

**ANDOVER CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING – JANUARY 18, 2024  
MINUTES**

The Andover City Council Special Meeting was called to order by Mayor Sheri Bukkila on January, 2024, 6:00 p.m., at the Andover City Hall, 1685 Crosstown Boulevard NW, Andover, Minnesota.

Councilmembers present: Jamie Barthel, Ted Butler, Rick Engelhardt, and Randy Nelson

Councilmembers absent: None

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

***Karen Godfrey - Planning & Zoning Commission***

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

Ms. Godfrey shared she is very dedicated to this community as she has lived here for 25 years and service to her community is very important to her. She shared she also services as a volunteer for Anoka County Emergency Management as a specialist. She added that she is on the Nomination Committee for Connexus Energy to nominate board members. She shared she taught for nine years at various banking schools at the national level. She noted that her approach is consultative as she sees this job as a way to let the neighbors in the community be heard and to work in aiding the Council. She explained she likes when the Council votes differently than the Planning Commission because when the Planning Commission votes on something, it causes Staff to do more research to be able to present more information to the Council. She gave the example of the recent driveway variance request, which she voted against; however, the Council approved it. Mayor Bukkila asked Ms. Godfrey's thoughts on the mentioned variance. Ms. Godfrey said she thought it was a great example of a variance and how they should be used. She noted some of the requests they see want to push the boundaries a lot and do not make sense as a variance. She shared there was a lot of planning and effort by Staff, Council, and the property owner on this variance request.

Councilmember Barthel asked what has been some of the excitement and challenges of being the Chair of the Planning & Zoning Commission. Ms. Godfrey shared some of the excitement is that she looks forward to every meeting and the challenge of the requests. She noted everything is a little different which is exciting for her. She said a challenge is that there has been a few occasions where she has worried about maintaining control of the meeting. She shared she lives for the

challenge. She said another challenge has been working with different people, which she also sees as a positive.

Councilmember Butler asked if she has any areas of City Code that Ms. Godfrey would like to see updated. Ms. Godfrey shared that she goes back and rereads the City Code many times and she does not have any areas at this time that she would like to update. She noted that she liked the adjustment in the fence height that was made to the City Code. She shared that the research that Staff does on these requests by looking into what other cities do in order to craft something that works for the City is terrific. She noted her only 'hot button' item is concerning the private kennel licenses.

Councilmember Nelson commended Ms. Godfrey for her volunteer work and for attending the City Council meetings.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Ms. Godfrey for reapplying for the Planning & Zoning Commission.

### ***Reuben Ustimchuk - Planning & Zoning Commission***

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

Mr. Ustimchuk shared he had previously served on the Parks & Recreation Commission as well as a Citizen Oversight Committee for the Minnesota DNR. He added that he is a carpenter for the Minneapolis Parks and Recreation Board. He noted he is also working on his bachelor's degree at this time. He said being involved in local politics is super important. He shared he knows a lot of people in Andover, and he hears them talk about what they look for in the City and he would love to be a representative for them to make their voices heard. Mayor Bukkila asked about his involvement with building out developments as a construction project manager. Mr. Ustimchuk shared he was a residential development project manager.

Councilmember Barthel asked what two things Mr. Ustimchuk would like to address if he were appointed to the Planning & Zoning Commission. Mr. Ustimchuk shared he likes being able to represent the young families in the community to ensure the City stays a good place for young families.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Ustimchuk if he believes that the City Code and the controls on housing as living documents that should be changed to conform to City needs or if it is more of a standard that should be very steady and stable and only changed with consideration. Mr. Ustimchuk shared that both aspects have their place; however, the City Code exists to help families and make Andover a great City. He noted the Code exists to make Andover well developed and be a great place for families. He added they also need to understand why they have the City Code.

Councilmember Butler asked what Mr. Ustimchuk sees as potential improvements that the City could make to better serve its residents. Mr. Ustimchuk shared that it is important to not miss the big picture which is making sure that Andover is a great place for people to raise a family and ensure its safety. He noted there is nothing that strikes him as something he would want to change other than making sure that everyone's voices are being heard.

