



**WORK SESSION  
RICHFIELD MUNICIPAL CENTER, BARTHOLOMEW ROOM  
DECEMBER 12, 2023  
5:30 PM**

Call to order

1. Wood Lake Building Project Update and Timeline
2. Consider the City's proposed legislative priorities for 2024.

Adjournment

**Auxiliary aids for individuals with disabilities are available upon request. Requests must be made at least 96 hours in advance to the City Clerk at 612-861-9739.**



## WORK SESSION

12/12/2023

REPORT PREPARED BY: Paul Smithson, Wood Lake Nature Center Manager

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REVIEW: Karl Huemiller, Acting Recreation Services Director  
12/5/2023

OTHER DEPARTMENT REVIEW:

CITY MANAGER REVIEW: Katie Rodriguez, City Manager  
12/7/2023

### **ITEM FOR WORK SESSION:**

#### **Wood Lake Building Project Update and Timeline**

#### **EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Wood Lake Nature Center (WLNC) is a public facility that opened in 1971 serving anyone who enters free of charge, connecting them to the natural world through both passive and programmed learning opportunities. The current building, which was built over 50 years is no longer able to serve all the needs of the community.

A project team of City staff was formed in February of 2021 and a local architectural firm, HGA, was contracted for the predesign process. The team worked for months on the pre-design of a new building, visiting other nature centers, administering surveys, and analyzing nature center processes. The pre-design process identified community needs for the new building, a general preliminary design, and a cost model.

In 2023 the City, using the pre-design concept, secured \$15 million in funding, \$12 million in state bonding money, and \$3 million in federal funding. In the 2023 legislative session, the City also received authorization for a sales tax referendum that could provide the final \$10 million needed for the project.

With the majority of the project fund secured, the project team distributed an invitation-only RFP to six qualified firms for architectural and engineering services for the design and construction administration of the new nature center building at Wood Lake. A thorough review of the proposals was made, and three firms were interviewed by a panel of city staff consisting of technical experts from Public Works, Community Development, and Recreation Services. Staff then contacted references for each of the firms. Through this process, HGA was selected for the project due to their technical expertise, experience with similar scale projects, and being the most cost-effective finalist.

With an Architectural firm selected, the next step will be to distribute an RFQ for a Construction Manager at Risk. (CMAR) This will be followed by an invitation for qualified Construction Managers to submit a proposal and be interviewed for the CMAR role. Along with a CMAR, a display design company must also be selected. The CMAR, display company, and architectural firm will work as a team with the City through the design and construction process to ensure that the new Wood Lake Nature Center Building meets the needs of the entire community.

The building design process will go through four phases, each phase honing the design with construction planned to start in the spring of 2025. A general timeline is as follows:

Conceptual Design – January to February  
Schematic Design – February to June  
Design Development – June to September  
Construction Documents Development – September to December

Through each of these phases, a team of City staff and consultants will be engaging with residents, nature center visitors, and other stakeholders to ensure that the building is accessible and welcoming to everyone.

### **DIRECTION NEEDED:**

**Staff is asking Council to provide feedback on the process and ask questions ahead of awarding the contract to HGA at the Council meeting.**

### **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

#### **A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

##### **Wood Lake Nature Center Background**

Wood Lake Nature Center (WLNC) is a public facility that opened in 1971 and has always been free of charge. The center serves anyone who enters and helps connect them to the natural world through both passive and programmed learning opportunities. Currently, 60-70% of all site visitors are from the region and 30-40% visit from Richfield. We also are a short 10-minute drive to the Minneapolis International Airport and frequently host visitors from around the country and the world. Wood Lake Nature Center serves as the gateway for guests to explore the 150-acre park that surrounds it. There are over 3 miles of gentle hiking and cross-country ski trails for all to experience the many benefits of nature in three native Minnesota biomes: the forest, wetland, and prairie.

