

**North Oaks City Council
Meeting Minutes
North Oaks City Council Chambers
January 11, 2024**

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Wolter called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Krista Wolter. Council Members Mark Azman, John Shuman, Sara Shah, Tom Watson.

Staff Present: Administrator Kevin Kress, City Attorney Bridget Nason, City Planner Kendra Lindahl

Others Present: Videographer Kenny Ronnan.

A quorum was declared present.

3. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

Mayor Wolter led the Council in the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. CITIZEN COMMENTS

There were no Citizen Comments.

5. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Administrator Kress asked Council to move item item 9d Solar Presentation, up to 7b immediately after the Deputy Lassegard's report.

MOTION by Shah, seconded by Watson, to approve the Agenda as revised.

Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

6. CONSENT AGENDA

Councilor Watson noted there was 1 correction to the minutes to amend the School district tax rate. Last paragraph on page 1 of minutes should reflect both White Bear and Mounds View Schools. Added NYFS Contract as 6G.

- a. Approval of Licenses.**
- b. Approval of City Council Meeting Minutes – 12-14-23.**
- c. Approval of 2024 City Hall Holiday Schedule.**
- d. Approval of City Financials.**
- e. Approval of Resolution 1505 accepting donations for Aging Grant Open House**
- f. Approval of GIS and interactive website for Master Infrastructure Plan.**
- g. Approval of NYFS annual contract.** (Standard annual contract added by City Administrator Kress as item 6g.)

MOTION by Watson, seconded by Azman, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented with Member Watson's modifications to the minutes, and addition of item 6g. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

7. PETITIONS, REQUESTS & COMMUNICATIONS

a. Deputy Matt Lassegard Report

Deputy Lassegard was absent. Refer to report included in packet.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

There was no unfinished business discussed.

9. NEW BUSINESS

9a. Presentation on Solar Energy Systems

Mayor Wolter noted that Incarnation Church had asked several months ago if possible to have ground solar panels installed in their back-parking lot. As there is currently no Ordinance addressing ground mounted solar, presentation today is to provide Council information on Solar Energy.

Erin and Kyle, representatives from Cedar Creek Energy, presented information on solar energy. Their company provides both roof mounted solar and commercial ground mounted. They have been in business 17 years, with 65 employees and based in Blaine. Residential solar can include both roof mounted and ground arrays with various styles. Black panels provide a sleeker esthetic appearance, and larger panels provide higher wattage. Solar panels are typically 6 x 3 feet and best oriented to the South. There are different brand panel options as well as color, size, and black vs. framed. Smaller panels are typically used on residential homes to accommodate skylights, chimney, dormers, etc. Efficiency goal is around 20% mark. Sunny days feed energy back to the grid. For excess capacity not used in the home, Excel Energy purchases back the power and the bill offset metering are different at different times of year. The rate they purchase the power varies based on if residential vs. commercial and depending on time of year. Net-metering allows user to dip in at different times of year.

There is an uptrend in solar use and consumers are realizing that that energy is coming from solar either on their own or from grids in other places. Investing in solar allows users to come out ahead in the long-term future as it becomes more standard in the future.

Councilor Shuman asked what type of tolerance neighborhoods are seeing with roof mounted vs. ground based. Cedar Creek noted that it is financially in homeowners' best interest to put it on roof if possible. Most common HOA ordinances require ground mounted behind the house. The State law recently changes that doesn't allow a HOA to restrict a home from generating their own energy. He noted that in a higher developed area with lots of trees it is a bit more difficult to capitalize on solar. Consumption is going to outpace solar in the wintertime. There are solar reward incentive programs in place for installation. There is more flexibility on rooftops in putting on south, east, or west locations while ground mounted is restricted to 1 fixed direction.

Ground mounts are elevated about 3 feet off the ground in order to allow snow to accumulate at the bottom, without impacting the array. Cedar shake and slate roofs are tough to impossible to

install on, and very expensive. Those homeowners may opt for a ground mounted array. The new homes with very steep roof pitch are also extremely difficult to install on as well. The homeowner's panels are fixed in one place and do not move or adjust. It was noted the Incarnation Church discussion is on hold right now while the solar discussion takes place.

