

**MINUTES OF THE WORKSHOP MEETING  
CITY COUNCIL  
LITTLE CANADA, MINNESOTA**

**SEPTEMBER 23, 2020**

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof a Workshop meeting of the City Council of Little Canada, Minnesota was convened on the 23<sup>rd</sup> day of September, 2020 in the Conference Room of the City Center located at 515 Little Canada Road in said City.

*In accordance with the requirements of Minn. Stat. Section 13D.021, the City Administrator has determined that an in-person meeting is not practical or prudent because of a health pandemic or an emergency declared under Chapter 12 of the Minnesota Statutes. Because of the health pandemic and emergency declaration, it has been determined that attendance at the regular meeting location by elected officials and members of the public is not feasible. Therefore, some or all of the City Council members may be participating by telephone or other electronic means. This meeting will be recorded in its entirety.*

*Members of the public may monitor the meeting on the CTV North Suburbs website (live stream) or use the meeting link provided on the city website prior to the meeting.*

Mayor John Keis called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. and the following members of the City Council were present at roll call:

**CITY COUNCIL:** Mayor Keis, Council Members Fischer, Torkelson, McGraw & Montour.  
Absent: None.

**ALSO PRESENT:** City Administrator Chris Heineman, Parks & Rec/Community Services Manager Bryce Shearen, Finance Director Brenda Malinowski, Public Works Director Bill Dircks, Community Development Director Corrin Wendell and City Clerk Heidi Heller

**MORRISON/MCMENEMY STORMWATER DRAINAGE**

The Public Works Director explained that in February the Council was asked to consider a project to clean out a natural wetland area that would cost \$42,000. He stated that due to the high cost and the City having no easements or maintenance agreements on this private property, the Council opted to look at other options, including potentially something that could be done by Public Works staff. The Public Works Director shared photos of the ditch from early 2020 that showed water backing up, along with photos taken this week where the ditch area is completely dry, although the wetland area is still soggy. He noted that the wetland area is very overgrown which also may be hindering the drainage. He stated that if staff simply dug out the ditch and put the material along the banks instead of removing it, it would be much more cost effective. He reported that he has pricing for renting equipment from Tri-State Bobcat, and also talked to a contractor about hiring a professional equipment operator and a larger piece of equipment on an hourly basis. He stated that he estimates this option would cost around \$3,700.

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The Public Works Director explained that the other issue is the long-term maintenance of this area. He reported that the City Attorney shared the opinion that the City has no obligation to access or maintain this privately-owned area since there are no easements in place. He explained that over the last few years the City has had to deal with water problems since the water table got high due to several years of high rainfall. He stated he would like to move forward with some sort of work, but we also need to decide how to pay for it. McGraw asked if we do this work now, do we have to keep cleaning it out. The City Administrator stated that the Council could require maintenance agreements with the properties that are adjacent to this drainage area. Fischer asked if the City should pay for this now, and wants to ensure that the City does not pay for this again. He asked if there should be a cost share now. McGraw asked if wetland gets bigger when it is not maintained. The City Engineer stated that when plants grow and shed leaves and sticks, it builds up and can potentially cause the wetland size to increase.

Fischer clarified that this area was last cleaned out in the 1980's. The Public Works Director stated that was correct. Keis asked if that was done by Ramsey County. The Public Works Director stated that he found records indicating that it was a city project.

Ken Timm, 2442 Morrison Avenue, asked if this area was part of the Ramsey Washington Metro Watershed District, and do they have any responsibility. The Public Works Director stated that this is a naturally occurring wetland which the Watershed District would not actively manage.

Joe Vitale, 2434 Morrison Avenue, explained that he is probably the most affected property. He noted that this area has not been cleaned out in over 35 years so the City would not have to do anything here every few years. He explained that there are water overflow problems in other areas of his neighborhood that the City does not know about. He stated that the City has to do maintenance on things. Mr. Timm stated that water builds up on their properties in order to get over the hump and be able to finally run down the ditch into the wetland to the south. Mr. Vitale stated that they have paperwork showing there are easements in place. The City Administrator explained that the City Attorney researched with Ramsey County and there are no records of easements being recorded on the properties in this area.

Keis stated that the \$3,700 cost is not so much the issue, as much as this is potentially setting a precedent. He stated that City staff can do some additional research and come back to Council with a recommendation.

Montour stated that his opinion is to do this project, but verify that there is either already easements or get them. He stated that there needs to be a plan for how to move forward with this. McGraw stated that he wants to determine what we would do across the city with the other drainage problems before going forward with this project. Fischer stated he agrees with McGraw and asked if we are under a time constraint. The Public Works Director stated it is dry now, but this work is best done in the winter when the ground is hard. Mr. Vitale explained that it is usually wet there in the winter. McGraw asked that the City Attorney again review why the letter the residents have about easements is not accurate.

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**2021 PRELIMINARY BUDGET DISCUSSION**

The Finance Director explained that tonight staff and Council will continue the 2021 budget discussion from the last workshop. She explained the taxable market changes and how that will affect property taxes. The City Administrator reviewed the budget addition of contracting with Ramsey County to run elections for the city. He stated that the City Clerk has taken on more human resource duties and he is also proposing to reclassify the Clerk position into a City Clerk/Human Resources Manager and it would be more feasible if the election duties were passed to the county.

The Community Development Director reviewed the budget addition for a zoning code update. She stated it would involve eliminating outdated terms and regulations and provide better organizational structure. She stated she would lead the project along with Bill Weber, Weber Community Planning. The City Administrator stated staff is proposing to use fund balance to pay for this one-time cost of \$22,500. Fischer suggested also using capital improvement funds.

The City Administrator stated that staff is also proposing to budget \$25,000 to put towards a rate study for adding a stormwater fee to fund proactive stormwater maintenance. He noted that Little Canada is one of the only cities who does not collect a storm water utility fee. He explained that the MS4 Permit fee is anticipated to increase substantially which will need a revenue source to pay for. He noted that there are other storm water projects needed, but there is no specific source of funds to pay for these.

Torkelson stated that he feels all three of these additional budget items are priorities. Montour asked what the levy percent would go to if all three of the additional items are included. The Finance Director explained that the fund balance is proposed to be used for the zoning code update and rate study since they are one-time costs, and the levy would increase from 2.68% to 3.48% if the election contract is added. Torkelson stated that he did not see anything budgeted to review the police services contract costs. McGraw stated that he would like to understand the formulas used by the Sheriff's Department to determine the costs that each city is charged.

**There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned at 7:29 p.m.**

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John T. Keis, Mayor

Attest:

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Christopher Heineman, City Administrator