People of all ages and abilities are served at WLNC and a large focus has always been on student education. WLNC has had an invaluable 50-year partnership with the local Richfield Public School District; each student from preschool through 5<sup>th</sup> grade participates in 2-3 free environmental education field trips a year. Approximately 70% of the district's students are of color and have a 60-80% free and reduced lunch rate. We also annually host dozens of other school groups from across the region, including schools such as Lucy Laney in North Minneapolis where the students have accessed the center via the Metro Transit Bus System. We regularly host SciTech Academy, a Somali school. In previous years, we have been fortunate to secure grant funding for Little Earth schools to come to multiple environmental education programs throughout the academic year. Being an accessible and affordable site has always helped the center to attract a large diversity of schools from across the 7-county metropolitan area. We anticipate more space with a new building will allow for several groups at a time to schedule programs; with our current building, we are very limited by space. The additional space will also serve as valuable space for community groups and residents to utilize for meetings and special events. Also, educational exhibits and learning spaces are not fully accessible and are dated. A new building would afford the needed opportunity to design a fully accessible building that includes an inclusive multimodal approach to exhibits.

##### **Project Pre-Design**

A project team was formed in February of 2021 that included City of Richfield staff (Amy Markle, Dave Conrads, Paul Smithson, and Rachel Lindholm), and a group from the local architectural firm, HGA. The project team took a field trip to the new Westwood Hills Nature Center and learned about their process as well as worked for months on the pre-design of a new building. The pre-design process identified community needs for the new building, a general preliminary design, and a cost model.

Following the pre-design process, the city was able to use the materials developed to raise funds for the project. In 2023 the City secured \$15 million in funding, \$12 million in state bonding money, and \$3 million in federal funding. In the 2023 legislative session, the City also received authorization for a sales tax referendum that could provide the final \$10 million needed for the project.

##### **Architect Interview Process**

On October 13, 2023, the Wood Lake Nature Center Building Project Team put out an invitation-only RFP for

architectural and engineering services for the design and construction administration of the new nature center building at Wood Lake. Six firms who have done similar work in the region were invited to submit proposals outlining their experience with similar projects, members of their project team, and approach to the project including community engagement and design schedules. Of the six firms invited, five submitted proposals, and three were invited to interviews based on the content of their proposals. Staff took into account the firms' understanding of the project, technical competence, experience with similar buildings, and the cost of their services.

An interview panel was formed, consisting of members of the Wood Lake Nature Center Building Project Team as well as technical experts including the city engineer and a community development planner. In the interviews, the three firms introduced their teams, presented their project schedules, design development process, and technical expertise, and answered questions from staff. Following the interviews staff contacted references for each of the design firms.

### **Architect Selection**

Out of this process, HGA was selected as the best firm for the Wood Lake Nature Center Building Project. HGA has the expertise to design and administer the construction of a building on a site with the complexities of Wood Lake Nature Center. They have experience working on municipal nature centers and community buildings having recently provided similar services for the construction of Westwood Hills Nature Center in St. Louis Park, MN, and the Plymouth Community Center in Plymouth, MN. HGA is a large firm with in-house staff for all aspects of design and construction administration, creating a strong and cohesive project team. They were the only firm to have an equity coordinator as part of the project team. The City also has experience working with HGA from the predesign process and HGA was the most cost-effective option among the firms interviewed with a cost of 9.37% of the building construction cost, or \$1,685,956.

### **B. EQUITABLE OR STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPACTS**

**Equity:** There is a large focus on equity in public engagement during the design process, which was emphasized during the architect interviews and was a key factor in the selection of a firm. The new building will allow more accessibility to more groups. Current ADA guidelines will be met which currently are not. Design also includes the goals of including feedback from a variety of community stakeholders, including the disability community, the Latine community, low-income residents, residents who live close to Wood Lake, visitors to Richfield, students who visit, and many more groups.

**Strategic Plan:** This project best aligns with the strategic plan priority of Sustainable Infrastructure addressing all sub-initiatives of asset management, comprehensive funding, and sustainability efforts.

### **C. POLICIES (resolutions, ordinances, regulations, statutes, exc):**

The architect will help the City comply with SB2030 and B3 standards, which are requirements as a part of receiving state bonding funds. More city ordinances and other regulations will come into play later in the building and design process.

### **D. CRITICAL TIMING ISSUES:**

The project has been budgeted with a start date of January 2024. To keep on this timeline we interviewed several architectural firms in November and determined a staff recommendation in early December. Additionally, to start planning in January the City needs to execute a contract in December 2023. Staff are working to have the architect, CMAR, and exhibit team on board in January 2024.

