

**ANDOVER CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING – AUGUST 25, 2020
MINUTES**

The Workshop Meeting of the Andover City Council was called to order by Mayor Julie Trude, August 25, 2020 at 6:05 p.m., at the Andover Public Works Building, 1900 Veterans Memorial Drive, Andover, Minnesota.

Councilmembers present: Sheri Bukkila, Valerie Holthus (arrived at 6:09 p.m.), Jamie Barthel, and Ted Butler

Councilmember absent: None

Also present: City Administrator, Jim Dickinson
City Engineer/Public Works Director, David Berkowitz
Others

DISCUSS PEDESTRIAN CROSSING CRITERIA/19-29

City Engineer/Public Works Director Berkowitz provided the Council with background information on the pedestrian crossing process and stated the City Council directed staff to work with a consultant to prepare criteria for evaluating the need for pedestrian crossings in the City. Staff has been working with Jonah Finkelstein, from Spack Solutions, on preparing a draft policy to evaluate potential and/or requested pedestrian crossings in Andover.

Mr. Finkelstein came forward and introduced himself to Council. He stated his company prepared a draft guideline to formalize the pedestrian crossing process in the City of Andover. Mr. Finkelstein explained Spack Solutions created a tool that anyone can use to evaluate an intersection and deem which type of crossing, if any, is appropriate. He stated the process takes into account safety, need, and type of crossing.

Mr. Finkelstein identified the factors taken into consideration include speed limit (high speed and low speed), stopping sight distance, distance of the crossing, and amenities nearby (schools, community center, shopping). He stated the biggest factor is speed and studies show that roads with speeds of 45 mph and greater are not suitable for at-grade crossings. He stated there is a need to differentiate between perceived and actual safety. Mr. Finkelstein said if the City were to put a crosswalk at an intersection, there is a perceived safety by the pedestrian yet many other factors determine if the crossing is actually safe.

Mr. Finkelstein explained that a HAWK (High-Intensity Activated Crosswalk) pedestrian system is a pedestrian activated signal and is often used on high volume and high pedestrian roadways.

Mr. Berkowitz stated MNDOT completed a speed study and recommended Nightingale Street

speed be lowered to 50 mph. Mr. Finkelstein explained a speed study is a collection of the speed cars are traveling and how many are traveling at that limit. Mr. Berkowitz stated if the speed limit is lower than people drive, they are going to drive above the speed limit and enforcement becomes an issue. Mr. Finkelstein stated that lowering the speed limit does not necessarily solve the problem and it can create a false sense of security.

Councilmember Bukkila pointed out that traffic in Andover is not at its normal volume now because school is not in session and kids aren't in activities. She stated if the study was conducted when school is in session and kids are active again, it would be a more accurate picture of traffic. Mr. Finkelstein stated speed studies are done in free-flowing times when it is not very congested, so a speed study is still valid, but a traffic study is not in this case.

Mr. Berkowitz stated the goal is to establish criteria for pedestrian crossing. He said if residents aren't satisfied with staff's decision, they can elevate the issue to the Council.

Mr. Finkelstein stated they created two levels of assessments. The first level is a Tier 1 assessment sheet and would take 5-10 minutes to complete. The second level is a Tier 2 study which builds off Tier 1 and collects more data with traffic specialists, this is where there will be added cost to evaluate.

Mr. Finkelstein showed Council some examples of completed Tier 1 assessment forms from Andover intersections.

Councilmember Bukkila asked why it matters what type of school is nearby. Mr. Finkelstein replied that schools have different traffic patterns. He said elementary aged kids tend to have parents walk them to school or they take the bus. He explained middle school kids tend to walk, bike, or bus and fewer parents accompany the child to school. He stated high school students will walk, take the bus, and drive.

Councilmember Bukkila stated if the roads are 45 mph or higher, the options for a crossing is limited. Mr. Finkelstein replied that whenever there is an uncontrolled crossing, the pedestrian is at risk. He noted if the speed is 45 mph or higher, any pedestrian-car incident is fatal. He said the best way to keep the pedestrian safe is advanced warning for drivers to be aware there is a pedestrian crossing. He explained there are ways to make that happen.

Councilmember Bukkila noted the most difficult crossings tend to be on County roads. Mr. Berkowitz stated most of the time that is true, but the City is going receive requests for crossings at busier city streets which are typical of county road traffic. Mayor Trude stated there are around 6,000 students attending school within a mile of the City Campus. Mr. Finkelstein stated this location would be a great example of using the Tier 2 analysis.

