

**WORKSHOP MINUTES
OAKDALE CITY COUNCIL
JUNE 27, 2023**

The City Council held a workshop on Tuesday, June 27, 2023 at Oakdale City Hall, 1584 Hadley Avenue North, Oakdale, Minnesota. The meeting began at 5:00 PM.

Present: Mayor Kevin Zabel

Council Members: Noah Her
Jake Ingebrigtsen
Andy Morcomb
Susan Willenbring

City Staff Members: Christina Volkers, City Administrator
Katie Robinson, Deputy City Clerk
Jesse Farrell, City Engineer
Andrew Gitzlaff, Community Development Director
Melanie Lee, Human Resources Director
Max Lohse, Community Development Specialist
Luke McClanahan, City Planner
Nick Newton, Police Chief
Lori Pulkrabek, Communications Manager
Jim Romanik, Public Works Manager
Julie Williams, Recreation Superintendent
Kevin Wold, Fire Chief
Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director
Kevin Zittel, Facilities Manager

Others Present: Martin & Caroline Tahara, Oakdale Residents
John Stark, Owner/President, Enduring Cities, LLC
Todd Axtell, President and CEO, The Axtell Group
Rob Thomasser, Chief Operating Officer, The Axtell Group

POLICE STAFFING ASSESSMENT

Police Chief Newton introduced Rob Thomasser and Todd Axtell from The Axtell Group who began a staffing assessment in December of 2022 and are attending the workshop to give a summary of that assessment.

Mr. Axtell stated that The Axtell Group did a deep dive into the Police Department to make sure the service demands are looked at compared to the history of the staffing of the department and what the capacity is moving forward considering the future demographics and population expansion in the City.

While conducting the assessment he mentioned there are gaps that could contribute to officer burnout, which in turn contributes to mistakes, which ultimately trickle down to the bottom-line of the City and can deteriorate the trust of the community.

Mr. Thomasser provided a summary of the report that was distributed to the staff prior to the meeting. He explained the recommendations that were made in the report are recommendations that reach the standard of minimal policing services expected today. The Axtell Group focused on what they felt were areas of risk and unnecessary exposure to the City, what was going to allow the department to retain the professionals that are currently serving the department, and the basic core elements to run policing operations with minimal mistakes. The thirty recommendations included in the assessment are meant to be a roadmap to success. Mr. Thomasser then highlighted a few recommendations in the areas of department structure, supervision, and data.

Mr. Thomasser said the City should be proud of who works in the police department and how much they care. There is a lot of good going on. He reiterated the report just provides a roadmap to evolve the department to meet a standard that is defensible from the City's position, but that is also healthy for the employees and good for the community. Mr. Thomasser then opened up the discussion for any questions.

Chief Newton added that the department is able to provide services, however it was a very worthwhile investment to obtain a perspective from an outside consultant. He said he is very proud of the people that work in the police department and promised that regardless of the changes that are made the culture of the department will always be community first.

Council Member Morcomb asked Chief Newton if it is true that 70% of our incidents are from people outside of the City of Oakdale. Chief Newton clarified that 70% of the people that are arrested are non-Oakdale residents. Arrests and incidents are separate issues. Council Member Morcomb mentioned there is an exterior force that has a big part in how the City polices this region and asked if there are any considerations as to how the City plans for what can happen in the surrounding communities and how it affects Oakdale. Chief Newton responded that Oakdale has very close relationships with Woodbury and Washington County. However, there is a bit of a communication barrier with Ramsey County because the Oakdale police department is in Washington County and operates on completely different systems than Ramsey County.

Council Member Morcomb asked if there are any opportunities to work more with the County and adjacent groups to help solve some of the critical issues in the short term. Chief Newton said he had spoken to the Washington County Attorney about taking a different look at the department collaborating on some of the bigger crime issues. He also shared having a major crimes unit where groups collaborate together and focus resources where the problems are being discussed.

Council Member Ingebrigtson asked specifically about the Ramsey County Attorney's Office comments about not prosecuting felonies that are charges as a result of traffic stops and how policy makers should handle this when people's jobs are to prosecute individuals who commit serious crimes but will not do that. Mr. Thomasser mentioned he noticed the department's capacity to work towards preventing crimes as the first step.

Council Member Her asked about The Axtell Group's experience with the affect good leadership can have on curbing bad habits within the department. Mr. Thomasser stated that supervision is absolutely critical for policing to the department's and community's standards.

City Administrator Chris Volkens suggested that staff could provide recommendations to Council throughout the budget process and workshops in the coming months and years which will address changes within the Police Department as recommended by The Axtell Group.