Proposed General Timeline for 2024-2025:

- Jan-Feb: programming/concept
- Feb-Jun: Schematic Design
- Jun-Sep: Design Development
- Sep-Jan: Construction Documents

### **E. FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

The total services fee for the architectural services is \$1,685,956.

**Total Project Cost: \$25 million**

**Construction Costs: \$18 million**

Includes escalation, design contingency, construction contingency, general conditions, construction management fees, bonds/insurance, and permitting.

**Project Soft Costs: \$7 Million**

Includes professional services fees, fixtures/furniture/equipment (FFE), exhibits, testing/inspections, survey, AV/Technology, owner contingency, etc.

**Funding:**

State Bonding - \$12 million

Federal Grants - \$3 million

Unsecured Funding - \$10 million (Bonds paid by Sales Tax Option or Property Taxes depending on outcome of referendum)

F. **LEGAL CONSIDERATION:**

Staff followed the RFP process and interviewed several firms before deciding on the staff recommendation.

**ALTERNATIVE(S):**

None

**PRINCIPAL PARTIES EXPECTED AT MEETING:**

**ATTACHMENTS:**

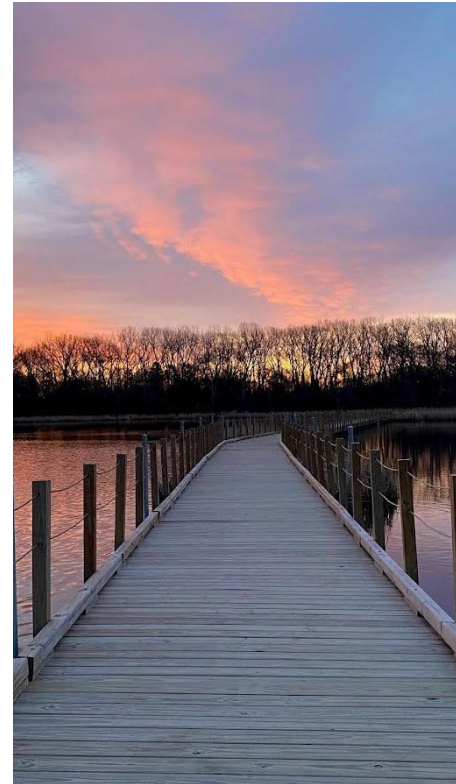
	Description	Type
▣	Wood Lake Nature Center Building Project Timeline Update	Presentation