Mayor Trude asked Council if they are in favor of using criteria. Councilmember Bukkila stated it is criteria, but she does not know if it is helpful because it appears the outcome will be that the City does not need pedestrian crossings. Mr. Berkowitz replied that the criteria could lead to a Tier 2

analysis. He said if a resident does not like staff's answer, they can take it to the City Council and make a determination if a Tier 2 assessment is needed.

Councilmember Butler spoke about perceived safety and actual safety and stated that both are important. Councilmember Butler stated he believes it is important to have some criteria to do an initial assessment.

Councilmember Holthus stated she likes having a 2-tier assessment process because it gives staff a tool to use when getting unrealistic requests from residents. She said she does not believe the City should follow the criteria in every single situation.

Mr. Finkelstein gave the example of the intersection at Crosstown Boulevard and Xeon Street. The Tier 1 analysis determined an at-grade crossing is not desirable. He stated the intersection qualified for further analysis and proposed creating a pedestrian refuge midway through the intersection. Councilmember Holthus asked if the secondary analysis takes into account the attraction on the other side of the crossing. Mr. Finkelstein stated the Tier 2 analysis takes other conditions into account and concludes that something needs to be done at the intersection. Councilmember Butler stated the Tier 2 analysis combines quantitative and qualitative data. Mr. Finkelstein stated that is correct as it takes context into account.

Mr. Berkowitz stated the Tier 2 analysis would come before Council because there is an added cost in completing the assessment. He said the City would need professional services of a traffic engineer to gather additional data and propose solutions.

Council reached consensus to use the 2-tier analysis.

Mr. Berkowitz asked if Council wanted to pursue a Tier 2 analysis of Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard. Councilmember Bukkila said the analysis needs to be done but she does not support a traffic engineering study when they aren't going to capture the best data (due to COVID, kids not being in school, and less traffic). Mayor Trude stated the Tier 2 study would help the City determine what needs to go on Nightingale Street and where it needs to go.

Councilmember Butler stated because the road speed is higher than 45 mph the study will determine there should not be any at grade crossings and he disagreed with that conclusion. Mr. Berkowitz stated the initial analysis determines an at grade crossing is not desired and the issue is now before Council to determine what steps to take next. Mr. Berkowitz stated staff was directed to establish criteria. Mayor Trude stated the City has established criteria that identifies areas where there is an attraction that kids want to get to and there is no other way to get there unless there is a crossing.

Councilmember Bukkila stated the criteria is a way to say no. Councilmember Holthus stated it is a way to say no when it is appropriate to say no.

Mr. Berkowitz stated the Tier 1 analysis may state an at grade crossing is not desired, not that a

crossing is not desired. He said he cannot do anything beyond a Tier 1 analysis without Council direction. He explained the next step would be to construct a beacon, HAWK system, overpass, underpass, or signal. He said staff would need to go before the Council and ask for direction.

Councilmember Butler said this is a tool for staff to tell residents no. He said he feels there is a desire from Council to establish safe crossings. Councilmember Butler stated he would like to see the Tier 1 analysis to state at-grade crossing requires HAWK or other safety measures instead of saying an at-grade crossing is not desired.

Mr. Berkowitz stated staff is trying to keep unrealistic requests away from Council and the alternative to establishing criteria is taking every request to Council.

Councilmember Barthel asked if the criteria are effective during this time because of the effects of COVID. Mr. Finkelstein replied his company is taking COVID into account by using some historical data and data they feel is valuable. He gave the example of Crosstown Boulevard and Xeon Street and stated the speed study is valid, but traffic count and pedestrian count would be more accurate when there is more regular activity within the City. Mr. Berkowitz stated the company they contract with is very good at collecting data using cameras and supply the best information so Council can make an informed decision.

Mr. Berkowitz asked Council if they want a Tier 2 assessment of Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard when things are somewhat back to normal. Mayor Trude stated she wants to budget for a crossing and plan for it. She feels the City needs to get moving on this intersection and that it is not a safe crossing. She said the intersection has a lot of use and is only going to be more popular as people want to cross to get to the Community Center.

Mr. Dickinson asked if Council wanted this item planned for 2022 or 2021. Mayor Trude replied she would like it done this year.

Councilmember Bukkila stated this is the first time they are doing this and if they move forward with Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard, they are moving forward without justification. She is worried it sets precedence and when asked for a future crossing, people will say the City didn't do it that way for Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard. Mayor Trude stated the Council has built trails based on resident requests. Councilmember Bukkila said a trail is one thing, but if the City is moving to a mechanized crossing, she is concerned any neighborhood could come forward with a petition saying they want a crossing in their neighborhood. She asked is the City going to do it based on resident desires or are they going to establish criteria. Mayor Trude stated all the schools have controlled intersections and this intersection has 3,000 students on one side of the street and a school and community center on the other side. She said the school and community center has year-round draw.

