

MINUTES OF A WORK SESSION OF THE  
INDEPENDENCE CITY COUNCIL  
WEDSDAY, JUNE 14, 2023 – 7:00 AM.  
(City Hall Community Room)

1. CALL TO ORDER.

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a work session of the Independence City Council was called to order by Mayor Johnson at 7:00 a.m.

2. ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Johnson, Councilors Spencer, Betts, Grotting, McCoy (arrived at Pioneer Park discussion)

ABSENT: None

STAFF: City Administrator Kaltsas, Administrative Services Director Simon, Public Works Supervisor Bode

VISITORS: WHPS Chief Kroells

3. General Administration

a. LMCC – Discussion relating to LMCC Member City Survey

Spencer explained that cable cutting is a big issue with source of funds. The number of people subscribing to cable is dropping by 5-10% each year. People have been going to streaming options instead of subscribing to cable. The primary service we enjoy from LMCC is that they upload our meeting videos online and you have the ability to click through an agenda and it will take you directly to the part of the meeting that the topic is being discussed in the video. LMCC is in a deficit for the next year but there are still reserves. Next year we are scheduled to renegotiate our contract. We are a large portion of their budget that is currently at \$280k. The options being presented to us are a.) does the city continue to pay the fees of 14% of their budget which would grow with inflation over time, b.) pull out and have someone else do our video uploading or c.) sell the building that LMCC is in, worth \$1m and use those funds to help keep LMCC afloat and offset some of these costs. This would defer the cost to its members for about 10 years.

Johnson asked what if the other cities decided to pull out and others didn't.

Spencer said they will have to choose. They are more concerned about the larger contributors such as Independence, Shorewood and some others pulling out.

Grotting said that we are seeing the value proposition for cable going away. The main value is to provide city meetings to people who do not have internet access. There is no connection to cable tv and internet regarding LMCC. Mediacom will continue to contribute 1 mile per year through the city. Grotting said working with Mediacom has been very difficult. They will continue to count rooftops and build out if there is enough density.

Spencer said if we negotiate for the next 10 years, we may need to include the short roads that they aren't considering, like Game Farm. Maybe an agreement to build those out.

Grotting said they are going to run into some competition with Xtratyme and Midco.

Spencer said we should do a vote in a council meeting with the three options. The executive committee seems to lean towards selling the building.

Kaltsas asked what our take home is if we sell.

Spencer said its about 14% of the value of the building. About \$130-140k. If we just pull out, we wouldn't get anything.

Kaltsas said \$140k in hand is better than not.

Spencer said there are young kids doing these types of things for cheap that we could get in here.

Johnson asked when we need to vote on this.

Spencer said by the August meeting. He said we should have an open discussion and vote on A, B or C in a public meeting. This isn't a final decision, it's just a survey of the members.

Kaltsas suggested we hear about the grant that the city applied for before voting if possible.

Spencer asked for this to be put on the July 18<sup>th</sup> meeting.

b. Pioneer Creek Community Park Master Plan – Cost Estimate and Youth Sports Organization Involvement.

Kaltsas asked where we want to go with the park plans. He said he got the engineering costs back for the full build out of the master plan for the park. The park would require rebuilding the entrance to the park to accommodate the full baseball/softball fields. The costs include a full bituminous drive, drainage, etc. The road would be moved about 50ft to the North. There is a baseball/softball complex with parking to service those fields on the East side of the park. The center of the park would have amenities such as the existing sand volleyball, playground and adding a skating rink and pickleball. And the West end shows 3 multi-purpose fields with more parking for soccer, football, frisbee, lacrosse or t-ball.

We have a lot of interest from Orono Baseball and Softball. There are some conflicts between the two. Softball wants the whole thing and baseball wants part of it. If they want to come forward with a proposal and money, we will have to know that both organizations are in agreement. Within the plan, there is a warming house, bathroom and concession that is currently located in the center of the park near the existing sand volleyball and playground. This would serve the whole park and would need septic, water and electricity. He asked what the city wants to go after with the existing funds and how to leverage the funds with the grant. He said the city is looking at a Fall submittal for the Hennepin County grant. There is also a DNR grant. The HC grant is the easiest to apply for and a better chance since we have never asked for it in the past. They reward up to \$500k, however it is not recommended to apply for the full amount, maybe \$400k. Kaltsas said we currently have about \$200k in park dedication and another \$200k roughly coming in soon. If we get the grant, it could be \$800k. It would pay for potentially the main drive, parking lot and maybe a multi-purpose field.

Grotting asked if grading would be included in that. If you could do one field and pickleball, that would be good.

Kaltsas said yes. The pickleball courts, drive, parking and 1 or 2 fields.