# **Wood Lake Nature Center Building Project**



# Wood Lake Overview



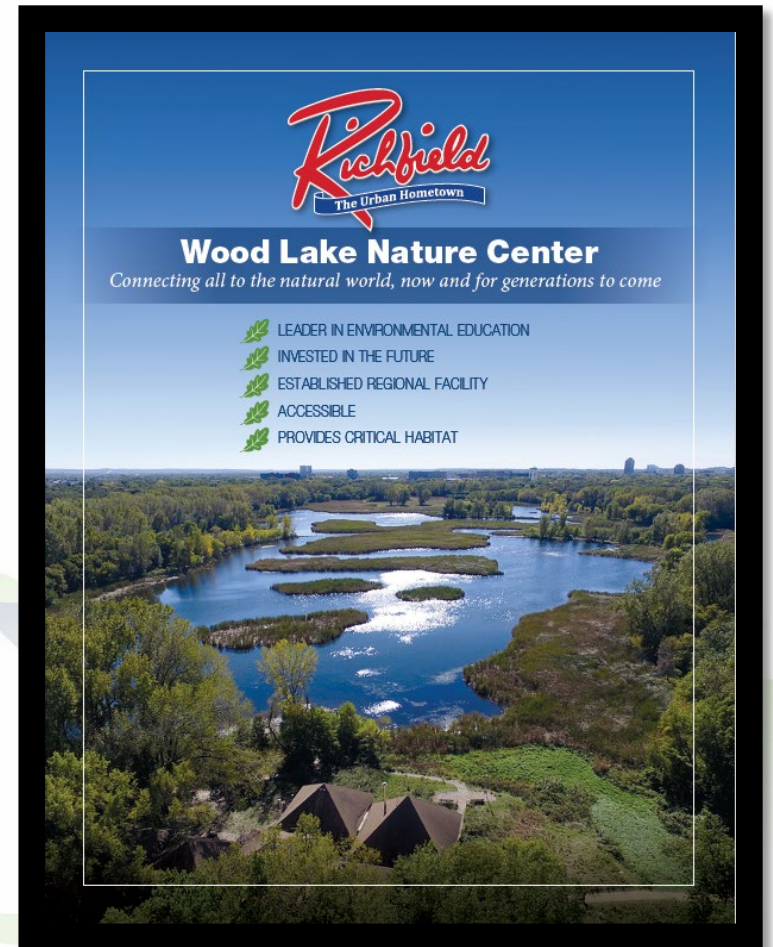
# Project History

Pre-design concept – 2021

## Funding

- State Bonding 2023
- Federal Grant
- Local Sales Tax Option
- City Funds

RFP for architects





# Selection Process

- RFP process – 6 firms invited
- Interviews/Presentations - 3 firms invited
- Interview panel of staff technical experts
  - Public Works
  - Community Development
  - Recreation Services

# Why HGA

- Expertise
- Experience
- Focus on Equity
- Past work with City
- Most Cost Effective



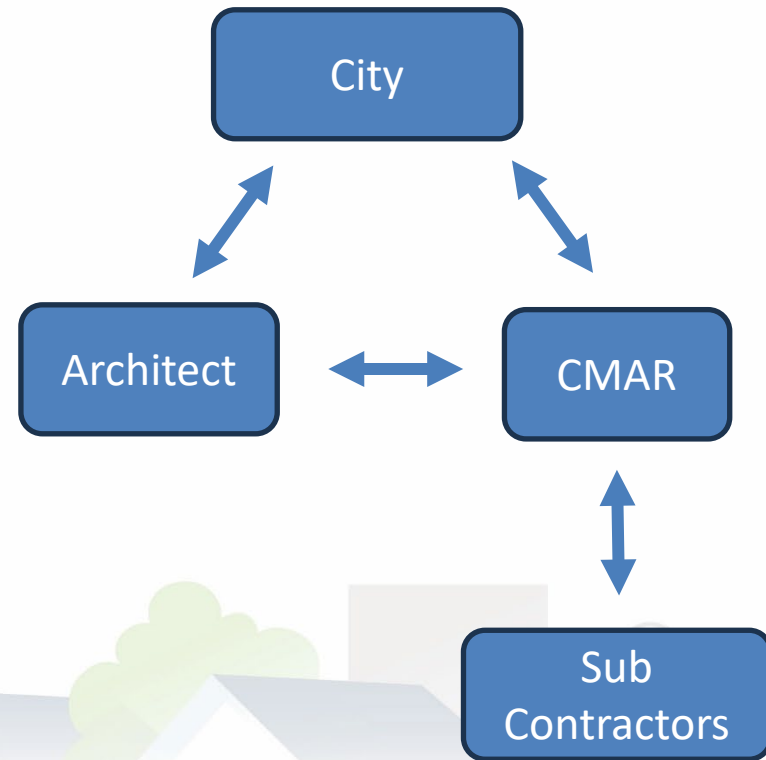
# Next Steps

- Contract with HGA
- RFPs for
  - Construction Manager at Risk
  - Exhibit Company
- Design Process - January

