

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
ST. FRANCIS MN
ANOKA COUNTY

WORK SESSION MINUTES
JUNE 11, 2018

Mayor Steve Feldman called the Work Session to order at 5:30 pm

Members present: Mayor Steve Feldman, Councilmembers Jerry Tveit, Joe Muehlbauer, Robert Bauer and Rich Skordahl.

Also present: Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), City Engineer Craig Jochum (Hakanson Anderson), City Administrator Joe Kohlmann, Community Development Director Kate Thunstrom.

1) Code Enforcement

Kate Thunstrom explained the Code Enforcement information as provided in the agenda packet. The City of St. Francis operates under a complaint made basis.

Mayor Feldman stated that he doesn't want to burden staff that's already busy, but he's wondering, just for now, if Public Works mixed with the Police Department could be educated on code compliance. That way, when they are already out and about and they see something that fits the criteria for code compliance, they could notify staff, and staff goes from there. This wouldn't be something they would make a special trip for, just when they are already out on their every day working routes. He's not against the idea of a Compliance Officer, but with everything else that's going on in the city, and the development that's finally starting in the city, he doesn't really want to see a budgeted line item for a seasonal part time/full time employee. He would rather see if we can work it within our own house, not to burden staff but to utilize them in areas where they are already out and about, and of course educating the public too.

Skordahl said that this is one of his pet peeves and he does not want to spend the money on a Compliance Officer. With our overall budget the way it stands today, he would rather have other services than a Code Compliance Officer until this city grows a little bit more. This is another topic that falls into the category of what's the best way to educate people. Some of these neighbors that don't like some of these properties, but don't know the process of reporting it, a Facebook post could reach some people. In our newsletter there's a "did you know" section of 5 or 6 bullet points. That list could be three times that long. He doesn't feel that what we are doing right now is working, and that's not the fault of the city. Maybe we hire a qualified person from Metro West for a week who knows what they are looking for. When you have staff that doesn't do this for a living, drive around the city, what are they supposed to look for? Would you give them a

checklist? You don't want them to come back with a bunch of addresses and then give staff enough work for two days to chase them down to see if they really are issues. He thinks one step would be to try and educate people on the process for reporting anonymously. For a nominal fee, pay someone that's trained to do this kind of stuff, whether it be Metro West or another, to put together an inventory of things that really need to be addressed. He doesn't know the magic answer but doesn't feel we can afford to move towards a full time person at this point. He questioned how we compare to other cities as far as our fee schedule goes. He doesn't want to give someone a \$500 fine for their first offense because if they didn't know they will get it fixed.

Thunstrom said that she hasn't directly compared our fee schedule with other cities, but 90% of the households respond to the Administrative Notice. They get the first notice and either weren't aware, or didn't see it the same way, and a lot of them do clean it up. We also have households that don't get a notice because they are not reported, and we have households that get the notice and just don't care to comply.

Bauer agreed with Skordahl that education is first and foremost. He would have liked to see how many code violations and what the workload is rather than for a seasonal or full time person and what can they accomplish. He knew this was coming down the pipes and has walked a couple of parks himself and there's some extra time out there from our Parks & Rec people. If you get a violation, you can task someone in Public Works just to drive by and see if it's the right address, if there is a violation based on our statutes, and have them knock on the door telling them what needs to be done. To him that's the first step to make sure the city is actually being aware. We don't want to get caught where someone could say that even the city didn't know, and another person comes to the city and says that they provided a letter and pictures and we did nothing. There are those neighbors that are going to constantly badger their other neighbors. There is a happy medium but he thinks they really need to concentrate on the big offenders and he doesn't think that's a full time job in the city.

Muehlbauer agrees with everyone's comments and also doesn't think we need a full time position at this point. He would be interested in any data that they come back with as far as work load. If you are talking about Public Works, the Police Department, or anybody other than someone that is fully trained in this, you would be looking at a huge grey area. Unless it's something completely obvious. It's not really their job and if they are looking for an unsafe deck they aren't able to look for what they really should be looking for. There are so many different possibilities with violations.

Tveit said that he's not in favor of having a Compliance Officer. We are currently on a complaint based system. If someone sees something they call in and it's

the city's responsibility to investigate it. He stated that Thunstrom laid out three scenarios. The first being that someone would get a notice that they are not in compliance and the problem is fixed. It's not an issue at that point because the problem got fixed. The second is that there's an issue but it's not reported. He counts that as no harm, no foul. The last thing is when there's an issue and they've been given a notice of non-compliance and they ignore it. He said that our fee schedule is specifically set up to address that additional cost for that. Like with a fence, they get noticed and have 30 days or 90 days to fix it, and then they get noticed again. The longer it goes on, the more time and money we have invested into the issue. The fee structure was actually set up to address that. If they don't pay it, it gets assessed to their property. He doesn't think we need to change how we are doing it. Sometimes he wrestles with how much he thinks the city needs to get involved. We don't need to go out looking for offenses.

Feldman said that maybe it's a combination of three things. Education, prioritizing the top things we are looking for, and utilizing staff to notify if it is an obvious violation. If it's brought to our attention we have to deal with it. The question is what should be brought to our attention and how to do it. With the help of the public, yes, but at the same time he's pleased with hearing that when 90% are notified, they make the correction. It's the 10% we have to deal with. The city needs to step in when it comes to safety or liability reasons. We owe it to the public to address it.

Thunstrom will contact the local technical colleges and see if there's a chance to get an intern here for the summer. She thinks that they would have had to do that back in February but at least she can get the city's name on a list for the future.

2) Riverbank Lane/Kings Hwy Street Improvement

City Engineer Craig Jochum gave a power point presentation explaining the River's Edge Development project.

Mayor Feldman mentioned that they tried to get the grant money from the Minnesota State Aid Program which hadn't been funded in two years. There were over 270 cities that applied for it for a total of over \$584 million dollars, and there were only \$25 million dollars in play. Of that, \$7.7 million dollars was in play for rural areas, not city, so we had no chance. We tried, we didn't get it and there's nothing we can do about that at this particular point. The council have discussed this through work sessions and they strongly believe that this area needs to be paved and it's gone on too long and too far.

Discussion continued with Riverbank residents regarding the three different options, signage, total costs to the residents, franchise fees and changes in property values.

Council will take the discussions from this work session, rework the numbers, update the information and bring them back to the next work session. They will look at 100% for residents for pavement and the city to pay the rest of it. Or 60%/40% and the whole project being storm water related. This is preliminary and there will be much more design before it gets to the actual work. In the meantime they need to clarify some things and will be checking with Isanti and the other areas and do what they can with them.

Feldman stated that these discussions are a good thing. What he doesn't like is having this council be blamed for 40 years of past council's negligence. He doesn't appreciate that. This council has done nothing but work with the residents and more than one occasion and have shown flexibility when they can. He's not going to worry about being threatened to get sued. He doesn't like being associated with other councils and the mistakes they made 40 years ago.

3) Other Business
NOTHING

Feldman closed the work session at 8:17 pm.