

**CITY OF SAINT PETER, MINNESOTA**

**OFFICIAL PROCEEDINGS**

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
JUNE 12, 2023**

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Saint Peter was conducted in the Governors' Room of the Community Center.

A quorum present, Mayor Nowell called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. The following members were present: Shanon Nowell, Brad DeVos, Keri Johnson, Ben Ranft, Darrell Pettis, Emily Bruflat, and Dustin Sharstrom. The following officials were also present: City Administrator Todd Prafke, City Attorney James Brandt, and City Engineer Jeff Domras.

**Approval of Agenda** – A motion was made by DeVos, seconded by Sharstrom, to approve the agenda with a modification to remove the Temporary Tobacco License from the Consent agenda and consider it as a separate agenda item. With all in favor, the agenda was approved as modified.

**Approval of Minutes** – A motion was made by Bruflat, seconded by Johnson, to approve the minutes of the May 22, 2023 regular City Council meeting. With all in favor, the minutes were approved. A complete copy of the minutes of the May 22, 2023 regular City Council meeting is contained in the City Administrator's book entitled Council Proceedings 20.

**Consent Agenda** – In motion by Pettis, seconded by Ranft, Resolution No. 2023–94 entitled "Resolution Approving Consent Agenda" was introduced as modified during approval of the agenda. Upon roll call, with all in favor, the modified Resolution was declared passed and adopted. A complete copy of Resolution No. 2023-94 is contained in the City Administrator's book entitled Council Resolutions 24.

**2023 Library Condenser (HVAC) Replacement Project Bid Award** – Recreation and Leisure Services Director Schugel requested award of the bid for the 2023 Library Condenser (HVAC) Replacement Project to Gag Sheet Metal in the base amount of \$89,800 for a Daikin unit plus \$3,500 for a five-year parts warranty and \$750 for a three-year labor warranty for a total price of \$94,050 which would be funded by the 2023 Equipment Certificate. Schugel noted that although the bid was the second lowest, he felt the added warranties, which were not offered by other vendors, justified taking the slightly higher bid.

Councilmember DeVos questioned how much had been budgeted for the replacement project. City Administrator Prafke noted \$175,000 had been budgeted.

In motion by DeVos, seconded by Johnson, Resolution No. 2023-95 entitled "Resolution Awarding Bid For 2023 Library Condenser (HVAC) Replacement Project" was introduced. Upon roll call, with all in favor, the Resolution was declared passed and adopted. A complete copy of Resolution No. 2023-95 is contained in the City Administrator's book entitled Council Resolutions 24.

**Request For City Assistance: Craft Sale** – City Administrator Prafke recommended approval of a first-time request for a large-scale craft and vendor show to be held in Minnesota Square Park on June 24th. Prafke stated the requested aid was for use of the park; use of restrooms and supplies and a key for the supply area. Prafke noted that while this was a for-profit event as compared to other large events which have been non-profits, the craft sale and vendor event is expected to bring people to the community who may spend money at local retailers. Councilmember Johnson questioned whether the event would have food vendors and/or music. Recreation and Leisure Services Director Schugel, who was coordinating the event with the organizers, said they would not have any food or entertainment offered and that he had required rental of the pavilion as a condition of the event to ensure that something else was not scheduled in the park at the same time. Schugel also noted that as a first-time event in Saint Peter, the organizers were not expecting a large crowd, but were interested in gauging interest in the event which the organizers hold in other cities.

In motion by Johnson, seconded by Pettis, Resolution No. 2023-96 entitled "Resolution Approving Request For City Assistance For A Day At The Park Craft And Vendor Show" was introduced. Upon roll call, with all in favor, the Resolution was declared passed and adopted. A complete copy of Resolution No. 2023-96 is contained in the City Administrator's book entitled Council Resolutions 24.

**City Council Salary Modification** – City Administrator Prafke presented the proposed ordinance that would increase City Councilmember salaries to \$10,000/year for the Mayor with Councilmembers receiving 75% of the Mayor’s salary effective January 1, 2024. Prafke stated the ordinance would also provide for automatic increases in every subsequent even numbered January in the same percentage as the consumer price index for the preceding calendar year based on the Minneapolis-St. Paul-Bloomington, MN-WI, CPI-U as reported by the U.S Bureau of Labor Statistics. Prafke pointed out that increases beginning in even numbered years meet the State Statute regulation that require Council salary increases to take effect after the “next municipal election”.