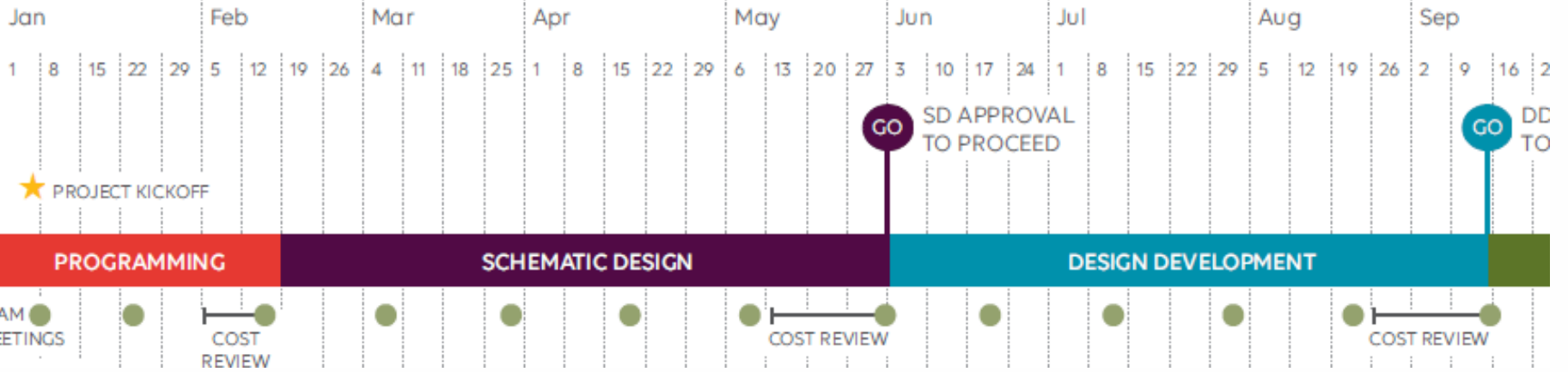


# Why a CMAR?

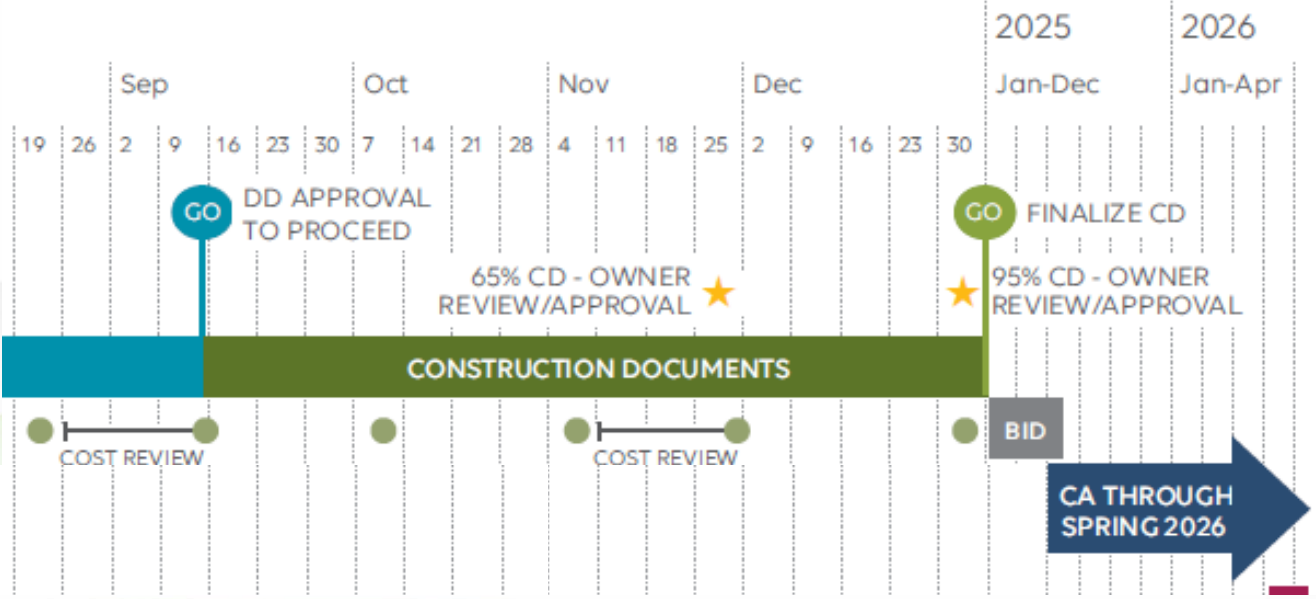
- Collaboration in design phase
- Maximize local participation
- Construction Estimate Checks
- Guaranteed maximum price
- Reduced risk for the City



2024



# Timeline



# Questions





**STAFF REPORT NO. 42**  
**WORK SESSION**  
**12/12/2023**

REPORT PREPARED BY: Chris Swanson, Management Analyst

DEPARTMENT DIRECTOR REVIEW:

