

South St. Paul City Council Work Session

Session Notes for January 12, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Francis called the City Council Work Session to order at 7:00 PM on January 12, 2026

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, Daniel Salmey, Police Commander, Deb Griffith, Community Affairs Liaison

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Armour Gate Community Brick Project

Ms. Griffith presented a general outline related to the opportunity to collaborate with community members on a community project that utilized the salvaged materials from the Armour Gatehouses in commemoration of the community's rich industrial history.

Ms. Griffith identified two key goals of the project. First, Ms. Griffith was confident that there were community members – in the hundreds – that would be interested in acquiring individual bricks as keepsakes, if the City were to explore a brick distribution program. Ms. Griffith suggested that essentially a “sign-up” program would be established for the orderly distribution of the bricks. Secondly, Ms. Griffith suggested the establishment of an ad-hoc committee of diverse community interests to lead the engagement and workshopping around a more concerted effort to create some manner of public art or memorial utilizing the materials.

Council supported the idea for a subcommittee and community engagement process as being the first step in this program, feeling that the subcommittee could further define how much material would be appropriate and usable for such an installation and thereafter would have a handle on how much material would be available for distribution, and what the budget for construction would be. Council supported the idea of including at least one Parks Commission member on the subcommittee.

Council and Ms. Griffith agreed that a “Minimum Suggested Donation” be established for any brick distribution program, with donations directly supporting the project that the subcommittee advances for implementation.

Next Steps were identified as the establishment of a subcommittee. Ms. Griffith felt that the committee could meet and engage the public over the first half of 2026 and provide their recommendation to Council tentatively by mid-year.

B. Council Compensation Discussion

Mr. Garcia provided an update on Mayor and Council compensation and sought guidance from Council as to whether there was support for modifying these figures, which were last adjusted in January 2017. Councilmembers generally gravitated around an increase in Councilmember Compensation to a total of \$10,000 - \$12,000 annually, and an increase in Mayoral Compensation to \$14,000 - \$14,500 annually. Mr. Garcia was directed to bring forward an ordinance for consideration at a business meeting in the near future.

C. 316 Malden Street Discussion

Mr. Garcia presented a summary of the property's history and existing conditions. Mr. Garcia briefly talked through the alternative approaches to disposition (or retention) of the property as presented in the packet. Council discussed and generally expressed an interest in conscientiously and methodically positioning the property for a light-industrial development, meeting the Industrial Zoning District's Floor Area Ratio (FAR) standard of 0.2. Recognizing that this approach may mean a longer exposure time on the market, continued use of the property for lease at a market rate was also discussed as a possibility for short-term consideration.

D. 314 – 318 2nd Street North Discussion

Mr. Garcia summarized the due diligence undertaken by staff as related to a number of potential development, renovation, or disposition options. Council discussed the options and consensus was that the property was not well-suited in its current state and configuration for residential reuse or redevelopment. Consensus formed around the demolition of the existing structures, restoration of the site, and holding the property for future reuse, potentially in support of redevelopment of the former library and/or expansion of City Hall.

E. 2026 Goal-Setting Process

Council confirmed the continued relevance and applicability of 2025 Goals as a foundation for City operations in 2026. Council expressed support for Mr. Garcia's intention to engage Department Heads in a strategic planning retreat in January. Mr. Garcia confirmed that following this department head engagement, the Council will be reengaged in discussion around the goals and departmental alignment and priorities for 2026.

F. Boards & Commissions Appointment Process

Council discussed the logistics of the 2026 Board and Commission appointment process. Staff was directed to prepare for a "Meet & Greet" event at which applicants would be invited to attend and share more about their interest. The preferred date was January 23 from 5 – 8 pm, with a preference to potentially split the session by different committees (one group meeting at 5, another at 6:30/7).

3. COUNCIL COMMENTS & QUESTIONS

There were 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 9:08 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/: Ryan Garcia
City Administrator