CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Rice called the worksession meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

Staff present: City Manager Greg Lee; Police Chief Eric Peterson; Engineering Technician Ben Nelson; Interim Chief Richard Kline; and City Attorney Scott Baumgartner.

Absent: None.

COUNCIL BUSINESS and/or DISCUSSION ITEMS

3.1 Discussion; Fire Department.

City Manager Greg Lee shared a staff report with background information stating it has been over a year since Chief Charlie Thompson submitted his letter of resignation and that Council should start a discussion on the process to hire the Fire Chief. Interim Chief Richard Kline started on July 13, 2020, and a joint meeting with the Champlin City Council has been scheduled for August 20. He said the Champlin City Administrator asked about three desired outcomes of this joint meeting and Anoka’s response was creating transparency and a need to identify any concerns, develop a consensus on a plan or process to move forward in hiring a Chief, and discuss solutions and organizational structure.

Interim Chief Kline shared his background and said he will be resigning his position on October 31, 2020. He said a schedule to hire a Chief with a start date of November 2 has been drafted, however, it is unlikely that will occur in that timeframe. He said given this fact his plan would be to ask former Interim Chief Jon Holmes to take on the position again for a period of a few months. Chief Kline said the City has a very proud and capable fire department and thanked Assistant Chiefs Todd Schewe and Jon Holmes for their great leadership and said he looked forward to working with both Anoka and Champlin moving forward.

Councilmember Wesp asked if Chief Kline anticipated any concerns that would delay the hiring of a permanent Chief. Chief Kline said it was important to identify what the cities were looking for in a Chief and find the right fit and encouraged casting a wide net and
obtaining firefighter input because the department has had a proven track record and history of progressive success and that the cities should not just settle.

Mr. Lee outlined the proposed timeframe for the hiring process and said while it was an aggressive schedule it was doable and that Assistant Chief Holmes was willing to fill in through November if needed. He encouraged both cities to review the job description as two different versions have been presented and the Fire Board has to decide what type of leader they are looking for.

Councilmember Barnett asked why the proposed schedule was so aggressive and more about what the Fire Board is looking for in a Chief. Chief Kline said he will have a better idea soon of the department’s organizational style and modeling and would provide an interim report on observations at that time.

Councilmember Wesp said operationally the department was doing very well and there were no concerns but that the cities simply needed direction from the Fire Board as to why the job description and qualifications changed.

Councilmember Barnett asked questions on who will be in charge of recruitment. Mr. Lee explained the human resources duties were assigned to Champlin and explained how Anoka was conducting the finance and administrative processes with the goal of being involved himself as a Board member. He spoke on how the last candidate did not meet the minimum requirements in experience and command categories which ultimately led to the position not being filled.

Councilmember Wesp questioned having voting members be elected officials and one at large and if that could be changed based on the joint powers agreement (JPA) for more accountability. Mr. Lee responded the city managers were voting members per the JPA and how the second round of interviews resulted in issues with a board member actively recruiting a candidate then voting so staff is reviewing other department JPAs for possible changes.

Mayor Rice asked if there were any points the cities or department should pay particular attention to, noting he served on the fire department for 20 years and commented on the administration over the years. Chief Kline spoke about the firefighters’ perspective and possible conflicting processes and the important work to find the right candidate as well as the need for better communication.

Councilmember Barnett asked about any gaps in requirement so the City was prepared for the meeting with Champlin. Councilmember Wesp spoke on how the dynamics of the two communities were different and challenges in getting firefighters for Champlin and reasons for those differences. Chief Kline spoke about the importance of recruitment and retention and how that should be central to decisions then commented on where to look for candidates.
Mr. Lee spoke about including other topics for the joint meeting with Champlin such as Mississippi River crossing, Highway 169, or the proposed riverboat. Councilmember Barnett responded the Fire Board discussion should be full priority that evening.

Mayor Rice thanked Chief Kline for his assistance and insight.

3.2 Discussion; US Highway 10/169 Improvement Project; Project Staging Overview and Open House Update.

Engineering Technician Ben Nelson shared a staff report with background information stating at the April 27, 2020 work session City Council provided unanimous consent for the streetscaping/landscaping on the City portion of the US Highway 10/169 Improvement project with the structure limestone and red brick treatment chosen. The City has been working over the past year with the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) to coordinate the project staging for the City’s US Highway 10/169 Improvement Project and the State’s Highway 10 Rum River Bridge and Corridor Project which are scheduled to begin in 2022.