OTHER DEPARTMENT REVIEW:

CITY MANAGER REVIEW: Katie Rodriguez, City Manager  
12/6/2023

**ITEM FOR WORK SESSION:**

**Consider the City's proposed legislative priorities for 2024.**

**EXECUTIVE SUMMARY:**

Annually, the City of Richfield legislative priorities have been compiled in collaboration with various City departments and stakeholders. The priorities are a list of policy positions and measures the city supports at the state and regional level and bonding requests for city projects. This list of priorities is a summary document to help steer the City's legislative advocacy and outreach in the coming year.

City staff has pulled together a proposed list of legislative priorities for the City Council to review. Based on prior discussions with the League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) and Richfield's contracted lobbyist, it is recommended the City legislative platform includes to 3-5 top priorities, that all items are within the scope of the City's purview, and that the City Council adopt the legislative priorities formally. City staff is available to answer any questions City Council has on the priorities.

**Proposed Top Legislative Priorities**

Introduce and support a bonding request for \$10,000,000 to supplement the City's estimated local cost-share for the Hennepin County's upcoming Nicollet Avenue (CSAH 52) reconstruction project.

Introduce and support limits on local contributions, ownership, and major maintenance responsibilities for County and State projects. Current one-size-fits-all cost participation requirements related to trunk highways and county state aid projects place too high of a burden on cities like Richfield.

Support increased accountability for Emergency Medical Services (EMS). The current laws do not provide meaningful oversight of the ambulance service providers. There are no response time requirements or control of ambulance billing rates within the Primary Service Areas. We support local control to determine who is best able to provide EMS services in our community.

Staff has also included a list of additional legislative positions which are attached to this report. City staff is available to answer any questions City Council has on the priorities.

## **Final Adoption**

The final list of legislative priorities will be brought to the City Council for adoption at the January 9 City Council meeting. By adopting the legislative platform formally, the City Council shows these priorities are in the best interest of the community and provides increased visibility for the issues.

## **Legislative Breakfast**

We will present the City's adopted legislative platform to elected representatives at the annual legislative breakfast scheduled from 7:45 a.m. through 9:15 a.m. on January 12th. The representatives will have time to ask staff follow up questions about the City's platform and present their priorities for the 2024 legislative session.

## **DIRECTION NEEDED:**

**City Council should provide feedback and direction on the proposed 2024 legislative priorities**

## **BACKGROUND INFORMATION:**

### **A. HISTORICAL CONTEXT**

### **B. EQUITABLE OR STRATEGIC CONSIDERATIONS OR IMPACTS**

#### Equity Consideration:

The included legislative priorities have the ability to foster equity by enacting policies that dismantle systemic barriers and, on the inverse, laws can be used to perpetuate historic inequalities. The city hopes that through the included priorities we can increase opportunities, safeguard marginalized communities, and help begin to address historical injustices.

#### Strategic Considerations:

The intent of many of the the included legislative priorities is to strengthen or maintain the city's ability to provide a high level of service to our residents. The included priorities touch on all five of the cities adopted goals included in the Strategic Plan.

### **C. POLICIES (resolutions, ordinances, regulations, statutes, exc):**

### **D. CRITICAL TIMING ISSUES:**

### **E. FINANCIAL IMPACT:**

There may be public expenditures associated with the priorities if specific projects are selected to receive the requested funding from the State. If that occurs, the actual funding structure will be presented at a future City Council meeting.

### **F. LEGAL CONSIDERATION:**

## **ALTERNATIVE(S):**

City Council may choose to not adopt the legislative priorities as a whole, or adopt a modified list of priorities.

## **PRINCIPAL PARTIES EXPECTED AT MEETING:**

## **ATTACHMENTS:**

Description	Type
□ Draft 2024 Legislative Priorities	Backup Material





# (DRAFT) CITY OF RICHFIELD 2024 LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS

## THE CITY OF RICHFIELD...

**Support** legislation that addresses the widening existing economic, racial, health and education gaps, and the adverse impacts a warming climate will have on our most vulnerable communities. As a city, we are providing local tools and support for residents, but there is need for more relief and legislation beyond city-level jurisdiction. We continue to support collaborative efforts with its representatives on legislation that expands labor rights, housing affordability and protections, as well as access to affordable healthcare.

