



# CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

## City Council Work Session Virtual via WebEx

### January 25, 2022

<b>CALL TO ORDER</b>
----------------------

The meeting was called to order by Council Member Supple at 5:33 p.m. virtually via WebEx

Council Members Present: Maria Regan Gonzalez, Mayor (arrived 5:34 p.m.); Mary Supple; Sean Hayford Oleary; and Ben Whalen

Council Members Absent: Simon Trautmann

Staff Present: Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Krista Guzman, Human Resources Manager; Neil Ruhland, Communications and Engagement Manager; Kate Aitchison, Communications Specialist; Chris Swanson, Management Analyst; Kelly Wynn, Administrative Assistant; and Kari Sinning, City Clerk.

<b>ITEM #1</b>	<b>DISCUSSION ON MODIFYING THE HEALTH CARE SAVINGS PLAN FOR THE MAYOR AND COUNCIL MEMBERS</b>
----------------	---

Council Member Supple introduced City Manager Rodriguez who turned it over to Human Resources Manager Guzman. Human Resources Manager Guzman explained the current healthcare savings plan and the proposed changes.

Council Member Whalen stated his concern and the need for input from Council.

Council Member Supple expressed that her feelings were not strong about the changes.

Council Member Hayford Oleary stated that it would be fine to reduce

Mayor Regan Gonzalez asked if it could be changed for some but not for all of which Human Resources Manager Guzman stated that it has to be the same for everyone.

City Manager Rodriguez shared that Council Member Trautmann told her that he would be fine with what the Council would decide.

Council Member Hayford Oleary asked for more information on the health care savings plan. Human Resources Manager Guzman explained the health care savings plan in further detail stating that it cannot be used until after employment for health care related costs.

Council Member Hayford Oleary asked Council Member Whalen for the details on why he would like to reduce the amount. Council Member Whalen explained that the money out of their paychecks could be potentially be used for something else and suggested \$50 as a middle ground.

All Council present agreed that \$50 would be reasonable.

Human Resources Manager Guzman stated that she will be able to change the amount with the State and make a resolution for full adoption.

<b>ITEM #2</b>	<b>PRESENTATION ON THE RICHFIELD NEWSLETTER</b>
----------------	---

Mayor Regan Gonzalez introduced City Manager Rodriguez who turned it over to Communications Manager Ruhland. Communications Manager Ruhland shared a little bit about the Richfield newsletter and the preliminary acceptance of it. He then introduced Communications Specialist Aitchison.

Communications Specialist Aitchison gave a presentation that explained the need, how the e-newsletter would be distributed, and what the e-newsletter would entail. She also shared the next steps for outreach to the community.

Council Member Hayford Oleary expressed his excitement for the Richfield Recap and asked about subscribing to only one topic without subscribing to the Richfield Recap. Communications Specialist Aitchison stated that is an option to add and it is something that could do as a pop out on the side of a page.

Council Member Whalen communicated his enthusiasm for the Richfield Recap and asked about text links working properly. Communications Specialist Aitchison stated that the text links should be operational and will follow up with GovDelivery.

Council Member Supple echoed the praises given by other council members and stated that she is excited for this to be a place for residents to get the news all in one place.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez also expressed excitement for the Richfield Recap and thanked the communications team for this project. She asked if we could include something along the lines of 'Thank you Thursdays' (a part of the City Manager's Report to Council) to it so that residents can see their words getting to city staff and also asked about having it be available in Spanish.

Council Member Whalen asked for clarification on how to sign up via text. Communications Specialist Aitchison stated that the phone number is a regular number but she is hopeful that they can make that easier for the future and promoted the use of the richfieldmn.gov/subscribe to sign up for the e-newsletter.

Communications Manager Ruhland stated that the open rate is about 56% which is so much higher than other government newsletters and also expressed that this can be used by all departments which can make it cheaper and standardize the brand for Richfield.

<b>ITEM #3</b>	<b>PRESENTATION FROM GREATER MSP</b>
----------------	--------------------------------------

Mayor Regan Gonzalez introduced City Manager Rodriguez who turned it over to Peter Frosch, CEO from Greater MSP, who gave a presentation about Greater MSP. Mr. Frosch shared that Greater MSP is a 13-county partnership that focuses on strategies to work as a region to promote economic growth in the region.

Council Member Supple asked for more detail about inclusive economic growth. Mr. Frosch explained that the recent census data stated a sixty percent growth in the BIPOC population in the region and Greater MSP is focused on getting access for small-medium BIPOC owned businesses to thrive.

Council Member Whalen shared his concern about housing affordability and asked about the programs to solve the home ownership disparities. Mr. Frosch expressed that this is an American problem and that there are some efforts that could be breakthrough when it comes to this issue.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez shared the history of housing setbacks in Richfield and how we as a City have been working towards more actual affordable housing. Mayor Regan Gonzalez asked about affordable quality childcare. Mr. Frosch echoed the concern for the need of affordable childcare which is a big issue that policy makers should be involved in and Mayor Regan Gonzalez stated that corporate offices could also rethink their childcare benefits to their employees and that is a conversation that Greater MSP could have with their stakeholders. Mayor Regan Gonzalez also asked about key opportunities that Greater MSP could offer Richfield given our location and size. Mr. Frosch explained the opportunities that Richfield could have in advanced manufacturing.

Council Member Hayford Oleary expressed concern on strict rent control policies like Minneapolis and St. Paul and asked about how other communities such as Richfield could not impose such strict policies. Mr. Frosch stated that the policies undermine the goals and that there are more solutions for this issue and asked what ideas Richfield has entertained. Council Member Hayford Oleary stated the current limits that are placed upon properties that are subsidized by the city. Mr. Frosch also brought up that this is also an income issue too.


Council Member Whalen asked about the policies for workers and worker protections that Greater MSP has conversed about. Mr. Frosch stated that Greater MSP is focused on creating jobs that pay competitive wages and making economic opportunity to help those workers to be successful.



Mayor Regan Gonzalez thanked Mr. Frosch and Greater MSP for the presentation and the continued work to make Richfield a part of the attractive regional solution. Mr. Frosch thanked the Council for the opportunity and mentioned a federal funding hub (website) that Richfield could take part in to create more transparency and creativity for the city.

**ADJOURNMENT**

The work session was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:49 p.m.

Date Approved: February 8, 2022

  
Kari Sinning  
City Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Maria Regan Gonzalez  
Mayor  
  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Katie Rodriguez  
City Manager