The State Statute discussed Homeowner Associations can encourage solar be put in the back, however if the front of the house is more than 10% of energy, then there must be a process to get approved in another location. Ground mounted solar is usually found on larger lots.

Attorney Nason confirmed that the new Statute speaks specifically to roof mounted solar and HOA regulations, not ground.

9a. Consider 2024 City Council Meeting Schedule

Administrator Kress noted the 2024 schedule of Council meetings is for the 2nd Thursday of each month just like the prior year.

MOTION by Watson, seconded by Shah, to approve the 2024 meeting schedule. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

9c. Consider annual appointment resolution

Administrator Kress noted the schedule in the packet is the same as 2023 for appointment. The council can adjust if desired, the resolution would be 1506. Mayor Wolter asked if Councilor Watson would be willing to be primary on #13 and #18. Watson noted he would like to be more involved in the Sheriff's contract. Shah noted she thought the whole Council will be meeting in a few work sessions to discuss this topic. There will be work sessions for Council to discuss the contract that ends in December 2024. Mayor Wolter noted it is good to grow other Council members in some appointment positions.

Shuman is open to Watson taking primary lead on the Sheriff's appointments if Council desires. After discussion between Council, agreed that Watson will take primary on both #12. Watson will also take primary on #13, with Mark Azman as secondary. Shah will take lead on #18, Aman will take secondary which meets Friday's.

MOTION by Shah, seconded by Shuman, to approve the 2024 Appointments with changes to items #12, #13 and #18 as noted in Resolution # 1506. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

9d. Public Hearing – Consider Ordinance Adopting 2024 Fee Schedule

MOTION by Wolter, seconded by Shah, to open the Public hearing to adopt the 2024 Fee Schedule. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

There were no public comments in person or online.

MOTION to close the Public hearing by Watson, seconded by Azman, to close the Public Hearing. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

Kress noted that the only change to the fee schedule from 2023 is an adjustment to the water / sewer rates. They are based off of White Bear and Shoreview rates. This reflects a 6% increase in water from Shoreview (3% from Shoreview, 3% North Oaks). White Bear Township directly bills residents, North Oaks has no input on their rate adjustment. There were no other changes from last year.

MOTION by Shah, seconded by Watson, to approve Ordinance #144 to adopt the 2024 Fee Schedule. Motion carried unanimously by roll call vote.

10. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Nothing to report from Councilor Azman or Shah.

Mayor Wolter noted that meetings are ongoing to move forward with Master Infrastructure planning with a meeting taking place with NOHOA next week.

Member Watson is continuing ride alongs with Deputy Matt around North Oaks and sharing historical information and key places to park as deterrent. He will work with Administrator Kress to find a date for RSCO contract workshop.

Councilor Shuman described the Safety and Security meeting at 5 p.m. earlier that day. Discussed was the 3 components of the safety & security program initiative: Emergency notification system, block captains, and a pilot License Plate Reader program. The undersheriff was well prepared for the meeting to answer questions and listen to concerns. The public spoke both in favor and against the License Plate Reader Program. A list of questions / answers will be put together to help inform the public of how the program could work. Shuman will put together a list of Frequently asked questions and answers and public service announcement. Once comfortable concerns been addressed, Council will decide whether to move forward, and if so, who signs contract, site analysis of where the poles would go, and partnership with North Oaks Company on installation of some of the poles.

11. CITY ADMINISTRATOR REPORTS

Administrator Kress noted primary focus of the meeting with NOHOA next Tuesday will be discussing the pavement standards and their 2020 project which listed each road and determination of what condition it is in. City may like transition to road standards with purpose for safety and security, and utility installs if that comes to fruition. Then possible touch lightly on sewer and water utilities and where we think they could be installed, as well as talk about low pressure sewer and how that could work.

12. CITY ATTORNEY REPORTS

None.

13. MISCELLANEOUS

13a. December 2023 Forestry Report

13b. 2023 Building Official Report

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION by Shah, seconded by Azman, to adjourn the meeting at 8:00 p.m. Motion carried unanimously by roll call.

Kevin Kress

Kevin Kress, City Administrator

Krista Wolter

Krista Wolter, Mayor

Date approved 2-8-2024