

## **COUNCIL WORK SESSION February 6, 2023**

Under due call and notice thereof, a Council Work Session of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Council Chambers on February 6, 2023. Mayor Carlson called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm. The following were present for roll call: Council Members Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, City Administrator McCann, Finance Director Ryan, Public Works Director Arnold, Culture, Recreation and Quality of Life Director Heintz, and City Clerk Van Genderen.

### **Draft Ordinance No. 155- Water Meters**

Finance Director Ryan reported that the proposed ordinance would continue the City's efforts to change all water meters from manual read meters to automatic read meters. The law would have three ways that an auto-read meter would be required. The first would be if a plumbing permit for over \$2,000 was requested for a project. The second would be if a resident does not read their meter for six months. The third would be if the home were sold. Finance Director Ryan asked if the Council would like to continue with the proposed ordinance. The City is implementing the previous ordinance that requires all rental properties to convert to automatic read meters within the next two years.

Mayor Carlson requested clarification on the current process and if the staff was overwhelmed. Public Works Director Arnold reported that it is currently taxing the staff. He stated that as the meters are not the City's it is difficult, and staffing remains an issue. The City may need to look at different ways to manage the installation, including possible additional staff or hiring contractors.

A discussion was held concerning the proposed ordinance and whether implementing all three changes would be manageable. Council Member Oachs suggested not moving forward with the ordinance and learning from the recently enacted rental water meter replacement ordinance passed at the end of 2022. Public Works Director Arnold reported that currently, the installation process was manageable. Still, the staff was concerned that most landlords would wait until the end to complete the installation, making it challenging to complete the installation. Mayor Carlson indicated it might be a good idea for the Council to allow Public Works Director Arnold to become more familiar with the issues and present ideas at an upcoming work session.

### **Rebranding Caswell Soccer**

Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz reported that the City is amidst an ongoing rebranding process. A part of the process is updating signage throughout the City. New signage will be installed at several locations; one of the locations that will be considered is the Caswell Soccer Complex. Staff is bringing forth the idea that while the site is receiving the updated signage, it is also rebranded as the Caswell Athletic Complex. The name would reflect the variety of activities that occur at the complex. She noted that because the idea was proposed, the staff wanted to seek Council guidance. City Administrator McCann reported that the rebranding is being carried out throughout the City with a color scheme to add cohesiveness. Director Heintz noted that Caswell recently changed their colors to match the City's family of colors.

Council Member Peterson stated that the rebranding should only move forward after staff discusses it with the Soccer Complex's largest donor, the Mankato United Soccer Club (MUSC). He noted there had been issues with the use of the fields and complex due to the additional activities. The activities were detrimental to MUSCs' ability to use the facility. Director Heintz agreed that the City would only move forward after speaking to MUSC but had decided to bring it to Council to determine their interest in the name change before speaking with MUSC. She

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noted that the staff is working on communication with MUSC and will continue to work to improve services. Mayor Carlson stated that staff would meet with MUSC to discuss the proposed rebranding and would keep the Council informed.

Council Member Steiner suggested that now might be a good time to discuss the use of DNA as City branding. Director Heintz reported that staff has continued to move the branding forward and is working on completing a website that would provide a North Mankato business directory. She stated staff has continued with cohesive branding. A discussion was held about providing an overview of the branding at a future work session. City Administrator McCann also noted that the DNA branding discussion would be included in the Strategic Planning process.

### **Junk Clean-Up Discussion**

Public Works Director Arnold reported that the discussion would revolve around if the City should conduct a Spring Pick-up or Spring Drop-off in 2023. He noted there were both financial and service implications. Mayor Carlson requested clarification on if a cost difference could be identified. Public Works Director Arnold indicated that it would be difficult to determine due to COVID-19. He did say that not accepting mattresses has saved the City approximately \$15,000 and suggested continuing not to accept mattresses. Public Works Director Arnold noted that staff costs are not included in any of the cost information. During the pick-up, the staff is fully engaged for approximately two weeks, while the staff is required at the drop-off events; it does not consume as much staff time. The discussion was held concerning accessibility of the drop-off for those that do not have transportation and how that would work to drop materials off at the Public Works Yard. Alternative ideas were discussed concerning maintaining some opportunities for pick-up, including picking up lower north one year and picking up upper north the following year. Mayor Carlson commented that at some point, as the City continues to grow, it may become impossible to maintain the service. It was determined to begin an alternating-year pick-up. The City would pick up this spring and conduct a drop-off in the fall, and then in 2024, both clean-ups would be drop-offs, but in 2025 the City would do a Spring pick-up followed by a fall drop-off.

### **North Mankato Public Works Annual Report**

Public Works Director Arnold reviewed the Public Works Department Annual Report, which covered the Streets, Parks, Mechanic Shop, Water, Sewer, Street Light, Storm Water, and Solid Waste. He noted that the North Mankato Public Works Departments Objectives are Safety, Quality, and Culture.

The Street Department has ten full-time and one part-time employees, with 70 pieces of equipment and over 16,000 hours worked in 2022. Challenges for the department include an aging Public Works Facility, aging equipment, and materials inflation. Opportunities include searching out and using equipment grants and increasing Federal Funding. The Street Department maintains 200 lane miles of City streets.

The Park Department has 4.5 full-time employees and hires between 10 and 12 seasonal employees. The department maintains approximately 280 acres of Green Space, 20 playground structures, 100 Natural Prairie Acres, and 10 miles of trails. Challenges for the department include aging infrastructure and providing additional support to Caswell Park and the Swim Facility.

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The Mechanic Shop has two full-time employees and maintains 154 City units. Challenges include the inflation of parts and equipment and the condition of the current fleet.

The Water Department has 3.5 full-time employees and maintains 2 Water Plants, 2 Water Towers, 1 Reservoir, two redundant connections with Mankato, five active wells, and 76 miles of watermain. Challenges for the department include aging infrastructure and the growing number of gopher one locates. 55% of the Water department hours are dedicated to maintenance, locates, shut-offs, training, and call-outs.

The Sewer System includes 64 miles of sewer main, ten sanitary sewer lift stations, and 4.5 miles of sewer force main. Challenges for the department include aging infrastructure and treatment costs. Opportunities include new technology and an effective CIP.

North Mankato Street Lights includes one full-time employee and eight signal lights, with 1,428 total lights in the system, with only 199 owned by the City of North Mankato. Challenges for the department include holding the street lights, the cost of leasing lights, and the age of the signal system.

North Mankato Solid Waste is a contracted residential pickup with West Central. On average, there are 3,400 tons picked up every year. On average, the cost has increased by \$1.97 per year.

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Oachs, to adjourn the Council Work Session at 6:56 pm.

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Mayor

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City Clerk