Grotting asked what about the savings on doing partial work now and having them come back.

Kaltsas said the city would put all the drainage, grading and lighting in. It would be prepped for future additions. The warming house is roughly \$520k. That is a fancy building that we do not need as much of what is included in it. It would have bathrooms.

Johnson asked if softball and baseball have different field size requirements.

Kaltsas said yes, softball plays on 1 size fields and baseball could play on 4 or 5 different sized fields. He said that Soccer is interested in an indoor facility but may still be a partner in this. Orono Softball and Baseball are very interested. Baseball said they are willing to give us \$1m to build the 2 fields and softball said they are interested in doing the same. He said without the grant though, we are really limited to what we can do.

Spencer said that would be just to build the infrastructure. He said if we are talking with the groups, his biggest concern is the maintenance costs that the city pays for. He said if this is something the city

needs to help maintain, he is out.

Grotting asked what cash flow comes out of it.

Kaltsas said if we partner, the groups will want to use the fields with no rent costs. Baseball said they will be doing all the maintenance. That works with good leaders and good volunteers.

Betts said it would be nice for the soccer fields and small amenities that our own community would use.

A lot of people wouldn't enjoy it if it was mainly for use by bigger groups. The soccer fields are low maintenance and pickleball would ease a lot of the community into the park. There could be picnic tables out there so people can enjoy it. This is not the Orono School Park.

Kaltsas said if they bring money in, we will consider building that part of the park. They have a challenge in front of them to raise \$1m but they are very confident they can do it.

Betts said that the city had a sports association years ago with an agreement that they were able to help with our parks and that fell apart and the association dissolved.

Grotting asked why this conversation started. Timing is everything. This is a great plan, but if we are getting dragged into it by other forces, its not good.

Kaltsas said the park isn't used very much. Frisbee golf is highly used. The city has been collecting park dedication fees for 10 years and haven't been spent. We could spend some of it on this park buildout.

Youth sports were very interested in using this park. We just need a place to start. You have to do a youth facility in order to qualify for the Hennepin County grant.

Spencer said that if the city does this, it has to be done right. The most sustainable would be to have a quad field with bathrooms and concessions in the middle to throw tournaments to raise money.

McCoy said the feedback he has received from softball is that they cannot throw tournaments there with how it is set up now.

Kaltsas said Orono Baseball said they were fine with this plan and it worked for them. There would be security and a gate when this gets built out to keep people from ruining it at night.

#### c. Fire District - Discussion and Provide Update

Kaltsas said he talked with Jeff Leuer, Chief of West Suburban District that is combined with Hamel and Loretto. They are open to Independence becoming part of that district. The only hold up is figuring out liability on the retirement relief. Right now, it is \$3,800/year for firefighters, and we would have to get to \$7,000. The cost is about \$800k to buy into that. He asked how we pay for that and is it feasible. We pay 70% and Maple Plain pays 30% right now. If we buy in, would it be 50/50? Nothing in the JPA talks about that. We have zero input.

McCoy said you have to look at it long term and what benefits it would have to be a part of a district.

Kaltsas said if Maple Plain said they were out, we wouldn't owe any of that. He said the city has talked about expanding the district next year and dissolving Delano. The city needs to notify Delano by October if they plan to make a change. Currently the city pays Delano \$75k/year. Leuer said he would do it for much less. Kaltsas said Leuer was going to plug in some numbers and see if it makes sense long term.

Spencer said if we could pay \$50k/year over the next 10 years that wouldn't be a big deal but if we have to cover it all right away, that would be difficult.

Kaltsas said that there is a provision in the statue that could cover this. Maple Plain would like to get into the JPA.

Spencer asked about Medina.

Kaltsas said they have committed 100%. Long Lake and Wayzata are even interested.

Spencer said he thinks this fire district is the future.

Kaltsas said we need to figure out the liability on the relief and who pays for what.

d. Miscellaneous Project Updates

Spencer said he had a conversation with Sally Simpson from Copeland Road. She wants to talk about the road. Rather than coming into a city council meeting and only getting 3 minutes to speak, he suggested doing an open house with staff where they could ask their questions. Shawn will be present from Public Works to discuss the process and educate residents on how the roads are maintained and what is being done to recover them. The city will send letters to the Copeland Road residents announcing the date of August 2<sup>nd</sup> at 7:00 pm at City Hall to have this discussion in-person. This will not be a virtual conversation.

Kaltsas said he is also working with the engineer to schedule a walkthrough and to get some costs for that road.

**4. Adjourn**

The Workshop adjourned at 8:49 a.m.

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Respectfully Submitted,  
Amber Simon/ Recording Secretary