

Maple Grove City Council work session

meeting minutes

May 16, 2022

Call to order

Pursuant to call and notice thereof, a City Council work session was held at 6:15 p.m. on Monday, May 16, 2022 at the Maple Grove Government Center/Public Safety Facility, Hennepin County, Minnesota. Present was Mayor Steffenson and Councilmembers Karen Jaeger, Phil Leith, Judy Hanson, and Kristy Barnett (attending remotely). Absent was none. Present also was City Administrator Heidi Nelson, Chief of Police Eric Werner, Police Commander Jonathan Wetternach, City Prosecutor Andrew Draper, and Finance Director Greg Sticha.

Mayor Steffenson called the meeting to order at 6:19 p.m.

2022 Community Oriented Policing Services (COPS) hiring program grant

Chief of Police Werner provided information regarding the Fiscal Year 2022 COPS Hiring Program (CHP) Grant. He noted that part of the city's goals as determined by the strategic planning session held in February 2022, includes providing a five-year staffing plan for the Police Department in order to meet departmental needs. He also noted that police grant revenue is a possible source of funding for future added positions in the department. He discussed the \$156 million in funding available through the CHP Grant and how the funding is disbursed. Police Chief Werner also provided details regarding how this grant money would cover salary costs and he identified staffing needs. He then outlined the steps involved with the grant application as well as application deadlines.

Councilmember Jaeger questioned whether there would be a sunset date on hiring additional staff using this grant money. Chief of Police Werner stated that the COPS grant is a five-year program and that the grant application deadline is June 16, 2022. While the Police Department is looking to develop a five-year staff plan, he anticipated that the first hire would be in 2023.

Police Commander Wetternach briefly discussed the current supervision challenges within the department in that many staff members are supervised by people that are not working in the same type of job function. He discussed the possible future positions identified by the command staff.

Mayor Steffenson asked if the Police Department was looking to add one, two, or three positions. Chief of Police Werner noted that the department currently has 73 sworn officers. If staff were to apply for the grant, he felt it would be most ideal to hire a community outreach officer that would be assigned to the Community Center as well as a community outreach sergeant. Therefore, adding a total of two positions.

Councilmember Hanson appreciated Finance Director Sticha providing a budget plan for the next five years. She noted it is beneficial for planning ahead. Chief of Police Werner stated that a current benchmark statistic is one sworn officer for

every 1,000 residents. However, for Maple Grove's city size it is approximately 1.15 sworn officers for every 1,000 residents according to BCA data. Actual officer numbers are based on a community's needs. He discussed the fact that it's been nearly 15 years since the Police Department has added a sergeant position to the department. He noted that it will be beneficial to establish a benchmark regarding staffing in order to determine what is needed in the future.

Councilmember Leith stated that as the city continues to grow, the Police Department staff also needs to grow. He noted that he liked the idea of the community outreach officer to be assigned to the Community Center. Consensus of the council was to move forward with the 2022 COPS Hiring Program Grant.

Review traffic diversion program and hearing officer guideline amendments

City Prosecutor Draper stated that he has been with the city now for about a month and a half. In that time, he has been analyzing what is being done in Maple Grove and other surrounding cities. He has met with law enforcement to learn their needs. He noted that he has learned from the Suburban Criminal Divisions Court that the City of Maple Grove is one of the suburban court's largest backlogged jurisdictions, with the majority of backlogged cases being traffic offenses. He noted that a key component of a prosecution office is fair and timely resolution of cases.

City Prosecutor Draper presented a PowerPoint to the council that discussed changes to hearing officer guidelines that will provide a more expedient resolution of petty misdemeanor traffic offenses as well as an adult traffic diversion program. He explained that Maple Grove is one of a few major suburban cities without a traffic diversion program. He noted the following goals associated with the two programs:

- Hold offenders accountable while offering opportunity to avoid a conviction
- Correct poor driving habits – increase safety of streets
- Incentivize citizens to drive legally by getting valid driver's license and insurance
- Reduce recidivism among traffic offenders by reducing compounding convictions, fines, and suspensions
- Create equity within the administration of justice
- Reduce Maple Grove's current backlog of cases within the court system
- Allow for more focused prosecution of DWI, domestic violence, and theft
- Improve community perception/experience with the criminal justice system, including Police Department and Prosecution Office by offering responsible alternatives to eligible offenders

City Prosecutor Draper also noted efficiencies in that hearing officers can hear the court's payables calendar.

Councilmember Hanson commented regarding her experience with traffic diversion program in another city in that people want to pay to keep driving offenses off their record. She suggested a requirement to maintain a clean driving

record for a full year after an offense. If another traffic offense occurs, then the driver retakes the traffic diversion program.

City Prosecutor Draper spoke to the parameters of the three levels of single petty misdemeanors of traffic violations. He noted that the corresponding length of time to maintain a clean driving record increased as the violation level increased. The periods of time range from three months, four months, and six months respectively.

Councilmember Hanson offered a few suggestions with regard to disqualifying an individual from participating in the traffic diversion program, and those include: school bus stop arm violations, pedestrian crosswalk violations, and reckless driving violations. City Prosecutor Draper indicated that he would include those suggestions and reiterated that it costs the city nothing to offer adult traffic diversion programs.

Mayor Steffenson stated that the presentation of materials and the suggested programs were well thought out and made a lot of sense. The consensus of the council was that the information was appreciated and that the programs should move forward.

Other items as deemed necessary

City Administrator Nelson questioned how the council wanted to proceed with the discussion of the process for a non-renewal of an on-sale intoxicating liquor license. The council asked for this topic to come back to the work session scheduled for May 23, 2022.

Adjournment

The meeting was adjourned by Mayor Steffenson at 7:27 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Heidi Nelson
City Administrator