

**ANDOVER CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING – SEPTEMBER 28, 2021  
MINUTES**

The Workshop Meeting of the Andover City Council was called to order by Mayor Sheri Bukkila, September 28, 2021 at 6:00 p.m., at the Andover City Hall, 1685 Crosstown Blvd NW, Andover, Minnesota.

Councilmembers present: Valerie Holthus, Jamie Barthel, Ted Butler, and Randy Nelson

Councilmember absent: None

Also present: City Administrator, Jim Dickinson  
Public Works Director/City Engineer, David Berkowitz  
Fire Chief, Dennis Jones  
Fire Captain, Jeff Cielocha  
Others

***CONTINUE DISCUSSION ON 2022 STREET RECONSTRUCTION/ASSESSMENT  
METHOD PROJECT/22-2***

The City Council is requested to continue the discussion on the method of assessment for the proposed 2022 Street Reconstruction Project. Mr. Berkowitz explained the City's standard assessment method does not provide the most equitable distribution of costs due to the variation in size of the lots. He reviewed previous discussions and proposed methods.

Mr. Berkowitz provided five options for the Council to review. Mr. Berkowitz displayed maps and tables illustrating the options and assessment costs.

- Option 1: everyone pays the same amount. \$7,000 per unit
- Option 2: dividing the project into 2 sections and have each section pay a flat fee: \$5,100 or \$8,100
- Option 3: dividing the project into 3 sections and have each section pay a flat fee: \$5,100, \$7,100, and \$11,200
- Option 4: hybrid method using 2.5 acres as the separation point. Take the cost of road in front footage, and divide by the number of units. The assessment would be \$5,600 for lots under 2.5 acres and \$10,400 for lots above 2.5 acres.
- Option 5: hybrid method similar to Option 4 but using 3.5 acres as the separation point.

The larger lots are separated from the smaller lots. The assessment would be \$6,600 for lots under 3.5 acres and \$9,900 for lots above 3.5 acres.

The Council discussed the options and asked for clarification. The Council discussed previous methods of establishing assessments and the challenges this project brings.

Mayor Bukkila stated she is leaning towards Option 4. Councilmember Barthel agreed because the smaller lots get a lower price.

Councilmember Butler stated he leans towards Option 5 because there are similar lots that will be split at 2.5 acres and paying very different amounts. He stated Option 5 provides a clearer division.

Councilmember Holthus suggested overlaying the distance the resident has to travel on the road to get to their home and applying the assessment.

Councilmember Barthel suggested three categories for lot sizes: 1 acre, 1-3.5 acres, and 3.5 and higher.

Councilmember Nelson stated he likes Option 4.

Mayor Bukkila stated the Council has never assessed based on lot size in the rural zone before. She stated if three categories were selected, the City would not be consistent and may be setting a new precedence.

Mayor Bukkila polled the Council and four members favored Option 4.

Jason Sichler, 4936 171<sup>st</sup> Avenue NW, came forward and stated he has polled his neighbors and they feel everyone should pay the same amount.

Councilmember Barthel would like the Council to address rural roads and spend time on how much is assessed. He stated rural roads are subsidized by the urban area. He would like to discuss the topic at a future workshop.

Mr. Sichler, came forward, and asked what the additional cost would be for a concrete curb. Mr. Berkowitz stated it will be approximately an additional \$800-\$1,000 per lot, and three times that for the City funded portion.

#### ***FIRE DEPARTMENT UPDATE***

Chief Jones presented the current staffing structure of the Fire Department related to duty crew and paid-on-call coverage. He explained the requirements of current firefighters and the benefits

they receive. Chief Jones presented the risks of the current structure including unfilled shifts, reliance on all-call response, increased response time, and differing levels of responsibilities for the same benefits given. Chief Jones explained this problem is not unique to Andover and occurs across the country with on-call firefighter departments. Chief Jones displayed the costs for the current Fire Department staffing structure.

Chief Jones presented a duty crew proposal increasing duty crew time from 12 hours to 18 hours per day. Captain Cielocha explained the call volume, proposed duty crew schedule, and staffing numbers. Chief Jones noted the proposed requirements for firefighters including 10 hours per month of duty crew, shift time, training, and station maintenance. Chief Jones stated the benefits of the proposed model are an 18-hour per day uniformed response, quicker response time, consistent cost for the City, better trained members, and equal responsibility for all members. Chief Jones noted there is an additional amount of time the Fire Department is asking of the firefighters per month.

Councilmember Holthus asked what would make a firefighter not like the proposal. Chief Jones said it is a change and change is difficult. He stated the City is asking more of firefighters. Mr. Dickinson noted the City began a duty crew because there were times during the day when there weren't any firefighters available to respond. In addition, there are times when call volumes are high and when there are more firefighters that respond than necessary.

Councilmember Butler asked about the response time to the northwest part of the City if the duty crew were housed out of Station 1. Chief Jones explained the duty crew would respond from Station 1 and firefighters for Station 2 would also be called to respond. Mayor Bukkila noted the Sheriff's Department would also be dispatched, creating layers of response.

Councilmember Butler asked how many current duty crews are not filled. Captain Cielocha stated all shifts were filled when he first started, however, through retirements and attrition, there are several shifts now left unfilled. He stated the weekends are going unfilled and the Fire Department has to put out an all-call which results in more firefighters than needed responding to calls.

The City Council discussed the benefits and challenges of the proposal. They stated the cost will increase, but the City will provide better service to the residents.

Mayor Bukkila asked what the daytime duty crew will be doing in between calls. Chief Jones stated they will be conducting fire prevention, presentations, maintenance of equipment & station, training, cleaning, inspecting, reviewing plans, fire ordinance compliance, CO2 and fire detector installation in homes, and tours and demonstrations. Mayor Bukkila noted that a lot of those responsibilities have been going on. Chief Jones stated a lot of those responsibilities have been overlooked recently because full-time staff are responding to calls and not able to do the work. Chief Jones stated they had to cancel the open house in part due to lack of staffing. Chief

Jones explained the morning duty crew sets the stage for the day. He stated the evening hour shift can be doing inspections and preplanning and having a presence at the high school or at high school activities.

Councilmember Barthel asked how maintenance and equipment will be maintained at the other stations if the duty crew is housed out of Station 1. Chief Jones stated the duty crew will rotate around stations to conduct those responsibilities. Captain Cielocha stated firefighters will be cross trained among the stations and have responsibilities at each.

Mayor Bukkila asked if the City had a road map to implementing the proposal. Mr. Dickinson stated the City is structuring the model and will plan implementation in January of 2022. The plan is still being developed.

Mayor Bukkila stated Mr. Dickinson was tasked to meet with fire officers about the proposal and asked him the outcome. Mr. Dickinson stated they discussed the budget, call responses, and duty crew. He indicated they did not get into the details of the proposal and would like the full support of the Council before expanding the duty crew. Mayor Bukkila asked if they could bring the proposal to the firefighters and ask for feedback. Chief Jones stated he has been transparent and inclusive. He explained the problem has been going on for a long time and he has asked for input. He stated the response he has been given by some firefighters has been resistance. Chief Jones indicated the firefighters with 9 years or less of service tend to be in favor of change. Mayor Bukkila stated the buy-in of the firefighters is essential.

Mr. Dickinson noted the proposal makes two primary changes: going to an 18-hour duty crew from a 12 hour and putting a mandatory requirement to commit to duty crew. He noted response times led to this proposal. Mr. Dickinson explained the alternative is worsening response times, more all-calls, more risk, and potentially hiring more full-time department staff with higher expenses. Mr. Dickinson outlined the investment they make in each firefighter with the cost of training, hourly rate, and the fire aid to pension. He asked if it is reasonable for the City to have expectations of the firefighters the City has invested in.

Mayor Bukkila asked what happens if the City moves to this model without involving the firefighters and half of them quit. She asked how to avoid that situation. Chief Jones said they will approach the membership with the proposal and ask them how they see this working. He stated it is not set in stone, and is based on math. Mr. Dickinson explained staff are seeking buy-in from the Council to go the next level to reach the desired level of staffing. He stated the proposal may need to be stepped in, but at some point, the City needs to reach the goal.

Councilmember Holthus asked how many firefighters would quit. Chief Jones estimated a handful of firefighters would leave. He explained the Fire Department is somewhat divided by years of service. Captain Cielocha stated those who aren't responding currently are the ones who aren't going to be in favor of the increase in requirements. He feels that the firefighters who are

on board will fill in the hours. Mr. Dickinson state the department will continue to recruit. Mr. Dickinson stated being sensitive to COVID the response requirements were pulled back during the last year and a half and the requirements weren't enforced. He explained benefits were still provided to the firefighters during this time.

Councilmember Butler asked if it would be difficult for the day duty crew to meet the call back requirements. Chief Jones stated it is hard for them now to meet the requirements. Councilmember Butler asked if duty crew responds to a call, does it count toward their requirements. Chief Jones stated currently it does not count. Captain Cielocha stated the firefighters tell them their night or daytime availability and are scheduled accordingly.

Councilmember Butler stated he is in support of the plan but is concerned about the firefighters' point of view. He would like to know what benefit and flexibility they will get. He recommended looking at the requirements and adjusting them where appropriate.

Chief Jones stated firefighters are also given 21 days of vacation. Captain Ceilocha stated firefighters are given forgiveness of the requirements if exposed to COVID as well. Captain Ceilocha stated they need people to respond to calls.

Mayor Bukkila explained the proposal is a big organizational change without considering what the firefighters are looking for. She asked how the City gets their buy-in.

Mr. Dickinson explained it will be a working implementation. Chief Jones stated if the plan gets support from the Council he will go to the membership. He noted if the Council gets calls from firefighters, the Council can provide support for the plan. Chief Jones stated the idea has been brought up multiple times before and the membership is split primarily based on years of service.

Councilmember Barthel indicated he supports the plan but would like to get feedback from the firefighters. He pointed out that there are more daytime duty crew hours than overnight hours. He suggested allowing people to work more duty crew hours and have a reduction in the call back requirement. Chief Jones stated he is not opposed to that idea.

Mr. Dickinson stated everyone agrees the City needs a better service model. He noted the implementation will have to be carefully thought through and they will get feedback from the membership. Mr. Dickison said the priority here is achieving reasonable response times.

Mayor Bukkila asked each Councilmember their opinion.

Councilmember Holthus said she likes the model but said it needs to be flexible. She wants them to get feedback from the firefighters and be willing to modify the plan.

Councilmember Nelson stated retention begins the moment you recruit someone. He said it is a

good idea to sell the plan to the firefighters and gain their feedback. He asked if other cities use this model. Chief Jones stated they looked at similar sized departments, population, and call volume, and found they have duty crew and some have up to a 50% call back requirement. Chief Jones gave the example of the Lake Johanna Fire Department who uses a similar method.

Councilmember Butler supports the new model and getting feedback from the firefighters. He recommends going to the firehouse and not presenting it as a plan that is already decided upon, but as an option for a solution. Mayor Bukkila suggested giving a historical explanation to the firefighters as well.

Mayor Bukkila said she is not set on a January 1 start date. Mr. Dickinson indicated they can be flexible on the implementation date, but the goal is to hit a basic level of service.

Mayor Bukkila asked to have an update by the November workshop. Mr. Dickinson stated he will provide updates to the Council as needed and they will continue to work on the plan, implementation process, and to gather feedback. Mr. Dickinson noted they will be flexible, however, if this model does not work, they will need to look at another option to solve the response time problem.

Mayor Bukkila recessed the meeting at 8:04 p.m. The Council reconvened at 8:10 p.m.

### ***DISCUSS DRAFT 2022-2026 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP)***

The City Council is requested to review the 2022-2026 CIP and provide direction to staff. Mr. Dickinson stated the draft is similar to last month's presentation. Mr. Dickinson presented the CIP by City Department and asked the Council to ask questions or comment as they went along.

Mr. Dickinson addressed items the Council discussed at the previous meeting. Mr. Berkowitz stated the maintenance costs for the shared dog park with Anoka County and the City of Coon Rapids will increase about \$500 per year if the trail is constructed. He explained the long-term cost will include replacement in around 20 to 30 years. Currently, the City allocates \$3,000 in maintenance costs for the dog park.

Mr. Dickinson addressed the proposed safety netting at Sunshine and Andover Station North Parks. He said the cost of the netting is \$240,000 and the maintenance commitment is putting them up and taking them down each year. He indicated the lifespan of the netting is 15 to 20 years. The Council discussed the value and cost of the netting. The Council reached consensus to take it out of the CIP.

Mr. Dickinson addressed the street reconstruction budget and funding it through bonding. The City Council reached consensus to start the process to consider issuing bonds for street reconstruction.

Mr. Berkowitz explained the water tower will be painted and the Council will need to select a color and logo. The Council reached consensus to keep the color the same and make the logo bigger.

The City Council reached consensus to remove the railroad underpass from the CIP.

### ***2022 SPECIAL REVENUE, DEBT SERVICE, CAPITAL PROJECTS, ENTERPRISE & INTERNAL SERVICE FUNDS BUDGET DISTRIBUTION & DISCUSSION***

The City Council reviewed the Special Revenue, Debt Service, Capital Projects, Enterprise, and Internal Service Funds and provided direction to staff. Mr. Dickinson provided highlights of the funds and asked the Council to ask questions or comments as needed. The Council did not request any changes. The EDA budget will go before the EDA for approval.

### ***2022 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION/UPDATE***

The City Council is requested to discuss the 2022 proposed budget and provide direction to staff. Mr. Dickinson reviewed the 2022 Budget Development guidelines and highlighted changes since the Council's last discussion. He explained employee health care cost is still to be determined. He will bring the Public Works Union Contract to a closed session at the next Council meeting.

Mr. Dickinson stated the taxable market value is \$3.8 billion and the tax rate is 36%, which is less than the tax rate in 2017. He noted the largest budget increase outside of street construction is the Fire Department at \$226,000.

Mr. Dickinson noted the outstanding items are the Fire Department structure, employee health insurance, the Public Works Union contract, and further potential levy reductions.

### ***AUGUST 2021 COMMUNITY CENTER UPDATE***

The City Council is requested to receive a presentation on the Community Center for August of 2021 and provide questions or comments. Mr. Dickinson provided an update on facility usage. He indicated that Subway is not renewing their lease and staff are searching for a replacement. He noted they will be looking for a vendor and providing simple items for sale by existing staff in the meantime. They are also exploring an option for booster clubs to fill the hours.

Mr. Dickinson provided the Council with an update on senior programming, after school programs, and programs for teens. Councilmember Holthus asked if the Community Center has been affected by vandalism from youth. Mr. Dickinson stated they have had significant damage from youth and the YMCA has had to increase their staffing to provide additional supervision for the middle schoolers.

Mr. Dickinson provided a financial update stating revenue overall is on target. He stated ice rental revenue will be higher because of summer programs. He indicated they are looking when the best time is to have turf in the sports complex.

Mayor Bukkila asked why there was a significant increase staffing. Mr. Dickinson stated additional staffing were needed to operate the building expansion.

Mr. Dickinson provided a summary for September 2021 facility usage, noting a hockey tournament that will bring a number of out of state teams to the Andover Community Center.

***OTHER ITEMS***

Mayor Bukkila announced a public meeting about well contamination on September 30, 2021. She said the State has been slow to commit and communicate. Mr. Dickinson stated the MPCA will be present at City Hall in addition to the virtual meeting participants.

Mr. Dickinson has been pushing the State to do more tests, retest, and expand the testing area.

Mayor Bukkila explained the City does not have the main role but is advocating for residents and is just as frustrated. She said the City needs to maintain a relationship with the State so they can pay for tests, bottled water, and water infrastructure. She expressed the importance of keeping the message consistent and clear.

Mr. Dickinson provided an update on the process and how he is advocating for the City.

***ADJOURNMENT***

***Motion*** by Holthus, Seconded by Butler, to adjourn the meeting at 9:20 p.m. Motion carried unanimously.

Respectfully submitted,

Shari Kunza, Recording Secretary  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*