



**Meeting of the City Council
Held at the Elk River Fire Station #2
Monday, April 29, 2024**

Members Present: Mayor John Dietz, Councilmember Jennifer Wagner, Councilmember Mike Beyer, Councilmember Matt Westgaard, Councilmember Cory Grupa

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: City Administrator Cal Portner, City Clerk Tina Allard, Economic Development Director Brent O'Neil, Business Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Joe Stremcha, Fire Chief Mark Dickinson, Environmental Services and Special Projects Director Suzanne Fischer, Public Works Director/Chief Engineer Justin Femrite, Community Development Director Zack Carlton, and Records Specialist Katie Porath

I. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 1:00 PM.

2. COUNCIL VISIONING

2.1 Review and Discuss Mission, Vision, and Goals

Ice Breaker

Staff worked with councilmembers on a letter writing exercise and compared it to responses generated by AI.

Review Values, Vision & Mission Statement 2024 Goals

The Council suggested changes to the Elk River Mission.

Elk River Municipal Mission Components

- Opportunity to live, work, and play
- Responsibly grow
- Meet changing needs - Agile
- Timeless
- Ethical, efficient and responsible
- Work with citizens to achieve goals
- Responsible for every dollar – good stewards
- Help improve citizen quality of life
- Reflect the culture of citizens and what is important

- Together we win

Mr. Portner reviewed the goals set in 2023.

Councilmember Westgaard stated that the goals do not include housing. He wondered if the city could educate residents on the term “affordable housing” so that it does not equate “crime ridden or dysfunctional”. He stated that housing is needed for all levels of employee salaries.

The Council agreed that they would like to see the results of the housing study Sherburne County is conducting as soon as possible.

Public Safety Grant

The city received a grant of \$1,145,601 to be used by the Police and Fire departments.

Mayor Dietz asked if patrol car purchases would be an allowed expense under this grant. Council also questioned if remodeling of the firing range would be allowed. Mr. Portner will research.

The Council will continue a discussion of how to allocate the funds at a future council work session. They were in favor of one-time expenses that would not have on-going costs.

Statewide Affordable Housing Aid

Mr. O’Neil discussed Statewide Affordable Housing Aid funding offered to the city. Sherburne County has discussed sharing their portion pro-rated with cities and, with that amount, the total could be \$270,000.

The Council agreed they shouldn’t turn down the money and the HRA be put in charge of managing it.

The Council recessed at 3:01 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 3:09 p.m.

Chamber Building Vision

The Council discussed proposed repairs on the Chamber of Commerce building. The building and property are owned by the city and leased to the Chamber of Commerce for \$1 per year.

The Council agreed they did not want to put additional money into the property and discussed other locations for the Chamber staff and meeting area.

Staff was instructed to ask the Chamber of Commerce what they can afford for rent and help find an alternative space.

The Council recessed at 3:25 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 3:30 p.m.

Fire Station #1 Vision

Fire Chief Dickinson received a quote of \$25 million to construct a new fire station, which would not include the cost of land acquisition. The new site should be 3 ½ - 4 acres in size.

The Council discussed combining the cost of a building, the aerial fire truck, and a new fire engine together and paying with bonds.

The Council discussed potential locations for a new fire station and instructed Mr. O'Neil to inquire about potential property.

Recreation Staffing Model and Updates

Mr. Stremcha discussed proposed staffing changes at the Furniture and Things Community Event Center to restructure as a hospitality industry focus.

The Council had concerns about staff response to the changes. New job descriptions are created and will be presented to the council at a future council meeting.

Sport Court

Mr. Stremcha presented information on a hard surface sport court that could replace some of the turf fields.

The Council was concerned about affecting current users who need a full turf field. The primary uses of a hard surface sport court seemed to be for pickleball, basketball, or volleyball. Mr. Stremcha stated that the turf would need to be removed and glued back down in pieces each time the change from turf to hard surface was needed.

Alternatives discussed included a Velcro turf or a hard-court surface that goes over one of the ice rinks.

Ms. Fischer left the meeting at 5:00 p.m.

Northbound Liquor Store

Mr. Stremcha discussed the idea of moving the Northbound liquor store and selling the current liquor store site to an interested developer. The project could be financed in-house and repaid at a lower percentage.

The Council instructed Mr. O'Neil to inquire about the availability of property for a new liquor store.

Athletic Fields Master Plan

Mr. Stremcha discussed the results of evaluating the Dave Anderson Athletic Complex, Oak Knoll Athletic Complex, and Plants and Things Recreation Complex.

The Council questioned why schools are closing due to decline in enrollment while the study showed that the need for sport fields is increasing.

Great River Energy (GRE) Account Balance

The Council discussed the remaining funds in the GRE account.

Councilmember Wagner discussed branding for the Furniture and Things Community Event Center.

The Council agreed that the Multipurpose Facility Advisory Commission should look at the proposed branding plan and decide a priority for completion.

The Council recessed at 5:38 p.m. for dinner. The meeting reconvened at 6:05 p.m.

Budget Kickoff

The Council requested that the budget be as cost neutral as possible.

ARPA Funds

Mr. Portner stated that ARPA funds have been allocated but not yet spent. Mr. Stremcha asked if remaining funds could be used toward the hard sports court. Mr. Femrite can check if the State contract has caught up on Public Works vehicles and if any fleet purchases were scheduled for 2024. The Council stated they should continue to discuss the best use of any extra funds.

Goal Setting

Mr. Portner asked if council had any additional goals to add and finalized the list.

Short-term (2024-25)

- Commercial Development
- Budget and sinking fund for building repair.
 - Transition PW Facility bond to general levy (ongoing)
- FT Center fully staff and financially self-sustaining
- Draft a Cost Participation Policy for Trail and Street Improvement Projects
- Line Avenue Cul de Sac

Mid-term (2029)

- Acquire business park land.
 - Assist developers with private acquisition as needed.
- Commercial development
 - CRT Zoning District
 - Hotel/Hospitality Growth
- Oak Knoll/Hale's Field improvement - collaboration with ISD #728
- Parks and Rec app – directions, ads, amenities, park features
- Communitywide Strategic Planning Implementation (downtown district)
- Identify city actions required after Elk River Landfill closure (groundwater)
- Gravel mining closure (transmission line placement)
- Fire Station #1 replacement/improvements
- Implementation of Parks Master Plan
- Implementation of new Housing Study recommendations (workforce housing)

Long-term (2034)

- Urban Service Area expansion
- C/I development
- Development of Specht property in eastern Elk River
- Trail connections
- Pedestrian Trail Connection downtown over the railroad and TH10.
- More retail development in western Elk River
- Riverwalk from Orono Park to City of Ramsey
- Highway 10 safety and mobility improvements, 165th Ave to Jarvis St.
- TH169 and 225th Avenue Safety Improvements
- Implementation of Downtown Small Area Study recommendations
- County Fairgrounds
- CRT Zoning review/update

Mr. Portner will bring the goals back on a future agenda for review and acceptance.

3. MOTION TO ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 07:01 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Katie Porath.



John J. Dietz, Mayor



Tina Allard, City Clerk