul City Council Work Session

Session Notes for October 27, 2025

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Francis called the City Council Work Session to order at 7:00 PM on October 13, 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, Joe Kaliszewski, Matt Thompson, Pam Bakken, Tom Seaberg, and Todd Podgorski.

Staff Present: Ryan Garcia, City Administrator, Brian Wicke, Police Chief, Shannon Young, Parks and Recreation Director, Deanna Werner, City Clerk, Kelsey Gelhar, City Engineer.

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. County Administrator Heidi Welsch – Update on Impacts of Federal Shutdown

Ms. Welsch shared that the County was expecting the ongoing federal government “shutdown” to continue to impact services throughout Dakota County. The Supplemental Nutrition and Assistance Program (SNAP) which provides aid to low-income and no-income persons to purchase food, is expected to end November 1. SNAP touches an estimate 4,000 residents in South St. Paul. Ms. Welsch recognized the importance of supporting local food shelves through donations of food and other products as those resources will be critical for as long as SNAP is idled. While SNAP is of primary concern, Ms. Welsch noted that other programs such as the Minnesota Family Investment Program (MFIP) which provides assistance to eligible low-income families to meet basic needs (housing, transportation) and Housing Assistance Programs offered through the CDA were also at risk should the shutdown persist further into November or longer. Ultimately, Ms. Welsch acknowledged that Dakota County, like all counties, is not equipped financially to backstop these programs that rely upon federal partnership to be successfully administered.

B. 106 3rd Avenue North (former SSP Library) Developer Interest

Representatives of Minneapolis Gymnastics, LLC shared background information about their growing business, established in Minneapolis in 2019 and having grown to two locations and approximately \$2,000,000 in annual revenue. The business expressed their interest in the currently vacant property at 106 3rd Avenue North, the former public library, which they would like to repurpose as a commercial interactive play center through a public-private partnership. The business envisions the facility including fee-based access to the general public for family play and gathering, in addition to reserving space within the facility for use by the City to host other public events and functions. Council was receptive to this concept and concurred that Staff and the business should establish a framework for the public private partnership that may include City participation in addressing deferred maintenance and structural/mechanical deficiencies at

the property, as well as potential leveraging of economic development sources to assist with the business' acquisition and/or fixturing of the space for the business' use. It is anticipated that next steps would include the preparation and consideration of purchase and development agreements that would outline the terms of the public-private partnership.

C. City Precinct Realignment for 2026 Elections – Addition of a City Precinct

Ms. Wener presented a revised proposal for precinct realignment which would add a new precinct and polling location at Doug Woog Arena. Council supported the realignment and Ms. Werner will prepare to present the proposal for formal approval at a City Council meeting before the end of the year.

D. Marie Avenue Reconstruction Project – Next Phase Design and Staging

Ms. Gelhar provided an update on the remaining reconstruction work planned for Marie Avenue. Ms. Gelhar demonstrated that the right-of-way from 15th Avenue to 21st Avenue was more complicated due to building setbacks, utilities, and grade changes and recommended undertaking future reconstruction in two phases: 9th to 15th and 15th to 21st. Ms. Gelhar provided general design options for the corridor, generally differentiated by the inclusion (or exclusion) and location of new sidewalks. Council feedback generally favored a design approach that replaced existing sidewalk along the corridor and extending continuous sidewalk along the north side of the road to 15th Avenue. Ms. Gelhar advised that next steps would include a neighborhood open house/public informational meeting in November, consideration of a feasibility report in December, and an improvement hearing in early 2026.

E. City Administrator's Update

Mr. Garcia advised that proposals related to the decommissioning of fueling infrastructure and demolition at the Jiffy Gas property would be considered for approval at the November EDA meeting.

Mr. Garcia advised that the closing for 314-318 2nd Street North (former Guild South) was on track for early December, if not sooner as title came back clean.

Mr. Garcia advised that Bonfe was contemplating accelerating closing for the property at Hardman and Armour Avenues, which is identified as April 2026 in the Purchase Agreement, and also noted that the proposal for demolition of the gatehouse structures at the property would be presented for consideration at the November 3 EDA meeting. Members of the audience, including a representative from the Office of the State Archaeologist, spoke to express concern that the EDA was failing to meet obligations under the Field Archaeology Act and Private Cemeteries Act as it relates to the disposition of the gatehouse structures. Resident Mark Westfphal spoke to express concern about Council transparency as it relates to the decision-making process employed to disposition of the gatehouse structures.

Mr. Garcia noted that the EDA's contract with the Center for Energy and Environment for underwriting and closing assistance on the EDA's Housing Improvement Loan Program was nearing end of term, and a renewal would be presented at a future EDA meeting for consideration.

Mr. Garcia advised that Phase II Environmental Investigation activities by Braun Intertec would be taking place this week for the proposed first phase of private development in the Hardman Triangle, generally along Concord Street and Grand Avenue in the southwestern portion of the redevelopment district.

Mr. Garcia reminded Councilmembers of upcoming commitments related to the House Bonding Tour the evening of November 6 and the Wakota Business Park groundbreaking the afternoon of November 17.

3. COUNCIL COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

Councilmember Hansen requested a future update on the City's fence permitting program.

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 9:52 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/: Ryan Garcia
City Administrator