Dan Lonnes, Principal Engineer with Bolton Menk, shared a presentation on the project staging and addressed Council questions. He discussed the flow moving from one to two lanes and proposed reliever routes, surrounding roadway network, circulation and access considerations. He outlined the project timeline in detail and reliever routes of Greenhaven Parkway then spoke about temporary signals at Fairoak and Thurston.

Councilmember Skogquist asked about the 4th Avenue bridge opening schedule and about signage to communicate major shifts. Mr. Nelson said the 4th Avenue Bridge will be done in 2023 when Ferry Street is started and an open house will be held soon and how communication was posted on MnDOT’s website and social media.

Councilmember Freeburg confirmed the four lanes will be paved throughout the staging process.

Mayor Rice spoke about the importance of good signage during the project as well as clear speed limits. Mr. Lonnes said they would be reducing design speed to 45 mph.

Councilmember Freeburg asked if Anoka County reduced improvements for 7th Avenue. Mr. Nelson said Anoka County will be reevaluating traffic impacts on 7th Avenue after Highway 10 is open.

Mayor Rice thanked Mr. Lonnes for the information.

3.3 Discussion; Human Rights Commission.

Mr. Lee shared a staff report with background information stating at the March 2019 worksession, Council discussed the City’s Human Rights Commission (HRC). The HRC was re-established in 2003 and at that time was made up of 15 people. They met on a
regular basis to get things going but from 2003-2007 membership, attendance and participation dwindled and the Commission was reduced to 5 members in 2007. They continued to have difficulty being able to meet quorum requirements and very rarely had topics on the agenda to discuss and in 2009 the City Code was amended so the HRC would only meet on an as-needed basis. The HRC has not met since 2012. At that worksession, staff provided information regarding the history of the HRC and the process in place should a person feel their rights have been violated. The consensus of Council was to not make any decisions on whether or not the City should consider disbanding the HRC but the role of the HRC should be altered to something more of an outreach commission. Staff was directed to work to create a subcommittee to the Parks & Recreation Board that would promote diverse arts and cultural activities and events and promote inclusiveness for all residents of the City then spoke more about the Arts and Culture Commission and their mission. He said staff’s position is that having an HRC is redundant since the State of Minnesota has a dedicated department to respond to human rights issues and how there may be other options related to human relations and not necessarily human rights.

Councilmember Freeburg said he suggested the HRC be disbanded a few years ago as they were not active and unsure of work direction, adding there could be liability concerns if reinstated.

Councilmember Skogquist said a narrower focus should be on human rights violations the spoke about the need for a broader direction such as cultural diversity. He said this was important in today’s environment then spoke about the importance of engaging people through offerings of more diverse concerts and events but not as a subcommittee of the Park Board.

Councilmember Barnett said the existing HRC was a potential liability and noted how minutes of the Commission were not readily available and asked if the Commission was not really necessary why create another one with a broader spectrum and suggested instead using the Boards and Commissions already in place.

Mayor Rice spoke about the importance of this Commission and how Anoka needs to be welcoming and accepting of change but recognized there could be a more effective strategy. Councilmember Skogquist spoke about the need for change and different models that included engaging churches and schools but felt it should not be a subcommittee of the Park Board but a separate Commission that would continue to expand and include a staff liaison.

Mayor Rice agreed a more effective strategy should be used.

City Attorney Scott Baumgartner spoke about the current Commission’s goal of preventing hate crimes then commented on the pros and cons of having a Commission and while the intention is good it could be a detriment to some criminal cases and should offer other avenues for people
Mayor Rice commented about the recent appearance by high school students and their expectations of actions against discrimination and if a Commission can give voice and strategy, we should still broaden the scope.

Councilmember Wesp spoke about diversity training from the school district and partnership opportunities then asked about racial issues in our community as he was not in favor of moving forward in the current form. Police Chief Eric Peterson responded that there have been crimes committed on race over the years crimes but not many and stressed the importance of listening and building relationships over time.

Councilmember Barnett spoke about the importance of partnering with Boards and Commissions on all levels.

Councilmember Skogquist shared how he served on the Park Board for 9 years and the importance of being involved and as the HRC is not meeting at the moment he supported a different focus with this Commission.

Council consensus was to initiate actions toward recognizing diversity and addressing community participation, acceptance and inclusiveness going forward and disbanding the Human Rights Commission as it exists today.

Mr. Lee said staff will work to identify other areas to focus on and celebrate all diversity and be welcoming to all communities while disbanding the current Human Rights Commission.

4. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Freeburg, seconded by Councilmember Wesp to adjourn the Worksesson at 6:56 p.m. to enter into a closed session pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05, subd (c) to discuss development sites/land acquisition. Motion carried.

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

Approval Attestation:

Amy T. Oehlers, City Clerk