

**ANDOVER CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING – JANUARY 14, 2025
MINUTES**

The Andover City Council Special Meeting was called to order by Mayor Jamie Barthel, on January 14, 2025, 6:00 p.m., at the Andover City Hall, 1685 Crosstown Boulevard NW, Andover, Minnesota.

Councilmembers present: Rick Engelhardt, Scott Schue, and Johnathan Shafto

Councilmembers absent: None

INTERVIEWS OF PLANNING & ZONING COMMISSION, PARK & RECREATION COMMISSION, AND NATURE PRESERVE COMMISSION

Kristin Lackie -Park & Recreation Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Ms. Lackie and asked her to tell the Council about herself and why she is interested in being reappointed to the Park & Recreation Commission.

Ms. Lackie introduced herself and gave the Council a brief background. She shared why she is interested in being reappointed to the Park & Recreation Commission.

The Council asked Ms. Lackie a few questions.

Mayor Barthel thanked Ms. Lackie for applying for the Park & Recreation Commission.

Roger Grout – Park & Recreation Commission; Planning & Zoning Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Mr. Grout and asked him to tell the Council about himself and why he is interested in being on either the Park & Recreation or Planning & Zoning Commission.

Mr. Grout introduced himself and gave the Council a brief background. He shared why he is interested in joining the Park & Recreation or Planning & Zoning Commission.

The Council asked Mr. Grout a few questions.

Mayor Barthel thanked Mr. Grout for applying for the Park & Recreation and Planning & Zoning Commission.

Chuck Naughton - Planning & Zoning Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Mr. Naughton and asked him to tell the Council about himself and why he is interested in being reappointed to the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Mr. Naughton introduced himself and gave the Council a brief background. He shared that he filled the vacancy on the Commission last year. He said serving on the Planning and Zoning Commission has encouraged him to reapply as he has learned a lot and has seen how the community engages with the Commission.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Naughton for an example of his worst engagement with a resident while serving on the Commission. Mr. Naughton shared he has not had many negative experiences as a Commissioner. He explained some residents have had issues with the proposed development by Crooked Lake. He noted the frustration from the residents has not been directed at him, but it was a heated discussion had by the residents.

Councilmember Shafto asked Mr. Naughton what takeaways he has from his time on the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Naughton said his key takeaways would be the impact that the Commission has on people and how they respond. He noted the residents and neighbors have rallied together to share their opinions with the Commission, which he finds as very important.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Naughton what some of the biggest issues he sees Andover facing in the future regarding planning and zoning. Mr. Naughton noted traffic control will be very important, especially on the main roads. He added there is also a need in the community for certain kinds of businesses, such as restaurants and eateries.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Naughton what role he sees the Council has in relation to the Commission. Mr. Naughton shared the Planning and Zoning Commission primarily looks at the facts against the code and regulations in place while there is a lot more to be discussed in regard to these projects or developments. He said this is where the Council comes in and the Planning and Zoning Commission makes the recommendation to the Council.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Naughton what he believes sets him apart from other applicants for this role. Mr. Naughton said he does have some experience already serving on the Planning and Zoning Commission. He added in his day job, he is an attorney who works for the City of Minneapolis and has a history in urban development. He shared he understands the rules and regulations as he has been involved with development projects in the past.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Naughton if there has been a time since he has served on the Planning and Zoning Commission where he voted one way and the Council voted the opposite, and if so, how he reacted to this. Mr. Naughton stated he had no experience with this while serving on the Planning and Zoning Commission; however, it did happen when he served on the Park and Recreation Commission. He explained the Park and Recreation Commission was all on board with a pickleball complex and the Council was not. He said he understood that the Council felt it was not the right time for this although he did not agree with the decision.

Mayor Barthel thanked Mr. Naughton for reapplying for the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Ryan Dawson - Park and Recreation Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Mr. Dawson and asked him to tell the Council about himself and why he is interested in being on the Commission.

