

COUNCIL WORK SESSION March 20, 2023

Under due call and notice thereof, a Council Work Session of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Council Chambers on March 20, 2023. Mayor Carlson called the meeting to order at 5:30 pm. The following were present for roll call: Council Members Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, Steiner, City Administrator McCann, Finance Director Ryan, and City Clerk Van Genderen.

Caswell Sports Annual Report 2022

Caswell Sports Director Tostenson appeared before Council and reviewed the Caswell Sports Annual Report 2022. He stated Caswell Sports had a strong 2022 season with various programs and events offered. The complex is also in the final stages of renovation. The Caswell Softball Complex held 17 events in 2022, the same as in 2021, due to closing early for renovations. The Economic Impact was estimated at just over \$7.9 million compared to \$7 million in 2021. The Minnesota State High School League Girls' State Tournament had an overall attendance of just under 11,000 paid admissions for the two-day event. The complex also hosted five state tournaments, three invitational tournaments, and one national tournament. There were 26,668 visitors in 2022 compared to 30,230 event visitors in 2021. The estimated hotel rooms for 2022 were 10,462 room nights.

Caswell Sports Director Tostenson reported that in 2023 Caswell Park would host the Men's Major Fastpitch, with teams from North America competing in July. The facility will also host the USA Softball 16 West National Championship in July.

The Caswell North Soccer Complex hosted 395 games during the 2022 season. Five outside schools used the complex in 2022, including Mankato East, Mankato West, Immanuel Lutheran High School, Mount Olive School, and Minnesota State University, Mankato, for practices. Caswell North hosted the annual Pack the Stands event in 2022, a game between Mankato West and Mankato East. In 2023 the Caswell North Soccer Complex is working with Mankato United to host a college showcase tournament, and a high school showcase of area teams, and working with the Minnesota State High School League to secure section championships for boys' and girls' soccer. Council Member Peterson asked if the school pays rent for facility use. Caswell Sports Director Tostenson reported they do not. As part of the agreement, the City also maintains the overflow parking.

Caswell Sports Director Tostenson stated that Caswell Sports operated additional sports recreation. He said Caswell Sports operated a wrestling program with 91 participants in 2022. The Youth Football program had 996 participants from Cleveland, St. Peter, Blue Earth, Fairmont, and North Mankato/Mankato Area, an increase of 320 due to added grade levels and communities. Junior Tennis Camps were held with a total of 86 participants. Youth golf and t-ball were also offered. Adult recreation team numbers included 95 adult summer softball teams and 94 sand volleyball teams. No fall softball was offered due to construction.

Mayor Carlson requested clarification if Caswell Sports was getting closer to cash flowing. He noted that a rough estimate for revenue per person was \$5.50. He wondered if it could be increased by \$1.50 through creative options. Caswell Sports Director Tostenson noted that additional revenue would come through additional advertising opportunities with the new scoreboards and signage. He also said that the City was working on establishing a streaming service that could be a source of revenue. Council Member Oachs stated she would like to meet with him again concerning options for the concession stand as the stand has a captured audience. Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz said they worked with local providers to change and manage the concession sales. Council Member Peterson noted that the number of

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teams in 2022 increased, but revenue decreased. Caswell Sports Director Tostenson stated that cost depended on the league, so there may be less revenue. Council Member Peterson asked why Caswell North had no economic impact data. Caswell Sports Director Tostenson reported that he is not comfortable estimating due to the City not running the events.

City Administrator McCann reported that the City established Caswell Sports as its own fund so the City could better track the revenue and expenses. Mayor Carlson commented that the youth football program was paying many people when it could be possible to complete a lot of the work through volunteers.

Discuss DNA Branding

Stacy Straka, the Creative Director of PresenceMaker, appeared before the Council. Ms. Straka defined place branding, explained the importance of place branding, and explained the principles of place branding. She stated that the principles included distinctive positioning, authenticity, and content quality. Ms. Straka reviewed examples of place branding from other regions and locations.

Ms. Straka stated that she believes North Mankato's place branding allows North Mankato to creatively share the community's personality, stories, and information about the City's valuable assets with everyone. She stated that the plan is multifaceted and rooted in what is important to the City's culture, history, citizen base, and economic future. She viewed the campaign as bold, engaging, and memorable. She noted that the campaign incorporates a wide range of attributes pointed to specific audiences and initiatives that she believes align with the strategic vision and plans for North Mankato. The campaign uses sector identifiers as creative elements in North Mankato's place branding toolkit to help carry brand consistency to individual markets. The sector identifiers are used with messaging to promote sector awareness, engagement, and opportunities. Ms. Straka reviewed the Place Branding, which included the Darn Nice Area Logo. She also showed the Darn Nice Area sector identifiers, which included overall livability, which uses the word happiness; community and culture, which uses kindness; economic development, uses success and progress; destination attraction, which uses fun; livability, which uses stories; arts, and culture which uses the word beauty; and culture and social justice which uses the word togetherness. Ms. Straka reviewed the proposed and current banners and billboards, website, and place identifiers included with the place branding campaign.

City Administrator McCann thanked Ms. Straka for coming before Council to review the place branding logo and campaign. He stated that the presentation would bring the Council up to speed and allow them to consider the information during the strategic planning. Mayor Carlson stated he had not heard the pitch before and believed the strategy was good, but said he needed to be completely sold on the logo. Although, he liked the colors and the overall plan.

