

**WORKSESSION OF THE ANOKA CITY COUNCIL  
ANOKA CITY HALL  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS  
APRIL 27, 2020**

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Rice called the worksession meeting to order at 5:05 p.m.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Present at roll call: Mayor Rice, Councilmembers Barnett, Freeburg, Skogquist, and Wesp.

Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee; Community Development Director Doug Borglund; Police Chief Eric Peterson; Finance Director Brenda Springer; Engineering Technician Ben Nelson; and City Attorney Scott Baumgartner.

**3. COUNCIL BUSINESS and/or DISCUSSION ITEMS**

**3.1 Discussion; Organized Solid Waste Hauling – Schedule Options for Citizen Vote.**

City Manager Greg Lee stated on February 24, 2020 the City Council reviewed the feedback and data associated with organized solid waste collection. At this meeting, the City Council unofficially indicated a desire to pose the question of whether to pursue organized solid waste collection to the citizens of Anoka as a question added to the ballot of a future election. He outlined the process for proposing ballot and said should the City Council wish to proceed with having the citizens of Anoka vote on this question, the next step is to determine whether the Council preference is to include it on the 2020 or the 2022 election ballot. Posing it as a 2020 question would move the issue along and obtain resolution in an expedient manner. A draft timeline was developed for a 2020 scenario, however, having it posed as a 2022 Question allows time to address questions and issues that were raised as part of the initial discussion of this topic. He said no formal action may be taken at a worksession but staff is seeking direction from the City Council as to their preference of which election year this question should be posed to the citizens for a vote, 2020 or 2022.

Councilmember Freeburg stated more information was needed before moving forward.

Councilmember Skogquist said we have seen a lot of data and was in support of letting people choose and noted more voters would appear since it was a Presidential election versus an off-year election and said there was no guarantee that in one to two years future Council would want this question on the ballot therefore this was the time to bring forward, stating this topic has been in discussions since 2015 and it was time for the residents to weigh in and then provide further details.

Councilmember Barnett asked if any reason to not to put this question on the ballot with regard to title and language drafting. City Attorney Scott Baumgartner responded the form of the question has to be neutral and that the City cannot take a position on a topic and had to be careful with materials educating the public. He said the City Charter allows the Council to hold special elections then noted we have to ensure we are not preempted by Statute.

Councilmember Barnett asked for more information about the answer as this cannot be put on the ballot again and could counter the response. Mr. Baumgartner said that scenario was not addressed in Charter but in Statute states a question cannot be brought up again for a period of time but not by a Council, although councils were likely held to the same standards.

The City Council discussed the question and desire to have the question on a ballot and discussed the strategy. Councilmember Skogquist said it makes more sense to include the question in the 2020 election due to anticipated voter turnout, adding if we wait for a future Council they may not want to include, adding he is not sure what more information we need as studies cost a lot.

Councilmember Barnett asked about the public education process. Mayor Rice said the education would be our responsibility in order to help residents make an informed decision and said he was concerned about this becoming a political issue but being on the ballot makes it a fair question to the voters.

Mr. Baumgartner spoke about the importance of being neutral and looking more at the timing should legislation change in the next two years we still have to do negotiations with haulers, adding his hope is by altering legislation and bypassing that onerous process might help deflect some staff time.

Councilmember Skogquist asked when the last time the Statute changed. Mr. Lee responded in 2013 legislation required the process for contracts for 3-7 years, then in 2019 changed to five years.

Mayor Rice noted it was more impactful than other cities for us to place on the ballot.

Councilmember Wesp said it was important for residents to decide and spoke about Bloomington's decision not to listen to a petition which was ruled by the Supreme Court to overrule and noted it was important citizens weigh in but this year may be too soon as we need to get more information in 2022 to be dealt with in a better way.

Councilmember Barnett commented on feedback and information that was difficult to validate on both sides and with 13 points of data needed she did not want to see a rush job based on an open forum.

Mayor Rice spoke about the proposed timeline and worksessions and to allow an opportunity for opponents to speak and agreed 2022 would be best.

Council consensus was to move forward with a ballot question for organized hauling in 2022.