Mayor Bukkila asked how familiar Mr. Ustimchuk is with the Met Council and density requirements in the City. Mr. Ustimchuk said he is a little familiar with the requirements and shared he has been watching old Planning & Zoning Commission meetings to study this. Mayor Bukkila asked if the City has enough density or should build more density. She asked if there were any other housing accommodations that Mr. Ustimchuk could see in the future. Mr. Ustimchuk shared they should look at everything with an open mind. He noted he would not be a fan of too much density in the City and less density seems to be what the residents want as well. Mayor Bukkila asked about his concerns with too much density. Mr. Ustimchuk stated that the big concerns he has have to do with crime, traffic, and property values.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Mr. Ustimchuk for applying for the Planning & Zoning Commission.

***Bob Ferguson - Planning & Zoning Commission; Nature Preserve Commission***

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

Mr. Ferguson shared he is the Building Inspector for the City of Monticello, where he also does some planning and zoning work.

Councilmember Nelson asked Mr. Ferguson if he has attended any of the Planning & Zoning Commission meetings. Mr. Ferguson said he has not. Councilmember Nelson asked what interests him in the Commission. Mr. Ferguson said he thinks he would be a good fit due to his background in building and because he is familiar with the Building Code. Councilmember Nelson asked how he would deal with conflict. Mr. Ferguson stated that he would be able to make an educated decision on any conflict.

Councilmember Butler asked if there are any observations that Mr. Ferguson has related to Planning & Zoning that could be done better in the City. Mr. Ferguson shared that every community is unique, and Andover has a good mix of open space and density.

Mayor Bukkila asked Mr. Ferguson when he moved back to Andover and how long he was living outside of the City. Mr. Ferguson shared he moved back to Andover a year ago and he was living outside of the City for 15 years. Mayor Bukkila asked how familiar he is with the Met Council and the density requirements. Mr. Ferguson shared he is not familiar with the Met Council as the Met Council does not impact Monticello.

Councilmember Barthel asked what some of the areas in the City that Mr. Ferguson could see being developed in the next 10 to 15 years and what he sees this being. Mr. Ferguson shared there seems to be growth in the City in a lot of different areas rather than concentrated in one area which he sees as a good thing for the City and the residents.

Councilmember Butler noted there are a lot of nature preserves in Andover. He asked Mr. Ferguson if he has any thoughts on what a nature preserve should be. Mr. Ferguson said that the nature preserves should be left as is; however, part of the point in having nature preserves is for residents and the community to be able to enjoy it.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked how Mr. Ferguson would solve a problem where the Code is not clear, or something is not allowed. Mr. Ferguson stated the best way to solve a problem is not to give an answer but rather to ask a question. He added they need to not be afraid of asking questions and doing more research to truly be able to understand a request. He noted they should be utilizing all resources with requests that come forward. He added he would love to be able to give every applicant the answer that they want; however, there are times that it does not make sense and the answer would have to be no. Councilmember Engelhardt asked which Commission Mr. Ferguson preferred. Mr. Ferguson stated he thinks he would be an asset to the Planning & Zoning Commission as he has been in construction his whole life. He added that he cannot make a change by sitting on the sidelines and if he is not part of the solution, he is a part of the problem which is why he wants to get involved with a Commission.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Mr. Ferguson for applying for the Planning & Zoning Commission and the Nature Preserve Commission.

***Peter Miller - Nature Preserve Commission***

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

Mr. Miller shared he lives on the Rum River and has always enjoyed being outside in nature. He noted he is a retired physician and now he has more free time on his hands. He added he was on the Planning & Zoning Commission in Duluth when he lived there. He said he likes to work together with people, and he does not have a strong political agenda that he would be bringing in. He said it is great that this effort even exists for nature preservation.

Councilmember Butler asked how Mr. Miller sees the balance between nature preservation while still making these areas accessible to the public. Mr. Miller shared he also has an interest in astronomy, but the nature preserves close around 11:00 p.m. He added he would like to look at how they could carefully extend access to the preserves. He stated he would like the animals to be protected in these preserves and to save the footprint of the land for future generations.

