

**MINUTES
OF THE TOWN HALL MEETING
EDINA CITY COUNCIL
HELD AT EDINA SENIOR CENTER
NOVEMBER 10, 2012
10:00 A.M.**

Mayor Hovland called the Town Hall meeting to order at 10:00 a.m. in the Fireside Room of the Edina Senior Center. Answering roll call were Members Bennett, Brindle, Swenson and Mayor Hovland. Absent and excused was Member Sprague.

Staff attending the meeting included: Susan Howl, Executive Assistant; Karen Kurt, Assistant City Manager; and Scott Neal, City Manager.

Mayor Hovland stated the purpose of the meeting was to allow citizens to share their views and concerns with members of the City Council in a less formal setting than during regular meetings.

Susan Clark, 5812 West 61st Street, asked whether financial penalties could be imposed when street construction deadlines were not met, like the Tracy Avenue project that seemed to run long. Member Swenson explained Tracy Avenue was an unusual case. Manager Neal stated that time limits put on contractors result in increased prices since the risk was also higher.

Liz Klaver, 5701 Grove Street, explained that she lived at the corner of Grove Street and Tracy and had extensive landscaping. She stated that the contractor had kept to schedule and kept her informed, and that the workers were cooperative, communicative and cleaned up after the work .

Lorenzo Tunesi, 4413 Ellsworth Drive, asked the City to consider contracting with a single garbage collector to reduce fees, traffic, and pollution. Member Bennett explained that moving to a single citywide hauler required a two-year process that involved a number of public notices and hearings. In the citywide Quality of Life survey of May 2011, residents were evenly divided in their opinions on this question. However, neighborhoods were free to organize themselves.

Member Brindle added that one neighborhood moved to a single hauler a few years ago and almost met their participation goal, but it was still individual contracts.

Joel Stegner, 6312 Barrie Road, asked if the city could award hauling contracts on a neighborhood basis. Manager Neal replied yes, the city could organize hauling into smaller municipal units.

Hope Melton, 4825 Valley View Road, asked if the League of Women Voters study recommending organized hauling had been completed and publicized before the Quality of Life survey was conducted. Member Bennett, who also is a member of the League of Women Voters, replied yes. Member Bennett added that the LWVE study emphasized low price, but that if larger haulers eliminated smaller haulers, prices could rise. The Morningside Neighborhood Association had worked with a small hauler who served much of the neighborhood to create an organics recycling program.

Mayor Hovland stated that the City could require smaller trucks or specific types of fuel to accomplish environmental goals. He added that legislation proposed but not passed in 2012 would have required cities to pay haulers who were not awarded organized hauling contracts.

Phil Mero, 4501 Grimes Avenue, cautioned that although a large hauler can lose a citywide contract but stay in business and come back to bid in the future, a small hauler who loses business in a city probably will not.

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Steve Sando, 5133 Juanita Avenue, praised recent improvements to Minnehaha Creek near the 54th Street bridge, including the removal of buckthorn and brush, and inquired about a walking path on the west side of Minnehaha Boulevard. Member Swenson noted the utility fee was a new funding source for sidewalks and trails, and the Transportation Commission would be creating a plan to utilize those new funds.

Ed Mathie, 4239 Grimes Avenue, and Jen Colburn, 4312 Branson Street, initiated discussion about residential reconstruction, particularly on 50-foot wide lots, and the challenges faced by neighbors.

Ed Mathie asked if the City could regulate residential construction by neighborhood. Member Swenson responded that the Council had asked the Planning Commission to consider neighborhood-specific floor area ratios. Member Bennett added that varied lot sizes even in the same neighborhood made it difficult to regulate floor area ratio, and that the City could have different zoning categories for single-unit residential building, but not specific to neighborhoods. Manager Neal confirmed this.

Jilene Framke, 4105 Morningside Road, stated that City code allows houses so large on narrow lots that they go so far back they look like office buildings.

Meriwether Felt, 4116 Grimes Avenue, stated that new owners don't know what they don't know about neighborhood character, and asked if communication could be improved between all entities.

