



CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

City Council Work Session

April 23, 2024

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Supple called the work session to order at 5:05 p.m. in the Bartholomew Room.

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

Staff Present: Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Sack Thongvanh, Assistant City Manager; Mike Dobesh, Fire Chief; Jay Henthorne, Police Chief; Melissa Poehlman, Community Development Director; Kristin Asher, Public Works Director; Kumud Verma, Finance Director; Karl Huemiller, Recreation Services Director; Rachel Lindholm, Sustainability Specialist; and Chris Swanson, Management Analyst.

ITEM #1	CITY COUNCIL AND DIRECTORS QUARTERLY MEETING TO REVIEW PROPOSED POLICY AND PROGRAM REQUESTS FOR POSSIBLE INCLUSION IN THE 2024 OR 2025 WORKPLANS
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City Manager Rodriguez reviewed the new policy proposal process. She stated staff needed to get Council consensus as to what work would be added to the 2024 or 2025 work plans, the scope of the work, and what work plan projects would need to be delayed.

Assistant City Manager Thongvanh summarized the proposed branding and website noting full branding was estimated to be \$50,000 to \$100,000. He proposed tighter brand stands such as logo, colors, fronts, and better staff training. He recommended having an RFP for the new website in 2025 with a launch in 2026 and proposing a website rebrand approximately every 5 years.

Council Member Hayford Oleary clarified that the recommendation was to stick with the existing brand and build the website around the existing brand. He indicated that he would prefer to do a full rebranding, but he did not think this was a big issue given the other priorities. He requested the brand be tightened and staff have training and consistency. He agreed with the proposed cost and the timeline.

Council Member Whalen stated he appreciated the industry standard timeline of approximately every five years of a website rebrand. He asked if there was an industry recommendation as to how often rebranding happened. He requested staff have some future date for this.

Assistant City Manager Thongvanh responded that staff would look into the matter. He indicated he had done branding in the past where it related when something was changing in an organization.

City Manager Rodriguez stated this would be brought back to staff to see if this could be looked at for a future year. She noted right now just firming up the branding and doing training on it, along with everything else, would be a lot of work for staff. She did not see the city being able to do this until after the launch of the website in 2026.

Mayor Supple stated her higher priority was the website over the branding and if the website could be refreshed on a regular basis that was more important than the branding. She believed there were more critical issues to handle.

City Manager Rodriguez summarized she understood that the website was the priority and staff's plan was to look at rebranding in 2026 or 2027, but in the meantime, Council was comfortable with tightening up the brand guidelines and providing better training for staff.

Director Huemiller provided a summary of the decarbonization project. He noted that with current staffing levels, it was not possible to administer this type of project without significant investment. He recommended to wait and see what came of this as everything becomes more solidified. He indicated staff were keeping on top of what possible grant opportunities were out there as well as outside support for this program. He indicated staff had also been discussing implementing some of the initiatives into the community housing program as well.

Specialist Lindholm indicated a lot of what they were waiting for came from the State and they were waiting to hear on the grant applications.

Council Member Whalen noted the Federal government was contributing a lot of money that individuals could apply toward new appliances, weatherization, etc. and the city needed to direct residents to this opportunity which he believed would be available at the end of 2024.

Director Poehlman indicated staff was already doing a comprehensive evaluation for the housing programs which would try and guide residents toward additional sustainable features. She noted staff wanted to wait until the evaluation was complete to not get ahead of the Federal programs. She also stated staff did not want to create a program within one of the city's existing HRA programs if it is decided that the city was no longer going to put resources toward that program.

City Manager Rodriguez summarized the Council was comfortable with staff's recommendation on timing and it made sense to wait until they had more information on the Federal programs. She noted once that was figured out, this would align nicely with the community development work and their housing programs.

Mayor Supple requested an update on the downtown name proposal.

Director Poehlman stated this year staff could start including the wording Downtown Richfield in new documents and proposed signage, and not use The Lakes at Lyndale tag line until the city went through the branding process. In 2025, she proposed undertaking a strategic process that looked at what's done for advertising or marketing projects. She recommended a consultant to help with that work along with figuring out what downtown meant as well as the extent of downtown along with how they want to grant it going forward.

Council Member Hayford O'Leary pointed out that the old branding from 20 years ago never caught on, and he supported staff's recommendation and noted that the timing made sense.

Council Member Trautman agreed with Council Member Hayford O'Leary, but believed the timing was very important as well as having cohesive messaging. He liked having a cohesive brand and he saw this as something potentially more where they could unlock other opportunities.

Council Member Whalen stated he liked the work around the downtown revitalization that was in the strategic plan. He asked if the planning would delay other projects that were going to be a part of the plan. Director Poehlman responded there would not be any delay, these were ultimately already part of the plan, and she did not believe this would be extra work.

Council Member Whalen indicated he did not oppose any of this, but noted it was not a strong priority for him. He believed they should have banners and lighting to have a defined downtown.