Councilmember Butler asked how long and how much money a Tier 2 analysis takes. Mr. Finkelstein replied it takes around 4 weeks and costs \$3,000 to \$5,000. Councilmember Barthel asked if the result of a Tier 2 analysis comes with a recommendation of what kind of apparatus

should be put there. Mr. Finkelstein stated it does provide recommendations for solutions.

Councilmember Butler said this is a unique enough intersection that a crossing can be approved as is. He stated the City can budget for it and move it forward quickly.

Mr. Dickinson suggested the Tier 2 study of Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard is a simulated study with plus or minus 200 kids. Mr. Finkelstein said most engineers will look at the background data, comprehensive plan material, and other relevant data.

Mr. Berkowitz stated once the crossing at Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard is constructed, there will be requests for more crossings and that is why it is important for Council to adopt criteria.

Mr. Dickinson said using study and analysis is important for due diligence to avoid the accusation of negligence. Councilmember Barthel stated Tier 2 is necessary for the intersection of Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard so the City knows what type of crossing is needed.

Council reached consensus to further study the intersection of Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard and conduct a Tier 2 analysis.

Council took a break at 7:52 p.m. and reconvened at 7:57 p.m.

DISCUSS CROSSTOWN BLVD. NW & CROSSTOWN DR. NW INTERSECTION/06-48

Mr. Berkowitz provided background information about the intersection at Crosstown Boulevard and Crosstown Drive to the Council. He said the City Council started discussing improvements to the intersection in 2006 and staff prepared options for Council to consider.

Mr. Berkowitz stated adding a southbound turn lane opens the sight line. He said the proposal eliminates the northbound left turn. Mr. Berkowitz stated this is really an ideal location for a roundabout as long as it is big enough to allow fire vehicles.

Mr. Berkowitz stated a roundabout is not on the County's radar and the City would need to take the lead on a roundabout. Councilmember Butler stated he is in support of a roundabout with safe pedestrian crossing.

Mayor Trude stated the roundabout should be added to the CIP. Mr. Berkowitz stated the first step is to apply for HSIP money. Then he indicated the City can budget for the roundabout and see what they can get from the County. He stated the cost would be around \$2.3 million. Council reached consensus to plan for a roundabout at Crosstown Drive and Crosstown Boulevard in 2024 in an unfunded category.

2021-2025 CIP DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

Mr. Dickinson explained that he will be presenting changes to the CIP since the Council last reviewed it. He stated the goal is to have the CIP to a public hearing in October. He said placeholders will be put in for the roundabout at Crosstown Boulevard and Crosstown Drive and the pedestrian crossing at Nightingale Street and Veterans Memorial Boulevard.

Mr. Dickinson stated there are no changes to Central Equipment, Community Center, and Emergency Management.

Mr. Dickinson stated the changes in Engineering include the Tom Anderson and Kelsey Round Lake Trails. Mr. Berkowitz stated Kelsey Round Lake Park trail comes from the General Fund because it is a replacement and the Tom Anderson trail comes out of the Roads and Bridges Fund. He stated staff wanted to balance out the workload so the Tom Anderson trail will be constructed in 2021 and Kelsey Round Lake Trail in 2022. Mr. Dickinson informed Council staff removed the trail along Station Parkway.

Mr. Dickinson informed Council the railroad underpass is still in the budget. He spoke with the developer and told him the City is not going to pursue an underpass because it is too costly and informed him the City will likely be selling the lot back to him. He said the developer called him back the next day and said they liked the idea of the underpass and they said they may be willing to contribute to constructing it by lowering the water table. The developer asked the City to keep the underpass in the budget because it may help them sell homes on the east side of the railroad and provides a much-needed trail connection. Mr. Berkowitz said the City has contacted the railroad to clarify the need for going 2.5 feet under the existing track.

Mr. Dickinson introduced the changes to the Facility Management Fund and stated the generator replacements are being staggered over several years unless it makes sense to replace them all at one time. Mr. Dickinson stated the Parks Maintenance Department operates out of the old central equipment area and the older part is experiencing separation of the veneer. He stated this part of the building will need to be repaired.

Mr. Dickinson stated there has been no changes to Finance, Fire, Information Technology, and Parks Operations.

Mr. Dickinson identified the changes to the Parks Projects section. He said the Prairie Knoll parking lot will be done in 2021 and Pine Hills North done in 2022.

Mayor Trude asked if the City has worked things out with the new soccer association and if they need less support since it's a larger organization. Mr. Dickinson stated there is a large number of Andover residents in the soccer association and their needs have not changed. Mr. Dickinson stated the Parks Project section is based on recommendations from the Park and Recreation Commission and the Commission has discussed the new soccer association and their field needs. Mr. Dickinson said the Kelsey Round Lake interpretive signs are proceeding and have been discussed with the Park and Recreation Commission.