Phil Mero, 4501 Grime Avenue, expressed concern about builders pressuring homeowners to sell for teardown and rebuild, and asked how the City was holding builders accountable.

Christopher Hayhoe, 4211 Morningside Road, also asked what was going to be done. He explained that his new neighbors had built a retaining wall that caused them to trespass on his yard to get to their own backyard, and that storm water was running onto his property.

Cathy Fuller, 5401 West 60th Street, stated that the same phenomenon was starting in her neighborhood, Birchcrest, and that the new very large houses were out of character with the smaller, relatively affordable existing homes.

Jen Colburn, 4312 Branson Street, stated that she shared concern about affordability because every new house in Morningside was selling for \$1.2 million. She added that perhaps people choosing the neighborhood for its walkability could give up some square footage and garages at the front of the house to fit neighborhood character.

Ed Mathie, 4239 Grimes Avenue, stated that the Council served the residents, not the builders, and that builders are taking advantage of no communication between current and prospective residents. He emphasized that the City is not doing enough to facilitate communication, and it should make an immediate priority to facilitate discussions with builders about expectations for teardowns and rebuilds.

Joel Stegner, 6312 Barrie Road, asked if the City could limit the number of teardowns per year to a number that could be adequately supervised and choose to allow just the best projects. Manager Neal replied the City could not, but that the City could adopt an ordinance requiring that builders hold neighborhood meetings.

Ed Mathie, 4239 Grimes Avenue, asked that neighborhood meetings be required if a builder was planning to build a front-loading garage or to cut down larger trees.

Cathy Fuller, 5401 West 60th Street, asked if awards or recognitions could be given to builders who honored neighborhood character. Member Bennett asked Assistant Manager Kurt about BLEND awards in the City of Minneapolis; Assistant Manager Kurt replied that they are awarded by neighborhood associations. Ms. Fuller

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also asked if some of the building permit money from residential reconstruction could be used to educate builders.

Member Swenson stated that there is a need to balance the rights of property owners to remodel or to sell for someone else to rebuild with the rights of neighboring property owners. She acknowledged that building permit fees would likely be \$300,000 above budget this year. Mayor Hovland added that the conversation at City Hall is not about increased property tax revenues or permit fees.

Jen Colburn, 4312 Branson Street and Ed Mathie, 4239 Grimes Avenue, emphasized that the issues were heated and that something needs to be done quickly.

Mark Valgema, 4315 Oakdale Avenue, stated that he had attended a neighborhood meeting about a large property to be subdivided. He observed that the property owner asked for input but seemed to be stating that they had already decided what to do with the property.

Gene Persha, 6917 Cornelia Drive, asked whether the Council could abolish the new bike lanes at 54th and Wooddale due to the busyness of the road and lack of safety. He suggested Council Members walk the finished project and ask residents what they think. He also stated that bicyclists do not need signage and markings and that Wooddale Avenue is not wide enough for vehicle and bicycle lanes.

Jane Fuegner, 5225 Kellogg Avenue, stated that she was concerned about people traveling on Wooddale who are unfamiliar with the area.

Member Bennett noted that Wooddale Avenue was chosen for a bike facility because it is the only complete north/south route in the northeast quadrant and connects residents to the only outdoor public pool in the City as well as to schools and parks. She acknowledged that residents may choose to use side streets that do not connect the whole route, but a bike route also serves visitors and people riding longer distances. She stated that Mr. Persha is correct that Wooddale Avenue is not wide enough for parking, vehicle travel lanes and bike lanes and added that in open houses, residents expressed very strong desire to keep on-street parking. They also were concerned about speeding traffic, and were creating safety issues by using the parking lane as a two-way bike lane. The advisory bike lanes were installed as an attempt to address all the needs and concerns, as an experiment, and data is being gathered on the effect of the lanes on traffic volumes, speeds and crashes as an objective measure of safety.

Member Swenson left the meeting at 12:04 p.m.

Mayor Hovland adjourned the meeting at 12:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Debra A. Mangen, City Clerk

Minutes approved by Edina City Council, November 20, 2012

James B. Hovland, Mayor