3.2 Discussion; Transportation Update; US Highway 10/169 Improvement Project; Streetscape.

Engineering Technician Ben Nelson shared a staff report with background information stating in 2009 and 2012 the streetscaping/landscaping for the Main Street sub-district was defined when East Main Street and West Main Street were reconstructed. During the planning and design of these projects, Anoka City Council branded the downtown area as “real classic.” At the November 25, 2019 work session meeting, staff discussed the landscaping/streetscaping for the U.S. Highway 10/169 Improvement Project and Council provided input/feedback for the streetscaping. The streetscape and corridor landscaping enhancements included boulevard trees, planting beds with irrigation, concrete center medians, entrance monument signage, ornamental fencing at forest hill cemetery, dual globe decorative lighting, single globe decorative lighting, roadway lighting, and decorative banner poles.

Josh Shields, Project Landscape Architect with Bolton Menk, presented the proposed bridge treatments complementing streetscaping/corridor landscaping in detail and addressed Council questions the outlined next steps that included more technical bridge design for MnDOT review, architectural lighting plan, and preliminary design close to 60% design with MnDOT, and work with the Rum River Bridge design teams to integrate design elements. He provided insight on the architectural lighting as well as retaining wall treatments.

Mr. Nelson said with the US Highway 10/169 corridor’s proximity to downtown and the proposed West Main Street extension, staff has refined the concepts detailing aesthetic treatments for the bridges at Main Street, Fair oak Avenue, and Thurston Avenues; along with retaining walls and corridor streetscaping enhancements. Bridge aesthetic considerations include the following treatments based on past discussion including corridor bridge interchange and underpass for Thurston Avenue interchange and Fair oak underpass, Main Street interchange, Thurston Avenue interchange, architectural lighting, and roadway embankment retaining walls.

Councilmember Skogquist asked about the MSC panel’s pattern selection. Mr. Shields said the difference is the distinction in joint lines and they hoped to decide so to have as a clean of look as possible.

Councilmember Freeburg inquired about repair from car accidents. Mr. Shields spoke about tieback with each and how MnDOT was responsible for repairs painting, adding the City was s responsible for maintenance of graffiti, vegetation, and ensuring a useable and aesthetically acceptable condition. He said for bridges MnDOT does all the inspections, painting, redecking, approach panels and signing and noted the City was responsible for architectural lighting of power and maintenance. He then spoke about the

brick and stained form for longevity and maintenance, noting staining lasts approximately 20 years.

Councilmember Barnett commented about making the design more angular on Main Street and Fair Oak with the brick limestone element, adding the expense was decreased but was still very nice and was a good option, adding the lighting was impactful.

Councilmember Freeburg agreed, stating he liked the lightscaping then asked for more details on anti-graffiti elements. Mr. Shields replied there was a protective coating over the stain and was included in the bid to help protect against water and ultraviolet rays.

Mayor Rice said he liked both options but liked the limestone changes and asked about durability then commented about salt impacts and which would be more durable in winter months. Mr. Shields responded that tall bridges would have a thin element of protection and how anti-graffiti would help protect against salt as well.

Councilmember Skogquist complemented MnDOT on the great job of melding the different ideas into the A-1 option and said anything under will splash 3-4 feet up and how he was more comfortable with something cast, adding he liked the look of angles with lighting, noting the MSC panel shape and would blend as best as possible.

Councilmember Barnett asked about durability differences between the two designs. Mr. Shields said there was no difference in durability and that they would just have to work with the fabricator to ensure it would fit well and work with the designs.

Mr. Nelson confirmed Council's consensus was the A-1 design with the brick/limestone and proposed maintenance plan.

Councilmember Freeburg confirmed there would be no planting of vines.

Councilmember Barnett asked for information on funding. Mr. Nelson replied Anoka County committed \$4 million for any costs and would be applied towards landscaping, West Main Street and utility relocation.

### 3.3 Discussion; Review Parking Signage.

Chief Peterson shared a staff report with background information stating the Anoka City Parking Advisory Board (PAB) have identified the need to direct motorists more effectively to City owned parking lots and parking ramps. The current signage in the downtown area is not of a universal design that allows motorists to follow efficiently. These signs currently consist of white over green, green over white, blue circle P and brown signs. The City currently has 7 different City owned surface lots and 2 parking ramps. The Board feels that the blue circle P sign is the most recognizable sign for public parking. Anoka County recently updated signs directing motorists to their parking ramp on Van Buren Street with the blue circle P signs. At the last Parking Advisory Board meeting, the Board supported the decision to update the public parking signage and

directed the staff to bring this to Council for direction. Chief Peterson reviewed current signage and locations in detail and said estimated costs for 24 new signs of 18” and 24” sizes are \$900.