Councilmember Barthel asked Mr. Miller what some of his ideas are that he would like to bring to the Nature Preserve Commission. Mr. Miller emphasized the need for preservation for future generations. He noted the nature preserves are a wonderful opportunity for children and education. He said these should not just be pieces of land that nothing is done with. He explained during his medical career he did a lot of work with people with disabilities and the nature preserves can also present an opportunity for people with disabilities.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Miller what types of things he thinks could be done in Andover to highlight the interest in the nature preserves. Mr. Miller noted there could be more done in terms of communication for events at the preserves or highlight preserves every so often to grow awareness with the residents. He added he would see event organization as a role of a Commission member.

Councilmember Nelson asked what Mr. Miller's specialty was in the medical field. Mr. Miller shared his specialty was in neurological and psychiatric related to neurological developmental problems.

Mr. Miller asked about the schedule and the role on the Nature Preserve Commission. Mayor Bukkila shared the Commission meets typically on a quarterly basis or more frequently if issues come up. Councilmember Nelson shared they also have joint meetings with the Council once a year.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Mr. Miller for applying for the Nature Preserve Commission.

***Lilya Ustimchuk - Planning & Zoning Commission; Nature Preserve Commission; Park & Recreation Commission***

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

Ms. Ustimchuk shared she has a passion for the City she lives in and would like to help the City do good, not only for its current residents, but for the generation to come. She stated she believes that they need more people who care about the City. She added she has a bachelor's degree in business administration. She noted she also has worked part time as an election judge, and she currently serves on the Nature Preserve Commission. Mayor Bukkila asked her what she has liked about serving on the Commission and what she would like to see changed. Ms. Ustimchuk said it is very important to her that the City acquire more land to preserve the land for future generations; however, it is tough to do so because of a lack of funding to do so.

Councilmember Barthel asked Ms. Ustimchuk what interested her about either the Parks & Recreation Commission or the Planning & Zoning Commission. Ms. Ustimchuk stated the Planning & Zoning Commission interests her as they can always be making improvements. She

shared her husband has a construction business and she can understand how important it is to have the right people in the right place when it comes to planning and zoning.

Councilmember Engelhardt shared he would like to increase his awareness of the nature preserve. He asked what are some ways that Ms. Ustimchuk would suggest to increase engagement with any Commission in the City. Ms. Ustimchuk suggested that more engagement in community activities will make sure residents see the Commissions presence more to see all of the good the Commissions do for the City.

Councilmember Butler asked if the land she would like to acquire for nature preserves should be similar to the current land in the nature preserves, which are larger parcels, or if there would be an opportunity for smaller nature preserve areas. Ms. Ustimchuk stated she believes the bigger the area the better as they would be able to do more with the land if it were bigger. She would also like to see them add to the existing nature preserves to make them larger. Councilmember Butler asked if she favors the community being able to access and use the preserves. Ms. Ustimchuk said yes.

Mayor Bukkila asked Ms. Ustimchuk to rank her preference of Commissions. Ms. Ustimchuk said her preference would be Planning & Zoning, then Parks & Recreation, then Nature Preserves. Mayor Bukkila asked about her experience with codes and ordinances. Ms. Ustimchuk shared she does not have too much experience on codes and ordinance but does have some experience with the building code.

Councilmember Barthel asked Ms. Ustimchuk what changes she thinks need to be made to the parks system in Andover. Ms. Ustimchuk suggested adding pickleball courts.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked how Ms. Ustimchuk would solve the problem of not having enough pickleball courts. Ms. Ustimchuk said she would just build more outdoor courts or transform tennis courts to be used for pickleball as not many people now play tennis. Councilmember Engelhardt asked if she has any ideas on how to find the funding for these pickleball courts. Ms. Ustimchuk stated they could raise taxes in a small amount.

Mayor Bukkila asked how Ms. Ustimchuk would suggest raising taxes for open spaces, new land acquisition, and pickleball. Ms. Ustimchuk said she is not a fan of raising taxes; however, it would be needed to get these things done. She reiterated her idea to transform tennis courts for pickleball courts. Mayor Bukkila asked why they should pick her for any of the Commissions she applied for. Ms. Ustimchuk shared she is very passionate about the City and wants to be involved in improvements for all residents and the coming generations. She added she also likes to work with other people who share her passion.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Ms. Ustimchuk for applying for all three open Commissions.