Mr. Dawson introduced himself and gave the Council a brief background. He shared he has recently become interested in how government works and wants to make a difference in his community. He said Park and Recreation seems like it will be a great fit for him as he just adopted a few Andover parks last year with his soccer club. He added he has discovered that the City has more parks than he realized.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Dawson which Andover park is his favorite. Mr. Dawson said Rose Park as he lives right around the corner from it and his children have grown up playing at this park. He stated it has been fun to see the park grow over the years.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Dawson if he sees any drawbacks for the City having so many parks. Mr. Dawson said he imagines maintenance costs can be high with the number of parks the City has. He added there is likely also difficulty with monitoring each park to know what kind of condition they are in.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Dawson if there is anything he could do to remedy these issues if he got the role on the Park and Recreation Commission. Mr. Dawson said he works as a plant manager at a manufacturing facility, so he has experience controlling costs, as well as creating policies and procedures from a risk management perspective.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Dawson if he had watched any previous Park and Recreation Commission meetings or read any of the minutes from past meetings. Mr. Dawson stated he has read the minutes from a few past meetings, but he has not done much other research into the Commission.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Dawson what he sees as some of the challenges moving forward with the parks system in Andover. Mr. Dawson said funding is likely one of the biggest challenges they would face. He noted that differences of opinion could also be a challenge. He shared he likes to be a mediator and a good listener to find some common ground amongst differing opinions.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Dawson what sets him apart from the others who applied for the Park and Recreation Commission. Mr. Dawson stated he is an innovator and problem solver who finds solutions to problems that arise every day. He added he is a team player and knows when to pick his battles.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Dawson how he sees the parks working with organizations like the Andover Soccer Club. Mr. Dawson noted the parks are a great resource for any youth organization. He added the Andover Soccer Club has moved from Ham Lake to Oak View Middle School and he hopes to be able to funnel kids in the community from recreation soccer, through the middle school and into high school.

Mayor Barthel indicated if Mr. Dawson does not get chosen for the role on the Park and Recreation Commission he can still apply again in the future. Mr. Dawson added if the Council sees his current work with adopting parks as a conflict of interest, he would be interested in serving on a different Commission if the Council sees fit.

Mayor Barthel thanked Mr. Dawson for applying for the Park and Recreation Commission.

Jonathan Gwinn - Nature Preserve Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Mr. Gwinn and asked him to tell the Council about himself and why he is interested in being on the Commission.

Mr. Grout introduced himself and gave the Council a brief background. He shared he loves this community as he has grown up in it and seen all of the great changes that have happened. He said he feels called to work with the Nature Preserve Commission as he wants to seek the betterment of the community. He noted it is important to him that the community is valued and they seek what is best for it. He shared his passion for natural resource conservation for residents and wildlife alike.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Gwinn how he would bring awareness to the nature preserves with residents. Mr. Gwinn explained the Commission has worked on this for many years. He said it is important to educate the community. He shared the Commission has had photo sessions where they take pictures of the preserves and post them on the Andover Facebook page to help people become aware of these areas within the City. He added they always look for creative ways to educate the community. He suggested having a pamphlet for new homeowners about the nature preserves. He noted they had partnered with DaVinci Academy in the past where they worked with students to educate them on the preserves.

Councilmember Shafto asked Mr. Gwinn if the partnership with DaVinci Academy has been done regularly. Mr. Gwinn said no and shared that this was a one-time event.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Gwinn how long he has been on the Nature Preserve Commission. Mr. Gwinn shared he has completed three years on the Commission.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Gwinn how he would react if he made a presentation to the Commission or the Council and did not get the reactions and responses he was hoping for. Mr. Gwinn shared he always lives with hope for future opportunities. He added he would be looking

for some middle ground and how they would be able to work together to come up with something that would work. He shared when he gave his tree proposal in the past, there was a lot of work and shifting of the proposal to get it to a place that everyone was in agreement with. He noted he never stops fighting for what he believes in.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Gwinn how the Nature Preserve Commission could be a bigger asset to the community. Mr. Gwinn stated Andover is a developing community and as preserves are closer to development, they are becoming more used. He said the preserves are such an asset to the community which is valuable. He added the nature preserves offer a unique experience that people cannot get in their backyards. He explained that preservation does not come naturally, and a lot of work had to go into preserving these areas which make them special places.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Gwinn what his next mission is now that his tree proposal has been passed. Mr. Gwinn shared his next mission is exploring potential land acquisition opportunities and creating a sustainable funding mechanism.