Councilmember Johnson supported the proposed ordinance and pointed out that the last Council salary increase occurred in 2016 and that increased salaries would be helpful to Council candidates who would incur costs such as childcare as part of their Council service. Johnson also noted that the Saint Peter Council meets more frequently than other area Councils and having a higher salary would enable having a more diverse City Council in the future.

Councilmember DeVos also supported the increase noting that the new salary was less than a three percent (3%) increase each year since 2016.

Councilmember Sharstrom questioned if the ordinance meant the Council would not actually vote on their proposed increases every two years and expressed concern about struggles for taxpayers and rate payers who are already faced with increases in each of the City’s utility fees and refuse fees who would now also be faced with funding a “substantial” increase in Council wages. Sharstrom stated his belief that it was a lot to ask residents to take on.

Councilmember Johnson noted that previous Councils had not asked for increases because they “didn’t need it” but they “could have and should have” and increasing the salary would provide more opportunity for working people and younger people to become the voice of the community. Johnson also said the increase is a step in the right direction because “time has value and we put a lot of work into being Councilmembers and to me, the change is a long time coming.”

Councilmember DeVos agreed with Councilmember Johnson and expressed his belief that lack of change in the past is what had led to the substantial change proposed.

In motion by Johnson, seconded by DeVos, Ordinance No. 58, Third Series, entitled “An Ordinance Amending Saint Peter City Code Chapter 2 ‘Administration’, Section. 2-32 ‘Salaries Of Mayor And Councilmembers’ And Adopting By Reference Saint Peter City Code Chapter 1 Section 1-6, Which, Among Other Things, Contain Penalty Provisions” was introduced. Upon roll call, Councilmembers Bruflat, DeVos, Johnson, Pettis, Ranft and Mayor Nowell voting in favor, Councilmember Sharstrom voting nay, the Ordinance was declared passed and adopted. A complete copy of Ordinance No. 58, Third Series is contained in the City Administrator’s book entitled Council Ordinances 2.

**Weed and Tall Grass Regulations Modification** – City Administrator Prafke presented the proposed ordinance providing for modification to weed and tall grass regulations as had been previously discussed by the Council. Prafke reminded the Council their goals, among others, had been to simplify the current regulations while providing additional options for owners of private residential property to allow for transition to managed natural lawn areas with native vegetation. Prafke suggested modifications to the proposed ordinance to remove the percentage contained in Subd. 4(1) and complete removal of Subdivision 4(5) as some Councilmembers had expressed concern about the language. Prafke noted that the proposed ordinance complied with the new “native landscape” provisions in recent State legislation.

Councilmember Bruflat commended the Council for reaching a consensus on the modifications and opening doors for community members but questioned where the phrase “adjacent to driveway” found in Subd. 4(8) came from. Prafke noted it was contained in the North Mankato ordinance the Council had been using as a template for the new language.

Following additional discussion on the phrase, Councilmember DeVos suggested it come out of Subd. 4(8) and that Subd. 4(4) be modified to say “...must be set back from property lines or neighboring driveways by at least five feet (5’)”.

City Administrator Prafke noted that enforcement for turf lawns will be the same as under current conditions and the new language would become effective upon publication in the St. Peter Herald.

Mayor Nowell suggested that Subd. 4(1) be modified to end at “...may transition an area of lawn on the lot to a managed natural lawn area” and the remainder of the paragraph be deleted.

In motion by Bruflat, seconded by Ranft, Ordinance No. 59, Third Series, entitled “An Ordinance Amending Saint Peter City Code Chapter 54 ‘Vegetation’, Article III ‘Weeds And Grass’ And Adopting By Reference Saint Peter City Code Chapter 1 Section 1-6, Which, Among Other Things, Contain Penalty Provisions” was introduced with all the proposed changes. Upon roll call, with all in favor, the Ordinance was declared passed and adopted as modified. A complete copy of Ordinance No. 59, Third Series is contained in the City Administrator’s book entitled Council Ordinances 2.

**2024 Pine Street Improvements Project (South Minnesota Avenue to South Washington Avenue)** – Public Works Director Moulton requested Bolton and Menk, Inc. be retained to provide engineering for roadway and utility improvements as part of the 2024 Pine Street Improvements Project (South Minnesota Avenue to South Washington Avenue). Moulton reported the engineering work would be approximately \$84,000 and would begin with development of a preliminary report and cost estimate to determine the feasibility of the proposed assessment project. According to Moulton, if the project were determined to be feasible, Bolton and Menk, Inc. would provide for the remaining components of the engineering work.

