



# CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

## City Council Work Session

### March 26, 2024

<b>CALL TO ORDER</b>
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Mayor Supple called the work session to order at 5:47 p.m. in the Bartholomew Room.

*Council Members Present:* Mary Supple, Mayor; Simon Trautmann, Sharon Christensen; and Sean Hayford Oleary

*Council Members Absent:* Ben Whalen

*Staff Present:* Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Karl Huemiller, Recreation Services Director; Kate Aitchison, Communications and Engagement Manager; Joe Powers, City Engineer; Kristin Asher, Public Works Director; Matt Hardegger, Transportation Engineer; and Chris Swanson, Management Analyst

*Guests:* Craig Holje, Chief Human Resources and Admin Officer for Richfield Public Schools; Kirk Spencer, Richfield School Board Member; Dr. Steven Unowsky, Superintendent of Richfield Public Schools

<b>ITEM #1</b>	<b>LOCAL SALES TAX COMMUNICATIONS UPDATE</b>
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City Manager Rodriguez provided a summary on the agenda and turned the first item over to Communications and Engagement Manager Kate Aitchison. Manager Aitchison introduced the council item and provided background on the local sales tax (LST) referendum discussion. She talked about what a sales tax is, what it can be used for, and what projects it was approved for in Richfield, if approved by the community at the upcoming November election. She went into more detail about the LST projects and talked about some of the specific items that would be added if the referendum was successful.

Manager Aitchison provided some background info on the city consultant, Rapp Strategics, who will be helping the city to coordinate the communication items for the city around the LST issue. She talked about the role of this consultant in the projects including their role in creating communication material and provided some assistance in responding to residents' questions about the referendum.

Manager Aitchison presented the proposed slogan and logo for the LST communication plan. She talked about how "Our Legacy, Our Future" ties the projects to the community. She noted we were still working on a final for a branded logo and Rapp will be building a website in the next few

weeks. Manager Aitchison noted Rapp and staff were working on fact sheets and other educational materials for elected officials and staff to use if there are questions from the community. These materials will go out to the council as they are drafted. She also noted how most of this "boots on the ground" work will start in May and staff were available to answer any questions the council may have.

Council Members Hayford Oleary asked about the brand used in the previous work session. Manager Aitchison said that we were looking for an updated brand as we wanted to broaden the message above just parks as additional projects are now included in the LST. Council Member Hayford Oleary talked about how he felt like some of the messaging was too broad. He wants to make sure people understand what they will be getting by supporting the referendum. He asked that staff be clear that this will go to fund the Wood Lake Nature Center building and would not be used to make any other changes at the site. He also noted staff should look at purchasing the ".com" tiny URL to make sure community members go to the correct sites. Staff noted there will be a standalone website.

Mayor Supple thanked staff for their work and turned the meeting to the second item.

<b>ITEM #2</b>	<b>A DISCUSSION ABOUT POTENTIAL IMPACTS FROM THE CITY'S REDUCTION IN SPEED LIMITS ON THE BUSSING OPERATIONS AND DAILY SCHEDULE OF RICHFIELD PUBLIC SCHOOL DISTRICT SCHOOLS.</b>
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City Manager Rodriguez introduced the guests that included: Craig Holje, Chief Human Resources and Admin Officer for Richfield Public Schools; Kirk Spencer, Richfield School Board Member; Dr. Steven Unowsky, Superintendent of Richfield Public Schools.

City Engineer Powers introduced the item and provided some background on prior discussion around this topic with the council. He talked about what staff wanted to discuss with the school district and how this was an opportunity for a discussion about the proposed speed reduction. He talked about how the school district estimates that there may be an impact to bussing times with these new speed limits. City Engineer Powers provided a summary of the current recommendation in front of the council. The current staff proposal is a pause of any changes on 76/77th Streets and proceed with the lower 25mph speed limit on all other local roads, including Lyndale. City Engineer Powers noted this change would be expected to be effective June 25, 2024.