Mayor Barthel thanked Mr. Gwinn for reapplying for the Nature Preserve Commission.

Scott Hudson - Planning & Zoning Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Mr. Hudson and asked him to tell the Council about himself and why he is interested in being on the Commission.

Mr. Hudson introduced himself and gave the Council a brief background. He shared he has been on the Planning and Zoning Commission since 2016 and it has been great to see the City grow over this time. He said there will be challenges that they face over the next few years, and he wants to be a part of finding the solutions to these challenges.

Councilmember Shafto asked Mr. Hudson what he sees as the big challenges that Andover will face in the next few years. Mr. Hudson said they are running out of space to develop so they are seeing a lot of infill. He added they also have to deal with the density changes from the Met Council.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Hudson what makes him stand out from the other applicants. Mr. Hudson said he has been on the Planning and Zoning Commission for nine years and he comes from a banking and finance background. He noted that his well-rounded background makes him an asset to the community.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Hudson what innovations or ideas he has to bring more business to Andover. Mr. Hudson noted restaurants have always been a challenge for the community. He explained the City also does not have a lot of commercial sites.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Hudson what are the things the Planning and Zoning Commission will have to focus on in the next three years. Mr. Hudson shared density issues will be the biggest issues that they face. He noted they are going to have an extremely difficult time explaining the density requirements to the residents as most residents in Andover live here because they like the rural feel of the City. He stated no matter where they develop, it will have to be more dense.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Hudson how he felt in times when the Council went against the Planning and Zoning Commissions recommendation. Mr. Hudson shared ultimately these decisions are up to the Council to do what they wish. He said everyone will have their own personal opinions and as long as they have taken into account what the residents want and the Commission has put forth a recommendation that is legal and fair, then whatever decision the Council makes is fine with him.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Hudson how he feels about a development that would meet the average lot size requirement but some of the lots will have additional benefits due to their larger lot size and others will not, like the proposed development on Ward Lake Drive. Mr. Hudson noted if the lots average out to the lot requirements, then he is okay with this. He noted the Pedersen Farms development is in a similar situation, so they have already set this precedent. He added homeowners should know what they can and cannot do with their property when they buy it and they should understand what benefits they may miss out on by having a smaller yard.

Mayor Barthel thanked Mr. Hudson for reapplying for the Planning and Zoning Commission

Emily Thomsen - Nature Preserve Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Ms. Thomsen and asked her to tell the Council about herself and why she is interested in being on the Commission.

Ms. Thomsen introduced herself and gave the Council a brief background. She shared she is an environmental educator, so she is interested in nature preserves both personally and professionally. She noted she lives right near Martin's Meadows, and she frequents the area often. She added she is also interested in how Commissions work.

Councilmember Schue asked Ms. Thomsen what she thinks is her biggest asset that she could bring to the Nature Preserve Commission. Ms. Thomsen said she was reviewing some of the meeting minutes from past meetings where they discussed the goals of the Commission. She stated one of the goals that stands out as it is a strength of hers is communication around sharing the nature preserves with the community, so they are aware of what the nature preserves are.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Ms. Thomsen what roadblocks she could foresee if they tried to implement an astrology program in the nature preserves. Ms. Thomsen stated the nature preserves are great because they are quiet; however, they do not have marked parking which could be a

concern at night. She noted some of the preserves are in wooded areas so they would not be able to see the sky.

Councilmember Shafto asked Ms. Thomsen about her experience working in communications. Ms. Thomsen shared she works at a nature center, and she communicates with teachers and works with children that come to her center. She added she also helps park users with any questions they may have, including reading the park maps and reviewing rules for what is allowed in the parks. She stated she also was in charge of the volunteer newsletter at the nature center and makes posts on social media.

Mayor Barthel asked Ms. Thomsen what things stood out to her when she reviewed the meeting minutes for past meetings. Ms. Thomsen said one thing that stood out to her was the night sky program that Councilmember Engelhardt had just mentioned. She explained in her day job, they do primarily daytime activities and the idea of an evening activity piqued her interest. She added the discussion around building a boardwalk over the ditch also stood out to her.