Council discussed the proposed signage and confirmed blue was the universal color.

Councilmember Barnett agreed with the blue signage and said following Anoka County’s schematic was good but asked that signs be placed in appropriate locations and that sizes do not detract from the parking ramps, adding she hoped the PAB was mindful in their placements.

Councilmember Skogquist agreed then noted perpendicular signage was needed for more visibility on 2<sup>nd</sup> Avenue.

Council consensus was to support the PAB’s recommendation for signage.

### 3.4 Discussion; Development of a Grant/Loan Program to Assist City Businesses.

Finance Director Brenda Springer shared a staff report with background information stating on April 20, 2020, the City Council approved a resolution to temporarily change our utility billing policy. This change allows the extension of the MN cold weather rule by not disconnecting services for non-payment, we are waiving all late fees and have created an application for customers to fill out and arranging payment plans for those customers. She noted this addresses the needs for both residential and commercial and suggested additional potential programs. Ms. Springer then outlined in detail and reviewed pros and cons of other potential programs such as operational grants and others.

Community Development Director Doug Borglund outlined pros and cons of each program then outlined one other program to consider that included the Entrepreneur Fund, Northland Foundation, and The Northspan Group, Inc.’s recently-formed Small Business Relief Fund. The three partners developed the fund in response to COVID-19 and intend to provide grants up to \$5,000 to regional small business owners facing significant financial challenges resulting from the pandemic. He also noted the State of Minnesota is offering aid to businesses then reviewed other cities’ programs including Wayzata, Edina, Maple Grove, Brooklyn Park, Chaska, and Minnetonka. Mr. Borglund shared the possibility of legislative changes as well as County level assistance to help businesses through various programs such as CDBG and others.

Councilmember Freeburg asked about the 2021 levy and lack of resources. Ms. Springer responded about potential concerns including budgeted revenue from Eagle Brook Church, school closings for police security, Pawn America, permit parking revenue, loss of lease income from The Tavern and Mad Hatter, recreation, aquatic center concessions, etc. She spoke about State aid from gas tax and with slowing gas sales would be much less then noted union salaries were settled at 3%, debt on the public safety building, and others.

Councilmember Freeburg shared concerns about deferring rent payments in favor of doing but not sure about how much leeway we have and risky at best and who decides who gets what.

Councilmember Barnett thanked staff for their work, stating without EDA funding it was not as easy to do or as likely to be able to assist small business and how this puts Anoka in a more difficult position. She spoke about the desire for expansion of the current program and letting our residents know this program was available with more latitude to help and not being prejudiced in one specific area but the goal to help as much as possible and said keeping with utility billing makes a lot of sense. She spoke about instead of a loan deferment of WAC/SAC fees for those newer establishments would be best rather than loans and said if we were going to talk about loans would like to see not just grants or zero interest but a stake in the result.

Councilmember Skogquist said this is a systematic issue throughout Anoka but noted we are a small business hub and that residents are getting some money but businesses are not and while there is no EDA we have a revolving loan fund and that it was important then spoke about the five-year loan to Ambi and 10K Brewing and with the \$1.4 million revolving loan fund with a narrow focus this would help grow businesses. He agreed with the investment from owner s and suggested if needed special assessments against real estate could be required.

Mayor Rice asked about the number of credits remaining in the WAC/SAC fund. Ms. Springer replied there were 38 credits remaining in the fund at \$2,582 per credit and the City had approximately \$1,500.

Councilmember Wesp asked about restrictions on the \$1.4 million fund. Ms. Springer replied the policy outlined paying for Metropolitan Council and would have to be amended. She said the benefit was all credits were in commercial areas in the downtown area and awarded and provided an opportunity for businesses to get started and was well on its way to making this a development fund, adding this fits well but the question is how much is Council willing to look at a change and to what amount so the fund works and benefits most businesses.

Councilmember Skogquist spoke about the County email regarding leeway the County has with regard to tax payments and their uniform work to aim for legislation direction and if not would entertain formal discussions.

Councilmember Wesp commented about liquor license fee relief at approximately \$4,400 per month as one opportunity for small businesses downtown. He said his biggest concern was what was going to happen with the tax levy and asked how many asked for utility relief, adding he was in favor of using this money during this emergency. Ms. Springer replied five residential properties and six commercial properties requested assistance.

Councilmember Freeburg said if we do this program residents could ask why this was not applied to the levy to reduce taxes.