Mr. Dickinson said there have been no changes to the Sanitary Sewer, Storm Sewer, and Streets Equipment sections.

Mr. Dickinson identified the changes in the Streets-Roadways section. He said staff will be making adjustments to the Pedestrian Crossing section based on discussions at tonight's workshop meeting.

Mr. Dickinson said there was a discussion about the Water Meter Reading System, and they are working on preparing an RFP to present to Council at a future meeting.

Mr. Dickinson stated the City will continue to look for additional funds to support the Road and Bridge Fund.

Mayor Trude asked if the City can figure out how to do Timber River with less money or defer the cost because it benefits a small group of residents and is extremely costly. Mr. Berkowitz stated the only way to lower the cost is to use bituminous curb instead of concrete. Councilmember Bukkila asked how the City can support concrete curb and gutter in other areas of the City but not for this location. Mr. Berkowitz stated it comes down to cost and the City bears the largest portion. Mayor Trude stated the City is using tax money to subsidize the road in Timber River and is looking at a way to reduce the burden on the taxpayers. She explained using bituminous instead of concrete curb is a way of reducing the tax burden. Councilmember Bukkila stated she is concerned that the next neighborhood is going to want to save money and ask for bituminous as well.

2021 BUDGET DEVELOPMENT DISCUSSION

Mr. Dickinson reviewed the updated Budget Memo and the 2021 Budget Development Guidelines.

Mr. Dickinson reviewed the staffing requests for 2020 and 2021. Mr. Dickinson explained the changes to the Fire Department's personnel request which reestablishes the Deputy Fire Chief position and expanding a part-time position to a full-time technician. Also a GIS position is contemplated.

Mr. Dickinson reviewed the personnel related implications for cost of living raises, health care costs, and retirements. Councilmember Butler said he would like to look at how to retain talented staff. He stated a 3% increase is a high increase given the state of the economy and he would like the City to review how they look at cost of living, merit increases, and market adjustments.

Mr. Dickinson stated he has worked in both a merit-based organization and a step-based system. He said a merit-based system works well in big organizations but not in smaller organizations. Councilmember Bukkila recommended that Councilmember Butler sit down with Mr. Dickinson and the Human Resources Manager to get a better understanding of how City personnel functions. She stated the Council looked at it a few years ago to fix market adjustments by adding a step increase. Councilmember Butler stated he feels the City should pull back on the 3% COLA. He stated he would like to revisit the terminology used for COLA and market adjustments.

Mr. Dickinson stated the health care insurance broker is marketing the City plan to other qualified

insurance providers and the City is looking again at a health care plan modification. Mr. Dickinson reported the General Fund budget for health care is proposed at \$655,000. Mr. Dickinson stated the contractual services for City Attorney and Sheriff's office has not changed.

Mr. Dickinson stated the City is expecting additional funds for the Recycling Center being open during COVID.

Mr. Dickinson stated the City is looking at having approximately a \$500,000 surplus to transfer over to Roads and Bridges at the end of the year based on current year performance.

Mr. Dickinson is proposing at 4.37% increase in the gross levy which bring the tax rate to a 1.4% increase. Mr. Dickinson briefly summarized sources of revenue and highlighted departmental budgets.

PREVIEW/DISCUSS 2021 PRELIMINARY PROPERTY TAX LEVY

Mr. Dickinson informed Council the preliminary tax levy will be presented to them on September 15th for approval. He stated the final levy can go down, but not up, when it is officially adopted in December. Mr. Dickinson stated there are some outstanding items to take into consideration but feels comfortable in setting the tax levy with a 4.37% gross levy increase.

Mayor Trude stated she is uncomfortable setting the tax levy at the proposed rate due to the excess coming in from the building department and a strong fund balance.

Mr. Dickinson stated the Council may be able to reduce the levy by \$100,000. Mr. Dickinson stated the City can use the fund balance; however, they don't want to dip too much into the fund balance with the potential COVID implications.

Mayor Trude stated she is comfortable keeping the tax rate the same or can wait until Mr. Dickinson comes back with final numbers. Mr. Dickinson stated he is comfortable reducing the levy by \$100,000. Mayor Trude proposed setting the tax levy to maintain the current tax rate. Mr. Dickinson stated he is waiting to find out what the final fiscal disparities amount is and the valuation from the County.

Mayor Trude asked to postpone making a decision until some more information is finalized.

OTHER BUSINESS

There was none.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Barthel, Seconded by Bukkila, to adjourn. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting

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adjourned at 9:37 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Shari Kunza, Recording Secretary