**Support** local officials who know what tools and programs best support our residents. We support local decision-making authority and oppose statutory changes that erode local authority and decision making.

**Oppose** the imposition of legislative mandates that increase local costs without a corresponding state appropriation or funding mechanism. Unfunded mandates may increase local property taxes and this additional cost impedes cities' ability to fund traditional services.

**Contact:** *Mary Supple, Mayor, 612-866-8829, [Msupple@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:Msupple@richfieldmn.gov)*  
*Katie Rodriguez, City Manager, 612-861-9702, [KRodriguez@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:KRodriguez@richfieldmn.gov)*

## TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES-

- **INTRODUCE AND SUPPORT** a bonding request for \$10,000,000 to supplement the City's estimated local cost-share for the Hennepin County's upcoming Nicollet Avenue (CSAH 52) reconstruction project.
- **INTRODUCE AND SUPPORT** limits on local contributions, ownership, and major maintenance responsibilities for County and State projects. Current one-size-fits-all cost participation requirements related to trunk highways and county state aid projects place too high of a burden on cities like Richfield.
- **SUPPORT** increased accountability for Emergency Medical Services (EMS).

**Contact:** *Katie Rodriguez, City Manager, 612-861-9702, [KRodriguez@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:KRodriguez@richfieldmn.gov)*  
*Chris Swanson, Management Analyst, 612-861-9712, [CSwanson@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:CSwanson@richfieldmn.gov)*

## ADMINISTRATIVE SERVICES

- **OPPOSE** the elimination of the current Minnesota Law (Coleman Act) that allows an open wholesale system for alcoholic beverages. Elimination of the Coleman Act would result in exclusive brand ownership and ultimately raise wholesale and retail consumer prices, compress the municipal liquor store's profit margins and lower service levels in all distribution channels.
- **SUPPORT** continued funding for full reimbursement to cities for the cost of providing continued health insurance coverage for police and firefighters disabled or killed in the line of duty. The recent appropriation to fully fund for the next five years is critical to cities trying to cover the shortfall locally: Since mid-2017, the City has paid \$302,498 towards continued health insurance benefits, of which only \$64,037 was reimbursed by the State. We have submitted \$85,000 in reimbursement for 2022/23.

**Richfield staff is available to provide detailed information on any of the items listed on this handout and to provide testimony.**



# **(DRAFT) CITY OF RICHFIELD**

## **2024 LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS**

- **SUPPORT** reimbursement to cities for the cost of covering employees who are out on military leave. While employees are out, cities must pay for 15 paid military leave days in a calendar year. Additionally, cities are obligated to pay for employee coverage for military leave through overtime expenses, which leads to increased costs with no reimbursement.
- **SUPPORT** legislation that would provide ongoing full state funding for the 2023 duty disability law that includes paid time off for mental health treatment, emotional trauma training for pre-service and in-service for police officers, and initiatives and programs that provide peer support, emotional trauma training, early intervention, and mental health treatment.
- **SUPPORT** splitting revenue from mail or online vehicle transactions with deputy registrars and increase filing fees and appropriations to the vehicle services operating account. This increase must be redistributed as processing revenue for deputy registrars.
- **SUPPORT** a modest CITY fee on companies using the public right-of-way for digital/video streaming services to support local communication work.
- **SUPPORT** a modest STATE fee on digital/video streaming services to be used to support local communication work.
- **SUPPORT** annual funding similar to state support of public radio and public television for local cable broadcasting.

**Contact: Sack Thongvanh, Assistant City Manager, 612-861-9708, [SThongvanh@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:SThongvanh@richfieldmn.gov)**

### **COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT**

- **SUPPORT** legislation to clarify that cities' comprehensive plans are exempt from review under the Minnesota Environmental Rights Act (MERA).
- **SUPPORT** ongoing support of Housing Infrastructure Bonds and other financing capital for affordable housing.
- **SUPPORT** amendment to the TIF statute to allow 10% of units at 30% of the Area Median Income in a Housing TIF District.
- **SUPPORT** legislation prohibiting housing discrimination of Section 8 and other rental assistance voucher holders.
- **SUPPORT** legislation to allow two-family and accessory dwelling units by-right but retain local autonomy in the development and approval of official controls.
- **SUPPORT** transfer of pooled tax increment to Affordable Housing Trust Funds on a permanent basis.