Councilmember Skogquist responded that is why the urban renewal program is so important because the levy and utilities were going to be hurting and this is fund, while it had a very limited scope, could be used in other areas to help businesses in tough straits in Anoka.

Councilmember Barnett asked for a reasonable amount from this fund and said she would support WAC/SAC over the next few years then asked how many businesses would want this loan. Ms. Springer suggested up to \$500,000 for total funding with \$5,000 each would be reasonable.

Councilmember Skogquist agreed, stating this amount would help more business and hoped more funding would be available from the federal government, adding this amount would be reasonable and could include parameters for items such as rent.

Ms. Springer shared that HRA Housing Manager Darin Berger commented if we the program was administered in-house the Center for Energy and Environment could administer for the City then outlined the fees, adding this amount would be reasonable.

Councilmember Skogquist asked about workload for this loan program. Mr. Borglund said staff has held no discussions yet but that staff could administer the program in-house if requested.

Mayor Rice noted Council would have to amend the policy anyway once 38 credits were used.

Councilmember Freeburg expressed concern about ongoing maintenance for bridges, lighting, graffiti, and cleaning and said current times revenue could be reduced and adding more programs for staff could be difficult and expressed concern about impacts.

Councilmember Barnett suggested liquor license deferments or other fees and fines and said that could be pulled from WAC/SAC and offered equally to all businesses instead of the application process. Ms. Springer agreed that was an option to defer the City's WAC/SAC fees but noted a large portion was for the Met Council's fee and how the City still had to collect that fee.

Councilmember Skogquist asked if the Council would expand the WAC/SAC program policy to be more general for an economic development program and said this is a program he would want to initiate to be most broad of a way to assist.

Councilmember Freeburg said if we raid this fund it was not designed to draw in new business. Mayor Rice said the fund was to have money to help defer some start-up costs and agreed we would want businesses to survive and draw people to the City then noted

these funds come from businesses in the City and was a natural fit and risk and while expensive to administer would be a great benefit.

Ms. Springer asked for direction on Plan 4 to use deposits toward utility bills to assist. Council was supportive of that program.

Council consensus was to direct staff to move forward with a program but at no more than \$250,000 for the total loan program.

Councilmember Barnett requested information be available for good decision.

Councilmember Freeburg asked about the number of employees included in the criteria based on the \$2,500 maximum, noting mostly small businesses would apply.

Councilmember Wesp said he did not want to put small limitations on the program to exclude people and encouraged program creation by next week. Councilmember Barnett suggested excluding home-based businesses from the program, stressing the need for a brick and mortar presence.

Mr. Lee said staff will work hard and take cues from other cities but asked for parameters to include then shared discussions with the Anoka Area Chamber who suggested deferment of the 2020 street renewal assessment which could be deferred for years one, two, and three with interest.

Councilmember Freeburg noted the City has to pay its bills too and asked if we could afford this deferment. Ms. Springer said we could but cautioned we would have to do that by class and not by application then confirmed interest would not defer.

Councilmember Wesp spoke about the need to be more equitable and suggested paying down levy increase to all residents who live in Anoka. Mayor Rice noted businesses provide relief to Anoka already that benefits citizens and a deferral makes sense with no penalty for prepaying.

Councilmember Freeburg said it was difficult to be equitable with items such as the golf course which is not used by all but is covered by everyone's taxes and makes the City viable and better for all.

Councilmember Skogquist asked about residents is last year's SRP including churches and others. Ms. Springer responded we could delay certifying assessments to the County but noted those already certified could not be adjusted in any event.

Mr. Lee confirmed Council consensus was to allow use of utility billing deposits for current bills, develop a loan program utilizing the Urban Redevelopment Fund up to \$250,000 for consideration at the next City Council meeting, SRP deferring payment for commercial and other properties for 2020 and possibly 2019 if possible.

Councilmember Skogquist asked about restaurant and bars opening June 1 and possible curb and parking use on Jackson Street to help provide additional seating and suggested staff review a possible policy for consideration.

4.1 Staff Update.

None.

**4. COUNCILMEMBERS COMMENTS**

None.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Councilmember Freeburg, seconded by Councilmember Wesp to adjourn the Worksession at 7:35 p.m.

Upon a roll call vote: Mayor Rice, Councilmembers Barnett, Freeburg, Skogquist, and Wesp voted in favor. Motion carried.

Submitted by: Cathy Sorensen, *TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

Approval Attestation:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk