

COUNCIL WORK SESSION September 18, 2023

Under due call and notice thereof, a Council Work Session of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Council Chambers on September 18, 2023. Mayor Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The following were present for roll call: Council Members Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, and Whitlock, City Administrator McCann, Finance Director Ryan, Community Development Director Fischer, Public Works Director Arnold, and Administrative Services Manager-City Clerk Van Genderen.

Budget Work Session: 5-Year Capital Improvement Plan, Capital Facilities/Equipment Replacement Fund and Construction Fund

Finance Director Ryan stated the CIP is a multi-year planning instrument identifying the needs and financing sources for vehicles, equipment, public infrastructure, and amenities over the next five years. Exhibit A included in the packet includes additional future needs and potential projects planned for the future as identified but not yet scheduled. The projects have been identified during strategic planning efforts or Council Work Sessions. Finance Director Ryan noted that items placed in the identified but not yet scheduled should not be seen as fixed commitments but as future placeholders for projects and equipment/vehicles. Expenditures budgeted for 2024 in the operating budgets of the General Fund, Construction Funds, Capital Facilities and Equipment Replacement Fund, and Utility Funds are identified in the CIP with the identified funding source(s). Finance Director Ryan noted that at \$65,164,475, the total value of projects identified in the 2024-2028 CIP is \$22,331,303 more than the 2023-2027 CIP. Finance Director Ryan noted that several items influenced the increase. First, staff moved several items from the General Fund to the CIP. Second, two departments were added to the schedules to provide additional transparency. Third, Public Works Director Arnold reviewed the items and updated their cost estimates and project year. The CIP moved the Indoor Recreation Project from 2023-2025 and reduced the amount of City Funds for the Somerset project in 2028.

Finance Director Ryan noted that the City did not bond for projects in 2023. City Administrator McCann said the City planned to bond for the Somerset project however, due to a proposed development not occurring, the City decided not to proceed with the project. Mayor Carlson asked if the City does not have the road built, will that hinder the development of the property? Community Development Director Fischer responded, saying it does not hinder development because the process of developing property takes time, and the City would have time to react before a development was built.

Council Member Peterson requested clarification on Public Safety money. City Administrator McCann reported they are State Funds the City will receive. North Mankato will receive approximately \$620,000, and staff determined to use the funds on capital improvements, including the body cameras and a police cruiser, with additional funds yet to be determined. Council Member Peterson asked if the \$18 million for a new public works facility was realistic.

Public Works Director Arnold stated it would depend on whether the City could utilize City-owned land and if funding could be acquired from the State. Mayor Carlson requested clarification on the \$1.5 million in 2025 that was earmarked for the Public Works Building. Public Works Director Arnold noted those funds would be used for preliminary work and plans. Council Member Steiner asked if the new Public Works building would be in its current location. Public Works Director Arnold stated it would be in upper North. City Administrator McCann noted the location is currently unknown, and the concern is about cost. Mayor Carlson requested an update on if the City will continue to manage the streets with issues. City Administrator McCann noted that Public Works Director Arnold and City Engineer Sarff are reviewing and

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updating the pavement needs plan. City Administrator McCann pointed out that the current plan is to start investing funds into the ravines again.

Mayor Carlson commented that he attended the events at Caswell North, noticed the volume of people using the facility, and asked about creating paved parking. City Administrator McCann commented that the City has had discussions with the school district, which owns the property, concerning a possible land swap for building a new school. He stated they are open to the idea.

Wildlife Management

City Planner Lassonde reported the City had received resident complaints about the deer population. The City has responded in the past but previously concluded there is not a deer problem in the community. With new complaints, the City conducted a study to determine the need and next steps.

City Planner Lassonde reviewed the issues that residents reported, including over-browsing of ravine and hillside vegetation and landscaping vegetation on private property. Residents expressing concerns include those on Lake Street and Mary Lane and Sherwood Drive, above the Lake Street hillside. City Planner Lassonde reviewed the impact of over-abundance, which provides for increased conflicts with humans in the urban/suburban environment in the form of car collisions, property damage, landscape destruction, health concerns, and other ecological damage due to over-browsing. Some people enjoy deer interactions, but when encounters exceed human tolerance levels, that is when there is deer overabundance. If deer populations are reduced, there will be increased plant production, regeneration, and/or plant diversity. Deer overabundance can also contribute to public health issues, including the potential spread of Lyme disease and other tick-borne illnesses.

Responsibility for deer impact on private property is outlined in the DNR's Urban Deer Population Control Policies and Procedures. The State owns the wildlife but is not liable for damage caused by wildlife. The DNR manages deer populations through regulated hunting. When a city's ordinances preclude hunting, responsibility for deer population management reverts to the City. North Mankato ordinances prohibit the discharge of firearms and prohibit the feeding of deer. While cities are responsible for deer population management, the onus still lies with homeowners to take precautions on their properties to deter deer rather than attract them.

In the past, the City has responded to resident concerns in various ways, including creating, in 2017, Ordinance 91.19 Prohibition on supplemental Deer Feeding, which prohibits intentionally feeding deer. The City also adopted Resolution No. 25-18 in 2018, which stated there was no need for a deer hunt in the City of North Mankato. In 2019, the City met with several residents concerning problematic deer, then spoke with the DNR and created a flier with recommendations on making homemade deer repellent and other ways to repel deer.

Staff continue to receive concerns about deer, and in 2022-2023, this study began. The study reviewed deer collisions with vehicles, and between 2013 and 2022, there were 62 total crashes over that period within City limits. A drone inventory was undertaken, which found at the Lake Street hillside, there were eight deer, which exceeds the DNR deer per square mile of habitat goal. Staff met with DNR representatives Stein Innvaer, Brian Haroldson, and Tom Hagen, resident at 927 Lake Street, to review the collected data. DNR representatives indicated the evidence was inconclusive concerning if North Mankato has a deer overabundance. However, they did agree that some residents are experiencing adverse impacts from the deer. The DNR did indicate that in 2023, they increased the number of deer that can be harvested

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around North Mankato and intend to increase it again in 2024. Discussion held with the DNR indicated that while the evidence is inconclusive, the City may consider that reducing citizen complaints may be a significant goal for the City.

Cities can manage deer populations by establishing ordinances banning the feeding of urban deer and encouraging residents to use deterrents, including sounds, lights, plant deterrents, electric fencing, and exclusion fencing. The City could allow hunting during deer season. Still, given the small amount of land providing deer habitat within city limits, staff believe it would be a dangerous situation to allow deer hunting. The City could also allow removal by a special permit from the DNR. Removal can be done by sharpshooting performed by a hired contractor of the local police department. This type of hunt may be more suitable for small acreage of habitat similar to that seen in North Mankato. To obtain a permit, the local government unit must follow a few steps, including estimating the urban deer population, identifying a population goal, performing public involvement, developing a management plan, keeping and maintaining records of deer/car collisions and citizen complaints, request in writing a DNR deer removal permit, and submit and or update a wildlife control application.

City Planner Lassonde reported staff is recommending the City take action, including performing a citizen survey to receive feedback on management, and then completing a Wildlife Management Plan that establishes goals aimed at diminishing impacts from not only excessive deer but other animals that cause damage to properties. The City would also create an Urban Deer page on the City's website to provide information for residents, including deterrence and allowing a place for complaints. If the complaints meet an established level, the City would have the Police Department complete a deer hunt.

The City Council discussed the recommendation and how it would be implemented, including the hunt being based on a complaint threshold and being able to do the DNR-permitted hunt accordingly. City Planner Lassonde emphasized the first step is to create the Wildlife Management Plan. City Planner Lassonde also noted that the deer could be used as part of a food recovery program in town. The deer would need to be processed at a USDA-certified facility.

City Council Members agreed it would be in the best interest of the City to move forward with creating a Wildlife Management Plan.

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Oachs, to adjourn the Council Work Session at 6:42 p.m.

Mayor

City Clerk