TAHARA CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT – PROPOSED ACCESSORY STRUCTURE ON VACANT LOT

City Planner Luke McClanahan reviewed the application and pointed out that the applicant owns three lots, two of which are combined by a deed. The proposed accessory structure would be on the third, standalone lot. Staff originally recommended that the applicant combined all three lots via a deed to be maintained under the same ownership in order to prevent a situation where the lot with the accessory structure be sold separately. Per City Code, it is not allowed to own an accessory structure without a primary structure. The goal of staff's recommendation was to prevent any non-confirming situation from occurring. The Planning Commission did not feel conveying all three lots on the same deed is sufficient, and instead suggested having the applicant re-subdivide to combine all three lots into one. Staff met with City Attorney Jim Thomson and some additional research was conducted. Attorney Thompson acknowledged that a re-subdivision would be the cleanest way to prevent any non-conformity from occurring, however as a compromise, he proposed that the deed restriction could be done. The deed restriction would be that the stand-alone structure on the lot could not be sold separately. Mr. McClanahan noted that the deed restriction would sunset after thirty years.

Mr. McClanahan also pointed out there are several hundred Oakdale properties that are currently combined by a deed; and the City does not want to discourage residents from reinvesting in their properties by having to go through the re-subdivision process every time a situation like this arises.

Council Member Ingebrigtsen was in favor of staff's recommendation to combine all three lots via a deed. Council Members Morcomb, Willenbring, and Her agreed.

Mayor Zabel asked Mr. McClanahan where the other accessory structure (7x7 shed) is currently located on the applicant's property. The applicant replied it is on the side of the house. Mayor Zabel asked for clarification about why a CUP is needed in this case. Mr. McClanahan explained that regardless of the existing shed, a resident only gets one accessory structure, and if a resident wants an additional one, it is required they go through the Conditional Use Permit (CUP) process. Additionally, the proposed structure is 900 sq. ft. which exceeds the size limit within the City Code.

Mayor Zabel then said Council will take action at tonight's Council meeting.

TANNERS LAKE REDEVELOPMENT PROPOSAL REVIEW

Community Development Director Andy Gitzlaff noted that this project dates back to previous Councils in 2008 and 2014 with all the potential for economic development at this site. There have been several attempts of re-development that did not come to fruition, however, the ask is of the current staff to try to put together a development proposal. Mr. Gitzlaff then turned the presentation over to John Stark from Enduring Cities, LLC., a consultant to the City.

Mr. Stark shared that through the request for proposal process they spoke with over twenty developers and are now down to two options for discussion with Council.

Option A includes: two apartment buildings; a five story 93-unit, a four story 70-unit, 2,800 sq. ft. of retail, and a kayak rental via a vending machine. This proposal is \$42M with a construction timeline of one year. This project could begin in the summer of 2024 and finish in the fall of 2025. This proposal is a higher value project which will create more taxes and will need more Tax Increment Financing (TIF), and the developer will pay a lesser amount for land up front.

Option B includes: a 100-unit apartment building, 12 townhomes on the lake shore, 2,600 sq. ft. of retail, more parking per unit than option A (however there are less units), a pavilion structure that will have concessions, boat rentals, and a new dock. This proposal is \$30.4M with a similar construction timeline as Option A. This developer would pay a higher amount upfront and would ask for less TIF.

Mr. Stark continued to say the financial capacity of the developers are as follows: Developer A would put in 31% equity and Developer B would put in 25% equity. He reviewed the challenges for either developer related to this development site.

Mr. Stark said that staff's recommendation is to move forward with Developer B, and if Council is supportive then staff will work with Kennedy & Graven to develop a draft exclusive rights agreement that will be presented to Council for consideration in July.

Discussion ensued about both options, and staff was directed to move forward with Developer B. There will be a closed session to discuss an agreement for land sale of the EDA owned Tanners property at a later date.

10TH STREET NORTH AND GENEVA AVE NORTH REDEVELOPMENT PLAN OPTIONS

Mr. Gitzlaff provided a short summary on the re-development plan and noted that it is identified as a need in the comprehensive plan. He then turned the presentation portion over to Community Development Specialist Max Lohse. Mr. Lohse spoke to the handouts that Council had received prior to the meeting in regard to the three options of re-development plans. He first identified the area as bordered by 10th Street, Century Avenue, 14th Street, and Glenbrook Avenue. Staff identified the following three options for future action.

- No Action; this would include a clarifying update to the comprehensive plan and nothing else; it is a reactive approach. Staff does not recommend this plan.
- Small Area Plan; most comprehensive option and similar to the Glenbrook Small Area Plan that is ongoing with multiple rounds of in-depth public input, design renderings, final documents, and a full site analysis. This plan would cost more, would be spread over a longer period of time, and would not be able to start until 2025.
- Redevelopment Site Analysis; this is currently the preferred option of staff as it would allow the City to reach many of the same key outcomes of the small area plan, such as market analysis, identifying the best redevelopment parcels, and looking at the capacity of the different sites. It does lack the extensive public input of the small area plan; however, it is a substantially smaller dollar amount. This is staff's recommendation.

Council Member Ingebrigtson stated it would be more appropriate if the timing was closer to the re-development of Century Avenue. Ms. Volkers explained this timing is based on a great deal of current interest from developers now.

Mayor Zabel asked if there an opportunity to involve community engagement into the planning process. Mr. Gitzlaff confirmed.

Council Member Willenbring would prefer a site analysis as she does not want to miss an opportunity for development.

Mayor Zabel asked the Council if any of them would prefer to not do the re-development site analysis. No one objected.

POLCO COMMUNITY SURVEY

Communications Manager Lori Pulkrabek began the discussion asking for Council's consideration as to whether or not to conduct another community survey. The previous survey was done in 2020, and prior to that in 2016. The City already has the agreement with POLCO to proceed with another survey, however, POLCO would be receptive if the City chooses not to move forward.

After a brief discussion, the general consensus of Council was to move forward with the survey in 2023. Ms. Volkers asked for a proposed timeline and funding source to begin the process. Ms. Pulkrabek indicated that the cost could be split to span two budget years – \$8,550 in 2023 (funding is available within the communications operational budget) and \$8,550 in 2024 (to be requested within the communications 2024 budget), with the survey releasing in February 2024.

ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Ms. Volkers stated that the ribbon cutting for the Girl Scout Brownie Troop 57987 Eberle crosswalk is scheduled for July 25th prior to the workshop meeting.

COUNCIL TOPICS

Council Member Her said Summerfest was great, and the Oakdale Summerfest Community Organization (OSCO) did a wonderful job of bringing the community together. He would like to see it continue. He said that law enforcement and fire personnel presence made he and his family feel very safe. He extended a thank you to all of the staff and volunteers who took part in the event.

Council Member Her also asked for an update on the roof solar panels. Ms. Volkers responded that they will likely be removed.

Council Member Willenbring asked on behalf of the Tree Board about the liability to the City for volunteers who show up to the Buckthorn Removal event and have not pre-registered, therefore, they have not signed a waiver to participate in the event. Ms. Volkers will follow up with the City Attorney to understand the City's liability in this situation.

Council Member Morcomb shared there is a growing demand for commercial space and has heard from residents who want to start a business in town, but cannot find anything affordable. Mr. Gitzlaff responded saying when there are calls from individuals like this inquiry and he guides them to the Minnesota Commercial Real Estate Association (MNCAR). Council Member Morcomb replied he will guide future inquiries to (MNCAR) as well.

Mayor Zabel shared that he told OSCO the City will be sending thank you cards to the event sponsors and exhibitors and asked that everyone be available to sign those. Ms. Volkers shared with the group that OSCO will be conducting a debrief on Summerfest amongst themselves and then with vendors and sponsors before they open up to discussions with City staff. Mayor Zabel noted he will be part of OSCO's debrief, but not as an elected official. Ms. Volkers will be adding the Summerfest topic to a future workshop for a debrief with Council and OSCO.

Mayor Zabel then brought up previous conversations about constructing a joint facility for the Police and Fire Departments and there was not action that came from those conversations. He asked if the City wants to explore what a joint facility would look like. Council Member Ingebrigtson asked where would this be placed and agreed there are a lot of benefits of both departments being housed in the same location. Ms. Volkers mentioned the current plan is to move the construction of the Police Department Facility up to a sooner date. She had discussions with both Chiefs and they are in favor of having a joint facility. She continued to say the obstacle with that plan is the time it would take to plan such a project. Chief Newton replied that he is in favor of a dual facility to be located centrally in the City, however, was concerned it may cause issues for the elected officials as the City has already publicized expanding these departments separately.

Fire Chief Kevin Wold agreed there would be several long-term benefits of a joint facility. Staff was directed to look into the logistics of a combined facility.

RECESS FOR REGULAR MEETING AT 6:53 PM

WORKSHOP RECONVENED AT 7:39 PM after the Regular Council Meeting

2024 – 2028 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PLAN (CIP) AND 2024 – 2033 VEHICLE & EQUIPMENT REPLACEMENT PLAN

Finance Director Jason Zimmerman began by providing some background on the transition of the capital improvement plan (CIP) from the Engineering Department to the Finance Department; the implementation of the vehicle & equipment replacement fund (VERF); and categories of the CIP. Mr. Zimmerman reviewed the increase in the property tax levy, comprehensive funding strategies, and a majority of the projects from the 2023-2027 CIP that are included in the 2024-2028 CIP. Mr. Zimmerman noted that items slotted for 2025 and beyond do not require a firm Council commitment as they are subject to change.