**Contact: Melissa Poehlman, Community Development Director, 612-861-9766, [MPoehlman@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:MPoehlman@richfieldmn.gov)**

### **FINANCE**

- **SUPPORT** maintaining and increasing Local Government Aid.
- **SUPPORT** the current formula and distribution of Fiscal Disparities and OPPOSE shifting funds based on specific projects.

**Richfield staff is available to provide detailed information on any of the items listed on this handout and to provide testimony.**



# **(DRAFT) CITY OF RICHFIELD**

## **2024 LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS**

- **SUPPORT** state action to identify and strengthen state and local cybersecurity capabilities. We support funding to evaluate local government cyber vulnerabilities, single points of failure and fixes and the ability for municipal governments to apply for grant funding or assistance to solve these weaknesses.

**Contact: Kumud Verma, Finance Manager, 612-861-9723, [KVerma@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:KVerma@richfieldmn.gov)**

### **FIRE**

- **SUPPORT** efforts to ensure that firefighters are protected from the emerging threat of Lithium-Ion Battery fires.
- **OPPOSE** efforts to limit the use of residential fire sprinklers. We support working collaboratively with stakeholders to provide the safest and most cost-effective homes.
- **OPPOSE** efforts to legalize and expand fireworks within the state.
- **SUPPORT** continued funding of the Hometown Heroes Assistance Program.

**Contact: Mike Dobesh, Fire Chief, 612-243-4502, [MDobesh@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:MDobesh@richfieldmn.gov)**

### **PUBLIC SAFETY**

- **SUPPORT** an update to MN Statute of 121A as it relates to clarification on use of reasonable force by SRO's or those that enter a contract with the school. This could be defining officers working on a contractual basis in an off-duty role as "An Agent of the school".
- **SUPPORT** Police Officer Safety, Health, and Wellness (Protecting the Protectors) legislation. Like the Hometown Heroes Act, this legislation would provide law enforcement agencies with training for emotional resiliency and understanding of trauma. Additionally, it would create peer support groups, provide mental health checks, therapy, suicide prevention and awareness and family support to officers and their loved ones.
- **SUPPORT** legislation focused on retention and recruitment of law enforcement officers.

**Contact: Jay Henthorne, Public Safety Director, 612-861-9828, [JHenthorne@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:JHenthorne@richfieldmn.gov)**

### **PUBLIC WORKS**

- **SUPPORT** a state-wide, comprehensive, and stable water, wastewater, and stormwater infrastructure funding source to address Minnesota's aging infrastructure to ensure Minnesota communities remain a great place to live and competitive place to do business.
- **OPPOSE** any legislation that would eliminate or reduce the ability to use State Aid funds for local projects, including lane reductions.
- **OPPOSE** any legislation or rule change that limits local authority related to use of public rights-of-way (small cell, for example).
- **SUPPORT** state laws that provide limited liability to commercial salt applicators that are certified through an established voluntary salt applicator certification program.

**Richfield staff is available to provide detailed information on any of the items listed on this handout and to provide testimony.**



# **(DRAFT) CITY OF RICHFIELD**

## **2024 LEGISLATIVE POSITIONS**

*Contact: Kristin Asher, Public Works Director, 612-861-9795, [KAsher@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:KAsher@richfieldmn.gov)*

### **RECREATION AND SUSTAINABILITY**

- **SUPPORT** efforts for the proper labeling of compostable products and not allow products with misleading claims to be sold or distributed in the State (H.F.1165 / S.F. 2243)
- **SUPPORT** legislation that would designate all solid waste taxes to the state's SCORE fund to supporting sustainability efforts.
- **SUPPORT** legislation around extended producer responsibility for paper and packaging.

*Contact: Karl Huemiller, Interim Recreation Services Director, 612-861-9387, [KHuemiller@richfieldmn.gov](mailto:KHuemiller@richfieldmn.gov)*