Ms. Thomsen asked about the expectations for the role outside of meetings. Mayor Barthel shared the expectation for every Commissioner is different as they have some Commissioners who are heavily involved and others who are not. He said some Commissioners are not active when it comes to projects and planning and others act more as cheerleaders and promote the nature preserves on social media.

Ms. Thomsen asked if anyone on the Council serves on the Nature Preserve Commission. Mayor Barthel said no and explained that the City's three main commissions are advisory groups that make recommendations to the Council.

Ms. Thomsen asked what the main project areas are for the Nature Preserve Commission. Councilmember Engelhardt said he sees the main focus of the Commission as raising awareness for the residents. Councilmember Shafto added they want people to bring passion to the Commission.

Mayor Barthel thanked Ms. Thomsen for applying for the Nature Preserve Commission.

Mark Howard - Planning & Zoning Commission; Park & Recreation Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Mr. Howard and asked him to tell the Council about himself and why he is interested in being on a Commission.

Mr. Howard introduced himself and gave the Council a brief background. He shared he is more interested in the Planning and Zoning Commission; however, he is open to the Park and Recreation Commission as well. He shared he has lived in Andover for 32 years and wants to use his retirement to give back to his community. He added he has always wondered how the planning and zoning process worked and he would like to be involved in the process.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Howard what skills he feels he would bring to the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Howard shared he was a high school science teacher, so he likes knowing how things work. He noted when it comes to planning and zoning, there is a balance that has to be found between what is right for the community and the rules and regulations outlined.

Councilmember Shafto shared the Met Council is currently mandating that the City has higher density. He asked Mr. Howard how he would propose dealing with the mandates from the Met Council and the residents who may disagree. Mr. Howard noted the Met Council will always look at things from the big picture view where the City will look at it on a micro-scale. He said they will need to find common ground between the direction being given by the Met Council and what works best for the City.

Councilmember Shafto asked Mr. Howard if they were in a situation where they had to either develop at the density that the Met Council is requiring or to not develop at all, how he would propose to talk to a developer or landowner about their property. Mr. Howard said he would want to provide the developer or landowner with every recourse they have so they know that no stone has been left unturned in advocating for them.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Howard what kind of retail Andover is missing. Mr. Howard said they do not have a real downtown area. He noted that retail is currently only in certain areas. He added they could use more restaurants or encourage development in an industrial park.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Howard if he has read the meeting minutes of any recent Planning and Zoning Commission meetings. Mr. Howard said yes and shared the whole process is very intriguing to him.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Howard how he would handle it if the Council disagreed with the recommendation of the Commission. Mr. Howard said that it would hurt because there would be a lot of time and effort put into making that recommendation; however, he understands that the Council is the representative body that makes these tough decisions.

Councilmember Shafto noted residents always want as low of density as possible whereas developers want as high of density as possible and there is not always a way to make everyone happy. He asked Mr. Howard how he would approach dealing with the public when they are voicing their concerns. Mr. Howard shared he would want to make sure that the residents feel that their needs and voices have been heard fairly. He said he would always want to make sure they do the best they can for the residents regardless of the outcome.

Mayor Barthel thanked Mr. Howard for applying for the Planning and Zoning Commission and the Park and Recreation Commission.

Eric Johnson - Planning & Zoning Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Mr. Johnson and asked him to tell the Council about himself and why he is interested in being on the Commission.

Mr. Johnson introduced himself and gave the Council a brief background. He shared he is interested in the Planning and Zoning Commission as he wants to give back to his community. He said he always wants to learn about the planning and zoning process and how to balance the City's needs with the requests that they receive.

Councilmember Shafto asked Mr. Johnson what skills he could bring to the table if he were selected for the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Johnson said he would take time to learn and understand the process and ask questions along the way. He added he could also bring an outside perspective as a citizen.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Johnson what makes him the right person for this position. Mr. Johnson said he can bring empathy and a recovery perspective to the Commission. He explained he can view things based on the needs of the community and would work to represent the community.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Johnson how long he has lived in Andover. Mr. Johnson said he has lived in Andover since 1998 other than the years he was serving in the Marine Corp.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Johnson if he has attended any past Planning and Zoning Commission meetings or if he has reviewed any of their meeting minutes. Mr. Johnson said he has not attended any of the Planning and Zoning meetings, but he did attend a Council meeting where there was a developer present for the property across from Crooked Lake Elementary.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Johnson what piqued his interest about the Planning and Zoning Commission. Mr. Johnson explained his awareness of how the planning and zoning process works is what made him interested in the Commission.

