

South St. Paul City Council Work Session

Session Notes for January 26, 2026

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Francis called the City Council Work Session to order at 7:00 PM on January 26, 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, Joe Kaliszewski, Matt Thompson, Pam Bakken, Tom Seaberg, and Todd Podgorski.

Council Member Lori Hansen was absent.

Staff Present: Ryan Garcia, City Administrator, Brian Wicke, Police Chief, Kelsey Gelhar, City Engineer, Clara Hilger, Finance Director, Howie Steenberg, Public Works Director

2. DISCUSSION ITEMS

A. Legislative Update

Mayor Francis and Council welcomed State Representative Rick Hansen. Rep. Hansen shared that this Legislative Session the legislature is expected to focus on passing a Capital Investment (Bonding) Bill. Rep. Hansen thanked the Council for hosting the House Bonding Committee at Public Works, which will help to streamline the consideration of the pool and public works bills that are being drafted for consideration this session. Rep. Hansen recommended that Council pass resolutions in 2026 to acknowledge the progress made on both of these major projects since last session.

Rep. Hansen and Councilmembers also discussed the importance of state assistance in the coming years as it relates to PFAS/PFOS in water supplies. Rep. Hansen shared that he is working across the aisle on potential legislation that would help fund a program through a fee on plastic water bottles.

Rep. Hansen discussed his concerns with recent federal immigration enforcement actions and the impacts expressed to him by constituents. Rep. Hansen advocated for negotiated, long-term, sustainable resolution between the state and federal government. Rep. Hansen shared that the current conditions and circumstances, if persistent into and through the legislative session, could occupy much of the work this legislative session potentially to the detriment of things such as the bonding bill.

Rep. Hansen discussed his commitment to more robust “safeguarding” against fraud. Rep. Hansen shared that steps taken such as more stringent appropriations processes requiring reimbursement (rather than upfront appropriation), improvements in technology and data security, and bolstering application processes and scrutiny were concrete measures that he has supported and worked on.

B. Public Works Central Maintenance Facility – Schematic Design Milestone

Mr. Garcia introduced Matt Lysne and Travis Bren with HCM Architects and Mike Phillips with Kraus-Anderson Construction, the principal project architects and construction management advisor for the project. Mr. Lysne walked through a presentation of the project at the Schematic Design phase, highlighting the plan development process, the current scope of proposed construction work, and the current budget estimate for the project.

Key comments that surfaced during the presentation included:

- Council felt it was critical for the program to include an accommodation for the police storage building. Staff and the project team shared that multiple options were under consideration to accommodate this need.
- Council urged the team to be thoughtful and creative about how to approach the project budget. For example, consideration as to when and how to fund furniture, fixtures and equipment was encouraged. At a high level, Council was hopeful to minimize the amount of debt incurred for the project to the extent feasible.
- Council acknowledged that the site is known to have geotechnical and environmental conditions that challenge its development potential and add meaningfully to the total project cost. Council felt that putting this property to productive public use represented the most holistically beneficial outcome to the City, in part by preserving more “desirable” property for economic development.
- Council felt it would be helpful to incorporate information into future presentations related to the ongoing building, vehicle, and equipment maintenance and repair costs that the City has incurred at its existing facility at 400 Richmond Street.
- Council expressed appreciation for the work that has gone into “right-sizing” the project to fit into the City’s budget targets for this project, reducing the overall cost estimate by more than 15% since the 2024 Facilities Master Plan.
- Council acknowledged that the project represented a generational investment that would have significant financial impacts on the City, but also reiterated that the project was an essential replacement of a 56-year old piece of core public infrastructure.

Mr. Lysne confirmed that, given Council’s feedback and direction, next steps would be to advance with Design Development, leading to the preparation of Construction Documents and the public bidding of the project in Q3 2026. Mr. Phillips identified an anticipated construction schedule of approximately 14 months for the project.

C. 106 3rd Avenue North – Corniea/Minneapolis Gymnastics Update

Mr. Garcia presented a summary of key terms and conditions found in the Letter of Intent, to confirm consistency with Council expectations prior to undertaking the preparation of formal agreements related to the purchase and renovation of the former library building. Council confirmed that the terms and conditions addressed their expectations, but stressed the importance of tight coordination and both practical and financial oversight of the redeveloper throughout the process, given the EDA’s anticipated significant role as a funding partner in the project.

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 9:34 PM.

Respectfully submitted,
/s/: Ryan Garcia
City Administrator