

CITY OF NORTON SHORES  
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
February 28, 2023

A regular work session of the Norton Shores City Council was held at the Norton Branch Library Community Room, 705 Seminole Road, on Tuesday, February 28, 2023 at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor Nelund, Council Members Flanders, Hylland, Jurkas, Kasher, Olson and Sowa; also, Mark Meyers, Shelly Stibitz, Doug Hughes, Anthony Chandler, Jim Murphy, Chris Lyonnais, Jon Gale, Bob Gagnon and Matt Anderson

1. Robertson Brain Health Update

Dr. Joel Robertson of Robertson Research Institute provided an update on the progress employee groups are making as participants in the Brain Health Project. City staff analytics for year one of three have shown marked improved in behavioral data; Police Department employees are on the third of a five-year program and have seen improvement in most areas; and, Fire Department staff, also in their third year of a five-year program are showing some areas of stability and a decline in a significant number of areas and they are showing higher anxiety and stress but still performing their jobs as expected.

2. Special Use Permit Revisions

City Attorney Douglas Hughes, discussed amending the ordinance to revise the standards required in acting on Special Use Permits. City Ordinance currently states that each proposal shall find adequate evidence showing eleven (11) standards which is not required in State statute. Attorney Hughes recommends changing the language to provide a more streamlined version of the findings for the Planning Commission to consider and the City Council retain the right to review and approve or reject their factual conclusion considering four (4) specified standards. Council members supported the proposed revisions and an ordinance amendment will be referred to the Planning Commission and placed on a Council agenda for consideration.

3. Water Meter Replacement Proposal

Public Works Director Jim Murphy explained that Water and Sewer Superintendent Matt Anderson had researched Council's concerns after presenting the water meter replacement proposal at the January work session. Mr. Anderson had presented his recommendation to transition to Metron radio read meters that had a \$10 per meter per month cost and, after further investigation, found that the cost is not monthly but \$10 per year. A 20-year comparison of new Metron meters versus current Sensus meters with the addition of radio reads resulted in close to \$1 million savings. Council Member Hylland would like to see a comparison of manual meters and combine cross connection checks with meter reads. Mr. Anderson contends that residents will benefit by the convenience of immediate reading capabilities with radio read equipment including catching leaks before it drives up their bill and to improve water usage accountability. Council Member Olson is not in favor of converting to radio

read meters based on the cost. City Administrator Mark Meyers asked what the options are for purchase of new manual meters and was told that both Metron and Sensus have manual meters with Metron having a shorter lead time. Council Member Jurkas asked if Metron manual read meters could later be converted to radio read capabilities and Mr. Anderson confirmed that they could. Council members asked if a pilot program could be initiated to show that immediate read capabilities is a cost savings and Mr. Anderson will check with the vendor to see if that is a possibility. Council Member Hylland would consider the conversion to radio read if a savings in another area, such as reducing meter reading positions, were factored into the budget. Overall, the Council is not ready to move forward with upgrading to radio read equipment but may be open to considering it if realized savings in other communities is presented at a later date for reconsideration.

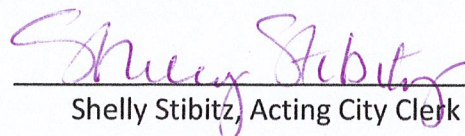
#### 4. Utility Rates Review

Mr. Murphy described two options proposed by Mr. Anderson regarding the adjustment of utility rates and fees to cover a water and sewer system depreciation shortage. One option would mean quarterly increases for residents of \$14 and another option at \$31. The city's cost to the customer would still be mid-range of surrounding municipalities with either option. Council Member Hylland asked where depreciation expense was accounted for in previous years and Finance Director Chris, along with Mr. Meyers, stated that it would be reflected in the asset account. Council Member Hylland asked what the cash flow of the Water and Sewer Department is to determine where the negative cash flow exists before he would be comfortable adjusting rates. An increase in expenses in 2018 was discussed and attributed to the connection to the City of Muskegon system. Council Member Hylland finds the current proposals better than what was brought in January but would like to further determine the Water and Sewer Department cash flow and depreciation standing before moving this forward. Further research will be completed and results shared at the March work session.

#### General Comments

Fire Chief Bob Gagnon shared appreciation for the Robertson Brain Health program and its findings. Many First Responders from the Fire Department were in attendance for this presentation as they know their data was concerning. Chief Gagnon shared some insight into job related contributors to their stress levels and encouraged continuation of the program.

Meeting adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

  
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Shelly Stibitz, Acting City Clerk