Mayor Barthel noted that Mr. Johnson was in the audience when the developer presented on the property across from Crooked Lake Elementary. He asked Mr. Johnson his opinion on this development and how he would feel about the seven-unit development. Mr. Johnson explained the density did not match the neighborhood. He said he wants the integrity of the City to be maintained and not to just give in to developers because they want to make the most money possible off of the development.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Johnson what made him think about things from the developer's perspective that they just want their pockets filled. Mr. Johnson explained there are a lot of systems that fail to demand the honesty and integrity that are expected from everyone. He said developers try to squeeze in as many lots as they can at times, and it may not look good or may leave behind a mess for the City to clean up. He stated it would be a disservice to not call out this kind of behavior.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Johnson about some of his major accomplishments that he had on the Anoka-Ramsey Student Senate. Mr. Johnson shared there is more awareness and advocacy for recovery because of his efforts. He explained they had someone from Anoka County come in and share about opioids and fentanyl and their effects on people. He shared a year ago he felt that his voice did not matter, and no one cared about his story; however, now that he is in recovery and working on himself, he speaks to those who could also be struggling.

Mr. Johnson asked how often the Planning and Zoning Commission meets. Councilmember Shafto shared the Commission meets twice a month on Tuesday evenings.

Mr. Johnson asked what kind of experience they were looking for in a Commissioner. Mayor Barthel said the biggest thing they are looking for is someone who has an understanding of development and density, as well as an understanding of how the City should look in the future.

Mayor Barthel thanked Mr. Johnson for applying for the Planning and Zoning Commission.

Gadisa Berkessa - Planning & Zoning Commission

Mayor Barthel welcomed Mr. Berkessa and asked him to tell the Council about himself and why he is interested in being on the Commission.

Mr. Berkessa introduced himself and gave the Council a brief background. He thanked the Council for the opportunity to interview for the Commission. He shared he is new to the area and he would like to contribute something to his City and his neighbors.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Berkessa what distinguishes him from all of the other applicants for this role. Mr. Berkessa said he has experience in this field as he is an engineer. He added he is also interested in helping his neighbors in the same way that others have helped him. He shared that he is always open to learning new things and likes to focus on solving problems.

Councilmember Shafto asked Mr. Berkessa if he has watched any previous Planning and Zoning Commission meetings or read any of the meeting minutes. Mr. Berkessa said he has not.

Councilmember Shafto shared the role of a Commissioner on the Planning and Zoning Commission is very analytical. He asked Mr. Berkessa what approach he would take to look at the rules in code and apply them to different developments and what the community wants. Mr. Berkessa shared he went through the planning and zoning process in the past when he did work on his basement, so he is familiar with that part of the process. He added as an engineer, he is always looking at plans and drawings. He explained they will have to prioritize what is most important and make the decisions that are best for the community. He added they also have to think of the City that they will be leaving behind for their children and future generations.

Mayor Barthel asked Mr. Berkessa about his opinion on the Met Council and their ability to dictate what density looks like in Andover. Mr. Berkessa stated they need to have a short term and a long term plan. He said the decisions by the Met Council may impact the City in the short term, but they also need to look at the impacts for the long term. He shared he believes in having lesser density. He added decisions they make about density also directly affect the City's infrastructure and schools and they need to make sure everything balances out.

Councilmember Schue asked Mr. Berkessa how he would feel if the Council goes against the Planning and Zoning Commission's recommendation. Mr. Berkessa said it is ultimately up to the Council to make the decisions that are best for the City and they can choose to agree or disagree with the recommendation of the Commission.

Mayor Barthel thanked Mr. Berkessa for applying for the Planning and Zoning Commission

DELIBERATION

The Council decided to wait until the final interviews have been conducted to make appointments to the Commissions.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Barthel declared the Special Meeting adjourned at 9:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Ava Major, Recording Secretary
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.