



CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
TUESDAY OCTOBER 1, 2024

6:30 PM REGULAR MEETING

1. Call to Order

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the Independence City Council was called to order by Mayor Johnson at 6:30 p.m.

2. Pledge of Allegiance

Mayor Johnson led the group in the Pledge of Allegiance.

3. Roll Call

PRESENT: Mayor Johnson, Councilors Spencer, Betts, McCoy and Grotting.

ABSENT: None

STAFF: City Administrator Mark Kaltsas and Administrative Services Director Amber Simon

VISITORS: Patrick Felton, Jim Van De Ven, Martha Van De Ven, Rob Sievers

4. ****Consent Agenda****

All items listed under Consent Agenda are considered to be routine by Council and will be acted on by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If discussion is desired, that item will be removed from the Consent Agenda and will be considered separately.

- a. Approval of City Council Minutes from the September 17, 2024, Regular City Council Meeting.
- b. Approval of Accounts Payable (Batch #1; Checks Numbered 23116-23128 and Batch #2; Checks Numbered 23129-23149).
- c. Approval of Election Judges for 2024 General Election.

Mayor Johnson requested approval of the Election Judges with the removal of Grotting and Spencer from the list since they are running in the Election.

Motion by Betts, second by McCoy to approve the Consent Agenda. Ayes: Johnson, Spencer, Betts, McCoy and Grotting. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain. None. MOTION DECLARED CARRIED 5-0.

5. Set Agenda – Anyone Not on the Agenda can be Placed Under Open/Misc.

Discussion on public note letter about the museum added to agenda.

6. Reports of Boards and Committees by Council and Staff.

Betts attended the following meetings:

- None

Spencer attended the following meetings:

- PSCWSC management
- MP Fire
- LMCC Executive Committee

Grotting attended the following meetings:

- Planning

McCoy attended the following meetings:

- Annual Farm Bureau

Mayor Johnson attended the following meetings:

- Planning
- County Sheriff invite for 24th Annual Sheriffs Swearing in at Fort Snelling
- Sensible Land Use Coalition
- Metro Cities Policy Committee (Virtual)
- Senior Center in Delano
- Orono Alumni distinguished awards at Wayzata Country Club
- Senior Community Services
- MP Fire discussion
- Annual Farm Bureau
- Small Cities Conference for NLC (virtual)

Kaltsas attended the following meetings:

- Kaltsas – Nothing outside those mentioned.

7. Patrick Felton (Applicant) and Jim VanDeVen (Owner) are requesting the following action for the property located at 7645 Turner Road (PID No. 28-118-24-31-0002) in the City of Independence, MN.

- a. **RESOLUTION No. 24-1001-01:** Considering approval of a conditional use permit to allow an Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) to be attached to the principal home on the property.

Kaltsas – this was considered previously by PC. The property is zoned AG, guided as AG. It is 40 acres in overall size. The existing home is in the NE corner of the parcel, and it has an indoor riding arena/barn on the property. The city considers an ADU a CUP. The applicant prepared plans and architectural elevations. The criteria is met for granting a CUP. The existing home allows for a maximum of 1,200 sqft of living space, not including mechanical spaces, garage or storage areas. All setbacks are met. There were no comments at the Public Hearing or after. The PC recommended approval. There is an existing CUP on the existing bard which is separate from this application.

Motion by McCoy, second by Betts to approve RESOLUTION 24-1001-01 granting a CUP to allow an ADU to be attached to the principal home. Ayes: Johnson, Spencer, Betts, McCoy and Grotting. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain. None. MOTION DECLARED CARRIED 5-0.

8. Metropolitan Council: Draft - Imagine 2050 Regional Development Plan (Base for 2050 Comprehensive Plans).

- a. High-level overview of the draft plan and what that means for Independence.

Kaltsas – MetCouncil has released the 2050 draft. This is done for every 10-years for the land use planning act. MetCouncil does a demographic analysis on what they anticipate for growth. Once they make a system statement, that initiates the cities to accommodate what MetCouncil is projecting. They put this out earlier this year and Kaltsas attended a public hearing. Their comment period goes for the next couple of weeks. Kaltsas is looking for thoughts and direction from the city. He would like to offer comments. The key pieces are transportation and how it is impacting our community. There isn't too much information relating to the Hwy 12 plans. The corridor needs to be updated and put more emphasis on that. The second is housing – what does that projection look like. MetCouncil made significant policy statements related to housing. The population at the end of 2023 was 3,916 and the housing units were 1,394. The 2040 comp plan for the city allowed for another 300 sewer homes by 2030. The 2050 draft from MetCouncil is showing a reduction from the approved 2040 comp plan. In 2040 the population would be 4,543 and in 2050 it would be 4,820. The households in 2040 would be 1,568 and in 2050 they would be 1,668. But in our 2040 comp plan we had a total of 1,694 by 2030 they are only projecting 1,668 by 2050. That's half of what we as a city are projecting. The city of Independence has never promoted growth, but we are trying to be realistic on how we thought we were going to grow based on the property owners that want to develop their properties. The projections they are trying to make is less than what we thought was going to occur. The policies that MetCouncil is proposing would increase the overall density requirements for cities across the region. This impacts Independence because it raises the standard 3 units per acre up to 4 units per acre. We have previously been able to balance the density such as some areas have a lower density development and other areas would have a higher density. This would no longer be the case with what they are proposing. Every development coming into the city would be required to show 4 units per acre in density. This goes against what the residents of Independence want as a community. It is unrealistic. At 4 units per acre, that would mandate multifamily housing. When you take out the roads, ponds and wetlands, that gets really small.