***Nick Loehlein - Planning & Zoning Commission***

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

Mr. Loehlein shared he has served on the Planning & Zoning Commission for two full terms. He added he works for Connexus Energy. He shared he has lived in Andover his entire life other than when he was in college. He noted he has enjoyed his time on the Planning & Zoning Commission as he loves the challenge it presents.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Loehlein what are some examples of positive and negative things he has seen while serving on the Planning & Zoning Commission. Mr. Loehlein shared that the Staff are a huge positive as they always bring forward lots of information to the Commission. He noted one of the frustrations he sees is the factors that are outside of their control as the Commission. He added that they use these types of issues to educate the public.

Councilmember Butler asked if there are any areas of City Code that Mr. Loehlein sees as needing adjustments or to be addressed. Mr. Loehlein shared the one area he would address would be the R-5 district, which was addressed in the past term. He noted that an issue that was slightly unresolved that came before them was about animals and noise. He stated they did not resolve this issue and would like it to be revisited.

Mayor Bukkila asked Mr. Loehlein about his likes and dislikes about the Hanson and Crosstown development area. Mr. Loehlein shared that he preferred the first iteration. He noted that having the senior villa across the street rather than the commercial development is better for this area.

Councilmember Barthel shared that he has noticed that there has been a lot more robust discussion concerning things that go to the Planning & Zoning Commission and there have also been a lot of split votes on these items. Mr. Loehlein explained it is the Commission's role to take the public input, interpret the code, and provide the Council with a recommendation. He noted that a split vote shows that they really need to pay attention to this item as there were differences in opinions to show different perspectives. He added that diversity of thought is always a good thing.

Mayor Bukkila asked Mr. Loehlein about the current function of the Planning & Zoning Commission and if it is in more agreement or dysfunction. Mr. Loehlein shared that his philosophy is that someone should listen and observe twice as much as they speak. He added that everyone also needs to learn, and he is hopeful that some of the dysfunction will work itself out. Mayor Bukkila asked if there is anything the Council can do to aid in this process. Mr. Loehlein said it would not hurt for the Commission to all go through a learning workshop, similar to what they did this year. He shared that nothing that the Planning & Zoning Commission does is routine and it would be beneficial to everyone to have a training.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Mr. Loehlein for applying for the Planning & Zoning Commission.

***Mark Ustimchuk - Planning & Zoning Commission; Nature Preserve Commission; Park &***

***Recreation Commission***

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

Mr. Ustimchuk shared he is very interested in the Park & Recreation Commission. He stated he developed an interest in parks from a young age and especially now that he works for the Anoka County Parks Department.

Councilmember Butler asked Mr. Ustimchuk if he has any specific ideas or specific parks in mind that he would like to pursue if he was chosen to serve on the Commission. Mr. Ustimchuk said he sees a lot of the parks process from working with the Council and he sees the frustration from the residents on how long things take. He noted it is a slow process to add or replace any new structures. He added it is always nice to see people enjoy amenities offered by the City.

Mayor Bukkila asked how long Mr. Ustimchuk has worked for the Anoka County Parks Department and what he does for them. Mr. Ustimchuk said he has worked for them for a year and a half and explained that he holds two roles, a park keeper and a union steward.

Councilmember Barthel asked what things Mr. Ustimchuk would like to see changed in the Park & Recreation Commission if he is chosen to serve on the Commission. Mr. Ustimchuk said he would like to add amenities, such as pickleball or disc golf and hearing these requests and trying to achieve them.

Councilmember Engelhardt shared that the Council has discussed that some of the current park equipment in the City is not relevant as it is not age appropriate for those who are using the parks. He asked if Mr. Ustimchuk has any ideas on how to refresh parks that are not just adding pickleball courts. Mr. Ustimchuk shared a lot of people his age enjoy disc golf and it can be done in a small area. He also noted trails. Councilmember Engelhardt shared there was an issue recently with access to parks and reserves for those with mobility issues. He asked if this is a valid problem and how it should be addressed. Mr. Ustimchuk stated it would make sense to provide a feasible solution as long as it is not ridiculously expensive. He noted the City should strive to provide this type of assistance for people to get to the parks as it is a service to the residents. Councilmember Engelhardt asked if he would consider a portable solution or a permanent solution. Mr. Ustimchuk said if it is a seldom used park then it could be a portable solution; however, if they are seeing this issue a lot then they should put in a permanent solution. Councilmember Engelhardt asked if the City should look at park sponsorships. Mr. Ustimchuk said that if there is a feasible organization then it would be a good thing to look into partnerships with local organizations.