The nine chapters of the CIP were introduced. Mr. Zimmerman noted that the chapters are like projects, but they can be funded from various funds/sources. Mayor Zabel provided a caveat that these numbers are not locked in place at this time. Before continuing, Mr. Zimmerman thanked all the staff that worked on updating OpenGov with the 2024-2028 CIP information.

Mr. Zimmerman began with the Parks category noting that City Project P2026-01: Tanners Park Playground Replacement was pushed from 2024 to 2026 to coincide with P2026-02: Tanners South Parking Lot Repaving. On the matter of pushing the Tanners Lake Playground Replacement from 2024 to 2026, Mayor Zabel indicated that park is in dire need of improvement, therefore, he would not like to wait on the scheduled improvements.

Council Member Her asked the Council if they are open to grass or another alternative material to the sand volleyball courts that are proposed in the 2024-2028 CIP.

Mayor Zabel suggested that each Council Member go down to Tanners Lake Park and look at the state of the current amenities as this may help drive Council's intent for proposed park improvements.

The discussion shifted to City Project P2024-03: Walton Ballfield Lighting Upgrade to LED. Several complaints have been received about efficient and reliable lighting. Council Member Morcomb was in favor of moving forward with this project. Ms. Volkers suggested that Xcel Energy could contribute to or offer a rebate for the installation of LED lighting. Mayor Zabel was also in favor of moving forward with this project.

Ms. Volkers clarified that Mayor Zabel would like City Project P2026-01: Tanners Park Playground Replacement to be completed in 2024 instead of City Project P2024-01: Oakdale Park Playground Replacement. Mayor Zabel confirmed.

Mr. Zimmerman then reviewed the funding sources for the 2024-2028 CIP.

Council Member Morcomb brought up the need to focus on park improvements because they are extremely public-facing. Mayor Zabel suggested that athletic associations could rent the use of the fields to provide a dedicated revenue stream to help offset park improvement costs. Ms. Volkers noted that in a prior conversation with Mr. Zimmerman, he indicated this would result in a net zero additional revenue due to the staff time and administrative work involved. After a brief discussion, staff was asked to determine the City's cost to maintain and improve the baseball/softball fields. Mr. Zimmerman suggested that the City could offer a set number of days/hours of use to the athletic associations at a fixed price and anything unused could be sublet at the athletic association's discretion.

Council Member Morcomb was in favor of the Walton Ballfield Lighting Upgrade project, and moving the Tanners Park Playground Replacement project back to 2024. Ms. Volkers asked Mr. Zimmerman to reevaluate the requested amount for City Project P2026-02: Tanners South Parking Lot Repaving. Mr. Zimmerman noted that activities related to Walton Park improvements are slated to occur in 2028. Council Member Morcomb would like to see these projects potentially moved up to 2025 or 2026.

Mr. Zimmerman moved on to discuss the new utility projects within the 2024-2028 CIP. Then, he reviewed the 2024-2033 VERF, which includes Police Department vehicles and Public Works Department equipment, among other vehicle and equipment items.

Mr. Zimmerman continued with the Buildings category discussing the new Public Works facility, the repaving of the North Fire Station parking lot, and the Discovery Center HVAC system. Facilities Manager Kevin Zittel explained the need for the Discovery Center HVAC system upgrade. In response to Council Member Morcomb's question about a possible rebate for the updating of the Discovery Center HVAC system, Mr. Zittel confirmed.

The Technology category was unchanged from the 2023 proposals.

Mr. Zimmerman noted that the Drainage category does not necessarily have specific projects identified, however there is funding set aside for yearly drainage system activities.

Mr. Zimmerman discussed the Signals category. City Project L2025-02: County Road 14 & Marketplace Drive Signal Improvements has been added due to the Oakdale Marketplace Apartments and the 4Front campus commercial development.

Lastly, regarding the Streets/Roadway category, Ms. Volkers asked if the Council was comfortable with the six-foot-wide concrete sidewalk along Greenway Avenue from Hudson Boulevard to 7th Street, as noted as part of City Projects R2025-01 and R2025-02. Staff was directed to review the workshop minutes in which this was discussed previously to determine Council's intent.

ADJOURNMENT

The workshop was adjourned at 9:11 PM.

Respectfully submitted,

Katie Robinson, Deputy City Clerk