Johnson asked if someone had a 40 acre parcel, would you subtract the wetlands first from that calculation and then add in 4 units per acre.

Kaltsas said you would subtract the wetlands, parks, and ponds first. Local roads are not subtracted. If you had 40 acres and 10 of those acres were wetlands, parks, pond, then the remaining 30 acres would be subjected to 4 units per acre.

Grotting asked if that would just be in the rural residential areas.

Kaltsas said that would be just for sewer residential properties.

Grotting asked if the airport property was 2.7 in density.

Kaltsas said it was and he got it to 2.7 because he was able to offset the density on the West side of the airport strip. He said now the city will have to think about how to meet 4 units per acre and they can no longer offset the density elsewhere.

Betts asked what benefits the city has received from MetCouncil.

Kaltsas said we haven't received benefits. We haven't received their sewer yet, no transportation. They have some control over our park funding.

Betts said that when MetCouncil came into being, the city was told they would get funding from them if there was some sort of catastrophe. She asked if there was funding from the tornado.

Kaltsas said maybe FEMA.

Betts asked what would happen if the city withdrew from MetCouncil.

Kaltsas said we can't withdraw. It governs the 7-county metro. Lake Elmo and Minnetrista tried but were unsuccessful.

Betts said they aren't elected officials.

Kaltsas said he heard them say that are going to allocate resources and funding to cities that want to play ball with them and follow the rules of their density requirements. They will have preferential treatment to sewer, parks, water and roads.

Johnson said that is discrimination.

Grotting said its contrary to the whole idea of us not being able to do anything otherwise.

Kaltsas said they want their metrics and density calculations met. Communities don't start with high density development. They start with low density and build their way up as they are able to bring more things into the city. Multifamily units require grocery, doctors, retail, and so on. You have to start smaller and build those things before bringing multifamily units in with no resources.

Betts asked how are they going to get some of the properties if people don't want to sell.

Kaltsas said people will always want to sell. This takes away the local control and what residents want in their communities.

Betts asked if they take into consideration the AG land.

Kaltsas said AG land preservation is limited. They think its obtainable but not really sustainable in the future.

McCoy said MetCouncil is taking away the zoning and planning that communities do.

Johnson said they are acting like one size fits all.

Kaltsas said MetCouncil wants more oversight. They have been denying sewer extension permits because they are doing plat review without the authority to do plat review. They want to do plat review on everything.

McCoy asked if we should push back on losing control.

Kaltsas said there's this weird conversion of the builder's association and the public housing group where the two of them aligned and both of them are pushing in the same direction from different sides to take away local control. They think it will equate to more housing units.

Johnson said he thinks it would be great if Kaltsas could jot down the key points and the council can officially make a motion on and say this is what we don't like. The idea of MetCouncil telling us to play with them for favoritism blows my mind. They should be doing more equalization on all cities the same but they use it for different things. He asked if sewer expansion was talked about.

Kaltsas said the sewer allocation is an underlying control. Communities that are agreeing to this will get more sewer. Independence hasn't pushed for growth but historically just looked at each property owner's plans individually and where there are roads and sewer that can accommodate those plans. Adding 240 units over the next 25 years is not that significant. This plan would take away local controls and they have modified the approach.

Johnson said that he assumes MetCouncil wouldn't look at the growth from the West in Delano under their transportation plans, but all those people are coming through Independence and that won't help us.

Kaltsas said there isn't a lot of thought to that.

Grotting recommended the properties along County Line where there is no water or sewer for their higher density areas.

Kaltsas said they don't acknowledge that because it's not on theirs. Delano wouldn't give water or sewer either. Cities like Corcoran, Minnetrista and Medina are all like us and have the same concerns. Do communities want to give up authority?

Johnson asked when Kaltsas needs the comments by.

Kaltsas said October 7th. We can put together a letter with comments for the next meeting.

9. Open/Misc.

Spencer brought up an open letter that was received on Facebook from a neighbor living on Wood Hill that has been there for 20-25 years. He is interested in some efforts to save the city hall. Spencer said he talked to staff, and understands it has mold problems. He said he is unsure what the resident's plans are but the resident would like to confirm specifics and hopes that the community can fundraise to save the building. It might be interesting to set up a time to go into the building with masks and look for ourselves. We can see what's left in there and see what we should or shouldn't do. Before we have an official response to this, maybe we look at it together.

Betts said maybe bring a mold specialist.

Spencer said we should see if we can salvage it. Next week sometime maybe.

McCoy also mentioned that there is a strip along County Road 90 that has not been maintained since they redid the roundabout. He asked if Public Works can go out there and maintain it. It looks awful.

10. Adjourn

Motion by Spencer, second by McCoy to adjourn at 7:30pm. Ayes: Johnson, Spencer, Betts, McCoy and Grotting. Nays: None. Absent: None. Abstain. None. MOTION DECLARED CARRIED 5-0

Respectfully Submitted,
Amber Simon/Recording Secretary