Council Member Steiner stated he agreed with the marketing plan but did not like the logo, and many people contacted him who also did not like the logo. Ms. Straka noted that she believes the logo comes from the idea that the City is very Minnesotan and that North Mankato may not be the best, but it can still be Darn Nice. She stated she thought it was memorable and unique.

Council Member Peterson stated he had received calls from residents who would like the City to eliminate the campaign. He asked why the City could not be the greatest.

Council Member Whitlock stated he has heard good and bad concerning the logo. He would like to see the D, N, and A larger in the Darn Nice Area logo to help solidify and tie back the "It's in our DNA" to the Darn Nice Area Logo.

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Council Member Oachs stated she has heard good and bad concerning the logo. She said she likes the DNA but has concerns about the “Darn.”

Mayor Carlson thanked Ms. Straka for providing the overview, and while he does not love the logo Darn Nice Area, he liked the marketing plan.

Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Department 2022 Annual Report

Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz stated it was a great year with many well-attended events, welcoming people into the facilities and engaging the community in activities.

Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz stated that the Swim Facility saw 44,451 visitors in 2022, and the pool was open for 85 days. They had 934 kids attend swim lessons, with an additional 28 families with special needs requesting private swim lessons. The facility hosted 29 special events and 47 birthday party packages. There were 8 Zumba classes with 1,283 people in attendance. Working with Connecting Kids, the pool gave out 246 sponsorships for swim lessons and punch passes. They had \$118,141 in concession stand sales and sold 743 family memberships and 45 individual memberships. The pool hired 46 lifeguards and 40 to 50 pool attendants and concession workers.

Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz stated that in 2023, the goal is to welcome 48,000 people to the pool, register over 1,000 kids for swim lessons, expand the fitness offerings to include lap swimming, and sponsor at least 120 kids with Connecting Kids. Mayor Carlson requested clarification on the pool capacity. Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz reported that the team allows 750 as a safe number.

Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz reported that the department launched six new programs designed to improve Quality of Life, including Red Cross Certification Classes, Babysitter Training, First Aid/CPR, Lay Rescuer, and Basic Life Support classes. The department also began offering active aging classes, Weight Management, and Chronic Disease/Pain Management. The department hosted fall/winter adult programming with Trivia and Snowshoeing events. She reported that the department had revenue of \$1,815 in 2022. Council Member Oachs encouraged Katie to send information concerning CPR training to businesses in town.

Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz reported that library circulation in 2022 was 97,674, with approximately 102,190 people entering the library. Overdrive eBook circulation was 12,433. The Bookmobile circulation was 15,288, with about 10,000 people getting on the Bookmobile. The department hosted 580 events/programs in 2022, with 22,866 people attending. Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz reported that the library collection added 4,765 items, and the Bookmobile added 760 items. Mayor Carlson stated that with 5,000 items being added, how much is on the floor? Culture, Recreation, and Quality of Life Director Heintz reported that most were on the floor, and some were in storage. The library does remove damaged materials and items that are not circulating.

Continue Water Meter Discussion

City Administrator McCann noted that the Council received a memo from Finance Director Ryan outlining information concerning the proposed water meter ordinance and discussion concerning ownership of the meters. Staff sought direction from the Council before determining numbers and providing additional information.

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Council Member Oachs stated she received a phone call from a resident questioning if she needed to replace her meter. She rents out a portion of her house but pays for all the utilities. Finance Director Ryan stated the resident would need to replace her meter because the ordinance's language says before they receive their rental license. So if she wants to maintain her rental license, she must obtain a new meter.

Council Member Peterson requested Public Works Director Arnold's position. Public Works Director Arnold reported that all options have pros and cons. Mayor Carlson also believed there were pros and cons but did not want the process to drag on for ten years. He supported implementation sooner rather than later. Mayor Carlson said that the City might need to be creative with its financing for the project. Council Member Whitlock stated that the City would need to determine who will own the meters, and if the City moves forward with owning the meters, then there may be issues with refunding those that have already replaced their meters. Council Member Peterson said some meters are ineffective that residents don't want to replace; if the City owns the meter and replaces them, it will help recoup the cost. Public Works Director Arnold stated he was uncomfortable with saying how long it would take to recoup the cost through better water meter data collection. He noted that the City could proceed on the current path and, after all the meters are swapped, begin taking ownership at that point. It would prevent issues with reimbursing those that have already replaced their meters. Council Member Oachs stated she believes it would be best if the City owned and paid for the replacement of the meters. She thinks having a monthly fee rather than a one-time payment would be easier for most people. Finance Director Ryan stated that one scenario would be a \$1.8 million bond at 4% interest. The City would need to increase the base amount per meter by \$2.40. Mayor Carlson stated it would be good to invest in the system and not drag out the change. He thought it would be good for the City to own the meter and add a charge to the residents' base water bill. City Administrator McCann stated that the staff understands that the Council would like to move forward with owning the meters and completing a total change out in the next few years. He stated that the turnover would be achieved through an outside contractor.

Council Member Oach moved, seconded by Council Member Peterson, to adjourn the Council Work Session at 6:40 pm.

Mayor

City Clerk