Mayor Supple agreed this was not a high priority, but it did seem easy to do and she agreed with staff's timeline. She noted her higher priority was focusing on economic development for that area and if this helped that economic development, then she agreed with proceeding. Council Member Christensen also agreed this was not a high priority and indicated the ideas were good and that they needed to look at the economic development of the entire area.

City Manager Rodriguez summarized that some Council Members thought this was a priority and some didn't think it was a priority, but they all agreed with staff's plan. She heard from staff that it's well aligned with the city's economic development efforts downtown and that it would be important.

Assistant City Manager Thongvanh presented a proposal to look at the liquor store names as well as eliminate past confusion for the stores.

Council Member Hayford O'Leary stated while this was not a big deal, it was an easy thing to do.

Mayor Supple expressed concern about copyright issues with Shops at Lyndale and asked if Richfield Liquor Lyndale Shops, or some other variation, could be used.

Council Member Hayford O'Leary stated he did not know if it would be allowed to use that name and he did not have a strong feeling about that.

Council Member Trautmann indicated he was for consistent branding but expressed concern with respect to the cost of the change and questioned if they wanted to invest in purchasing new LED signage.

Council Member Christensen stated she agreed with identifying the liquor shops as the names would help the residents find a location.

Council Member Whalen believed it was okay to move ahead with as little extra time spent on this as needed. Mayor Supple agreed it would be easy for staff to do this and it would be an easy fix.

City Manager Rodriguez summarized the Council was okay with staff's recommendation and staff will check into The Shops to see if there were any copyright concerns.

Director Poehlman moved on to short-term rental regulation and noted there were two parts to this, (1) looking at the proposed prohibition on short-term rentals and (2) continuing to monitor the number of institutional investors. She noted staff's recommendation was to address this in 2025 when there would be a full year of data. She stated they had started to implement a system where citizens had to self-identify as a short-term rental operation, which would give staff an idea of the number of short-term rentals in the community as well as allow staff to link that data to code enforcement. She

stated if the Council believed this should be a higher priority, they would need to reprioritize existing work that was planned for 2024. She reminded the Council that the City Attorney also had a concern about the city putting limits on ownership and whether that would be legal. She indicated staff's preference would be to continue watching the legislature and to monitor what was happening locally.

Mayor Supple agreed it was okay to keep monitoring with the possibility of legislative changes, which could overrule the city. She stated she did want this to keep moving forward, even if it meant they needed to wait until 2025 but would like to see it sooner if possible. Her highest priority was MR2 and MR3 zoning revisions because that affected the greatest number of people. Then she believed short-term rentals took priority over parking.

Council Member Hayford Oleary believed this was a priority. He agreed the parking requirements were an impediment and this was a good time to address it. He noted the buildings that were built, or failed to get built, because the parking would be there for 50 to 100 years, while short-term rentals would be there until the city managed to get an ordinance together. He asked if someone had a right to continue with a short-term rental that was already started prior to having an ordinance.

Director Poehlman responded there would not be and gave some examples the Council could implement once an Ordinance was finalized. She indicated staff was very close to being done with parking and if were set aside, they would need to start over with the discussions. She noted staff was also working on other Ordinances, such as cannabis which was unmovable. She indicated if things had to be moved, the only options were zoning and parking.

Council Member Whalen stated short-term rentals seemed less important to him than the two projects that would be delayed. Director Poehlman indicated she understood this was a high priority for the Council Members and certain community members and she believed it would be possible to fit this in for 2025.

Council Member Christensen believed there needed to be a better way of approaching the ownership of short-term rentals and asked how many the city currently had. Director Poehlman responded there were approximately 50 rentals, but staff were still collecting information on this.

Council Member Hayford Oleary stated he supported staff's recommendation and timing.

Mayor Supple believed they needed to do something on the short-term rental side, but it sounded like it was Council's consensus to wait on this until 2025. She indicated her higher priority was the short-term rental ban.

Council Member Trautman stated he would support staff's priorities, but he did believe responding to residents' concerns was important as did Mayor Supple

City Manager Rodriguez summarized that short-term rentals were a priority, but it was okay for staff to do this in 2025. She requested clarification on institutional ownership.

Council Member Trautman recommended making that part of their legislative priorities in the coming year. Council Member Hayford Oleary stated he did not want to see this to into the Legislative platform as they had meetings for that.

City Manager Rodriguez understood the plan was to tackle short-term rentals in 2025 and track institutional ownership as part of the Legislature with discussions about it as part of the Legislative platform.

There was a brief discussion on possible changes to the policy proposal process and City Manager Rodriguez proposed sending some possible changes for consideration before the 2025 quarterly meetings.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Supple adjourned the work session at 6:35 p.m.


Date Approved: May 14, 2024



Mary B. Supple
Mayor



Kelly Wynn
Administrative Assistant



Katie Rodriguez
City Manager