Mayor Supple asked a logistical question to the district about when they would be able to look at their routing software. Chief Human Resources and Admin Officer Craig Holje said they would like to look at this impact after summer school gets out later in the year. Mr. Holje said they are trying to find a window of time where they can pull good data. Mayor Supple said she does not want to mess up the school year and recognizes this is something that could be disruptive. She then asked city staff what timing is needed for implementation of a 25-mph limit only on local roads. City Engineer Powers discussed the rollout plan. He said staff would look at an implementation date of June 25th. He noted that waiting to make a change to the limits on 76/77th Streets would not impact the rollout time.

Transportation Engineer Hardegger noted the statute to address the local streets is different than the one needed to change larger roads like 76/77th Streets. The local roads require some communication before the changes. Mayor Supple asked if there was anything in the legislature that would impact this work. Staff provided a summary of various bills currently under review at the capital.

Council Member Hayford Oleary asked the school district what their next step is in the process. Mr. Holje talked about some of the impacts these proposed changes, even dropping just the local roads to 25, will have on their operations. He noted they have not had the opportunity to run this through their modeling software. They plan to do more thorough communication with the parents if they find the route times are impacted 3 or more minutes. The district would like 6 to 9 months to

communicate with their families. Their hope would be to make some changes in the in the 2025-2026 school year. Council Member Hayford Oleary restated his question, noting that it sounds like the district is comfortable with moving forward with the change to local roads but that they would like more time to investigate the impact a change on 76/77th Street may have.

Superintendent Unowsky stated there would be an increase in costs for the district with these changes. He said they expect there to be an increase in 3 minutes to the average travel time. He noted the district does not know the impact on childcare, work, etc. these changes will have. Council Member Hayford Oleary said he is committed to the speed reduction being done in the community but is open to discussion about when this change occurs. Superintendent Unowsky said the board does not have a clear agreement on the matter. He said there is good evidence that altering starts times will have an impact on students.

Council Member Trautmann said that he shares Council Member Hayford Oleary's views. He said he wants to be mindful of this impact, including the additional cost to the district. Council Member Trautmann said he wanted to respect the relationship but may disagree with their findings. He said that in the interest of walking together, he is willing to slow things down.

Council Member Christensen asked general questions about the timing and noted she would like this change to take effect in the fall of this year. Superintendent Unowsky noted it's hard to provide a direct answer because of the school board being split and not knowing what the impact would be until they had more time to study this matter. Council Member Christensen asked if they could start talking with families now. Superintendent Unowsky said that they would not want to communicate anything unless something is set in stone. Mayor Supple agreed that a dual education approach would be too complicated. She said with a lot of the local routes, the buses are already only going 25 mph so there hopefully will be less impact. The school district staff agreed.

City Manager Rodriguez clarified that the city believed the school district was planning on studying the impacts of this change in the next few months. This would include starting to communicate the changes to the families in the district this year. Mayor Supple agreed this was the info provided to council before this meeting. School district staff said this is the leadup time they feel they would need for communicating with the families in their districts.

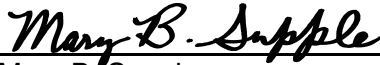
City Manager Rodriguez provided a summary of the discussion. She noted there is agreement in changes to speeds on the local roads can move forward, with a start date of June 25, and city staff will provide additional information to the district on 76/77th Street, to allow the school district time to study this larger question. Mayor Supple noted the construction on 494 and wanted the district to be mindful of any impacts this may have on their study. She thanked them for all the partnership for the safe routes to school work. She talked about a recent Richfield Disability Advocacy Partnership (R-DAP) forum she participated in and how areas of issue brought up in the meeting were addressed by the safe routes to school.

Council Member Hayford Oleary said that if we need to pass any ordinances which may push back the dates for the implementation he would only amend with an updated date and not rescind with no replacement. Council Member Trautmann talked about how much he would enjoy having a joint meeting with the school board in the future.

**ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Supple adjourned the work session at 6:40 pm.

Date Approved: April 9, 2024



Mary B. Supple  
Mayor



Dustin Leslie  
City Clerk



Katie Rodriguez  
City Manager