Mayor Bukkila asked Mr. Ustimchuk why he should be chosen to serve on a Commission. Mr. Ustimchuk shared he has been around the sphere of parks for a while, and he also started a non-profit with his friends called Minnesota Revival where they do a lot of events in parks across the State. He added he has been able to see the blessings and downfalls of the parks.



Mayor Bukkila thanked Mr. Ustimchuk for applying for all three open Commissions.

***Charles Naughton - Planning & Zoning Commission; Park & Recreation Commission***

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

Mr. Naughton shared he has lived in Andover since 1997, where his three children have been very involved in school and sports. He shared he would like to give back to his community and serve it somehow. He added he is a licensed attorney in Minnesota where he works primarily with casinos and gambling. He noted he used to work in family law. Mayor Bukkila asked if he had a preference between the two Commissions. Mr. Naughton said he would lean more towards the Planning & Zoning Commission.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked if Mr. Naughton has watched any of the Planning & Zoning Commission meetings, and if so, what are the things he sees as causing the most issues. Mr. Naughton said he has attended some of the meetings and shared that some of the issues he sees is that people by nature do not like to read materials that come to them which lends to the problem.

Councilmember Butler asked what Mr. Naughton has seen done well from a development perspective over the years of him living in the City and what he thinks could have been done better. Mr. Naughton noted the changes in some of the infrastructure has gone very well. He shared when he moved to the area, the major thoroughfares have changed so much for the good over time. He added that the proposed roundabout will also be a good thing. He shared he is not versed enough to know what the density requirements are, so he is not sure if things have been done right or wrong with density in the City. He noted that smaller lots and high density helps fund the community and education which can be a good thing.

Mayor Bukkila asked about Mr. Naughton's knowledge of the Planning & Zoning Commission and if he has any projects he has been following. Mr. Naughton shared he had looked at some past agendas and meetings to see what is being discussed and considered by the Planning & Zoning Commission. He noted that he started to pay attention to these things when something happened in the area that he lives that made him dig deeper. He emphasized that communication seems to be the biggest challenge facing the Commissions. Mayor Bukkila asked how Mr. Naughton's background would fit into the Park & Recreation Commission. Mr. Naughton shared he became a lawyer later in life and before he was a lawyer he worked in sales and marketing. He explained he spent a lot of time talking to people and figuring out what they wanted in a sales capacity and in this role he learned that you have to be able to balance what people want, what you can afford, and what makes sense, which he thinks would lend well to the role of the Park & Recreation Commission.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Mr. Naughton for applying for the Park & Recreation Commission and the Planning & Zoning Commission.

***Bruckner Johnson - Nature Preserve Commission; Park & Recreation Commission***

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

Mr. Johnson shared he has lived in Andover since 2005 while his wife's family has lived in Andover since the 1960s. He added that he did serve on the Park & Recreation Commission as a citizen volunteer in Brooklyn Park and he is interested in getting back into community service. He shared he is very interested in supporting the work that is being done in the reserves. He stated this seems like a great opportunity in Andover due to the recent developments. He noted his appreciation for the green space in the City. He emphasized the value in planning for the future. He shared that he leads a group of engineering teams that develop designs for custom power system applications for industrial and commercial applications. Mayor Bukkila asked if he is also interested in the Park & Recreation Commission. Mr. Johnson stated either would be fine and he does not have a preference.

Councilmember Butler asked if Mr. Johnson has had the opportunity to visit the different nature preserves in the City. Mr. Johnson said he has visited some of them. Councilmember Butler asked how he thinks they should balance a nature preserve being an area for wildlife versus allowing residents to access the preserve. Mr. Johnson stated he believes that trails are a wonderful use as opposed to leaving the preserves completely open. He added he does not believe that the land needs to stay unaffected to make the preserves accessible.

Mayor Bukkila noted all of the park requests that residents have pointed to tax increases. She asked Mr. Johnson how he would balance the needs and the wants of the community to delivery what they want while taking resources and funding into consideration. Mr. Johnson noted there definitely comes a point where they do not have the resources to do these things. He added they also need to consider maintenance when looking at adding anything to parks. He stated it does not make sense to put money into new assets if they are not taking care of what they already have. He noted all of the things that the residents want are nice; however, people cannot always get what they want. He emphasized the importance of always keeping financials in mind.