Councilmember Johnson asked if the project would be on the regular timeline for roadway projects. Moulton noted it would and, if deemed feasible, staff would meet with property owners in the fall before the project is proposed to be awarded in January.

In motion by DeVos, seconded by Sharstrom, Resolution No. 2023-97 entitled “Resolution Retaining Bolton and Menk, Inc. To Provide Engineering For 2024 Pine Street Improvements Project (South Minnesota Avenue To South Washington Avenue) “ was introduced. Upon roll call, with all in favor, the Resolution was declared passed and adopted. A complete copy of Resolution No. 2023-97 is contained in the City Administrator’s book entitled Council Resolutions 24.

**Closed Sessions: Real Estate Transactions** – City Administrator Prafke requested two closed sessions, as authorized by State Statute, to discuss proposed real estate transactions involving the properties at 107 West Nassau Street and 1300 Nicollet Avenue. In motion by Ranft, seconded by Bruflat, Resolution No. 2023-98 entitled “Resolution Calling For Closed Sessions“ was introduced. Upon roll call, with all in favor, the Resolution was declared passed and adopted. A complete copy of Resolution No. 2023-98 is contained in the City Administrator’s book entitled Council Resolutions 24.

The Council recessed at 7:39 p.m. to clear the room for the closed sessions.

The Council convened in closed session to discuss lease of the City owned property at 107 West Nassau Street at 7:41 p.m. The closed session ended at 7:50 p.m.

The Council convened in closed session to discuss purchase of the property at 1300 Nicollet Avenue at 7:50 p.m. The closed session ended at 8:01 p.m.

The Council returned to open session at 8:04 p.m.

**Lease of City owned Property At 107 West Nassau Street** – A motion was made by Pettis, seconded by Sharstrom, to table action on the proposed lease until further modifications can be made to the draft lease. With all in favor, the motion carried.

**Temporary Tobacco License Application** – Councilmember DeVos expressed his objection to retroactive approval of permits and licenses and, more specifically, tobacco licenses where the smoking product is being sold on City property as was the case with the proposed license for Smolder Emporium for sale of smoking products at Blues Fest the previous weekend in Minnesota Square Park. DeVos indicated his belief that if the Council wished to promote a healthy community, allowing sale of such products in a City park was sending the wrong message especially considering the City Council’s support for Tobacco 21. Finally, DeVos mentioned that the applicant should have been fully aware of the need to obtain a license prior to the much-publicized community event of Blues Fest.

City Administrator Prafke responded that it had been policy to provide contingent approval for temporary licenses to help applicants, but it was certainly the Council’s decision whether that policy should continue. DeVos asked for the issue to be discussed at workshop.

Councilmember Pettis asked if Council approval was still necessary now that the applicants had already utilized the license. Prafke stated it was his preference that the Council act on the license and noted that the applicant met all the requirements for the licensure.

In motion by Johnson, seconded by Pettis, Resolution No. 2023-99 entitled “Resolution Approving Temporary Tobacco License Application” was introduced. Upon roll call, Councilmembers Sharstrom, Bruflat, Johnson, Pettis, Ranft and Mayor Nowell voting in favor, Councilmember DeVos voting nay, the Resolution was declared passed and adopted. A complete copy of Resolution No. 2023-99 is contained in the City Administrator’s book entitled Council Resolutions 24.

**Reports**

**Mayor’s Report** – Mayor Nowell had no reports.

**Refuse/Recycling Changeover** – City Administrator Prafke asked Finance Director Vogel to report on the schedule for changeover from LJP Enterprises to West Central Sanitation for refuse hauling. Vogel indicated the change over will happen at the end of June and customers should look for a special mailing around June 19th that will include West Central’s schedule of collection dates/times for both refuse and recycling as well as information on how the LJP curbies will be collected and when new containers will be delivered by West Central.

**Juneteenth Parade Cancellation** – City Administrator Prafke reported the Juneteenth Foundation had decided to cancel the parade proposed for June 17th, but all other Juneteenth activities would continue.

There being no further business, a motion was made by Ranft, seconded by Bruflat, to adjourn. With all in favor, the motion carried and the meeting adjourned at 8:17 p.m.

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Shanon A. Nowell  
Mayor

ATTEST:

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Todd Prafke  
City Administrator