Councilmember Barthel asked Mr. Johnson how he dealt with challenges when he was on the Advisory Committee for Brooklyn Park in regard to him not agreeing with other members. Mr. Johnson shared one of the things he does a lot at work that aids in the culture is alignment when agreement is not possible. He noted the need for good communication and added that he enjoys working with people who want to work for alignment even when there are disagreements.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Mr. Johnson for applying for the Park & Recreation Commission and the Nature Preserve Commission.

***Wade Strelow - Planning & Zoning Commission***

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

Mr. Strelow shared that he moved to Andover around two and a half years ago. He added he has two small children, and he is interested in the Planning & Zoning Commission as he wants to ensure the community develops in an intentional way for his children to have the opportunities and amenities for the future.

Councilmember Barthel asked Mr. Strelow what some of the issues he sees in the City are in regard to planning and zoning and what he would like to bring to the table to help change things. Mr. Strelow noted he originally moved to Andover from the Maple Grove area where he saw that community grow really quickly. He emphasized intentionality with growth. He added he also sees issues with access to the community and businesses. Councilmember Barthel asked how much research he has done for the Planning & Zoning Commission and if he has watched any of the past meetings and if he has any ‘hot topics’ that have been discussed. Mr. Strelow shared he is relatively new to the community, so he does not have any ‘hot topics.’ He shared he lives across the street from the development that is going up in the Petersen Farms neighborhood, so he is seeing what is going on there. He stated he is not necessarily concerned with what is going on with this development, but it does bring things to the front of his mind. Councilmember Barthel asked if he has attended or watched any of the Council meetings pertaining to this development. Mr. Strelow said no; however, he had intended to.

Councilmember Butler asked Mr. Strelow about his thoughts and ideas on the Hanson and Bunker corridors. Mr. Strelow shared he believes the accessibility to Target and Festival Foods is awful off of this corridor and it is tough to get in and out of these areas. He added that Andover does not have a nice little downtown business district area like he saw in Maple Grove. He noted as they grow as a community it would be nice to develop this identity and character in the downtown area.

Councilmember Engelhardt asked Mr. Strelow’s thought on having a Clocktower Commons with no clocktower in downtown. Mr. Strelow stated he does not have any issue with not having a clocktower. He noted it is more about developing a community center in downtown and what it is called is not the important part. Councilmember Engelhardt asked how he would handle balancing the requests of the residents for more amenities like restaurants and recreation facilities while not over saturating the City. Mr. Strelow reiterating that it would come down to intentionality. He stated they would not want to try to grow the City too fast and they do not want abandoned buildings because places are going out of business too quickly. Councilmember Engelhardt asked if he thinks they need to focus on the centrality of the City by working on some of the empty businesses on Bunker. Mr. Strelow stated he would think to start with these businesses in the town center.

Mayor Bukkila asked Mr. Strelow how familiar he is with the Met Council and their oversight of density and transit. Mr. Strelow stated he is not very familiar with the Met Council; however, his wife is, as she used to work in State government. He noted his wife has shared some of what the Met Council does. Mayor Bukkila asked if he sees a need for a community transit system as far as meeting the needs to his vision for the downtown center. Mr. Strelow said this is a careful balance as mass public transit systems also tend to bring in other things. He stated that mass transit is likely less of a need than having better access off of Highway 10 for people driving into the community. Mayor Bukkila explained if they were to bring in this service then it would bring in another layer of taxing district and the Met Council has taxing authority to provide these services which would result in an increase in taxes. Mr. Strelow noted this needs to be looked at as a part of the bigger plan. He said he does not have a judgment on it at this time. He shared that he thinks the community develops first then the services like public transit follow to help support that, not the other way around.

Mayor Bukkila thanked Mr. Strelow for applying for the Planning & Zoning Commission.

## **DELIBERATION**

The Council discussed applicants for City Commissions.

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

## **ADJOURNMENT**

**Motion** by Councilmember Barthel, Seconded by Councilmember Engelhardt to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Mayor Bukkila declared the Special Meeting adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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