

**MINUTES**  
**WASECA CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION**  
**TUESDAY, JANUARY 31, 2023, 6:00 P.M.**

**CALL TO ORDER**

The Waseca City Council Work Session began at 6:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

Councilmembers Present:	Mayor Randy Zimmerman	Daren Arndt
	Mark Christiansen – 7:32 p.m.	Jeremy Conrath
	James Ebertowski	John Mansfield
	Stacey Schroeder	

Staff Present: Carl Sonnenberg, Interim City Manager  
Penny Vought, Police Chief  
Alicia Fischer, Finance Director  
Nate Willey, City Engineer  
Tina Wilson, PCED, Economic Development Manager

**PURPOSE**

Mayor Zimmerman opened the meeting and stated that the purpose of the meeting was to set goals for the 2023 calendar year and to establish an outline of what priorities are. Each Council Member was asked to submit a list of 5 points they would like to see the Council work on this year, and that list was compiled into a document that was handed out at the meeting.

**CONVERSATION**

Councilmember Arndt stated that he would like to see more apartments in Waseca. Nice apartments for families that may not be ready yet to purchase or build a home, or who would prefer to not have the maintenance of a home. He said it is preferred to not be low income apartments but rather market-value apartments to meet the needs of companies hoping to come to Waseca. This thought was echoed amongst all of Council with Council member Schroeder suggesting townhomes may be a nice offer as well.

Councilmember Arndt also mentioned that there are still places looking to come to Waseca and he is currently working with Tina Wilson, the City's Economic Development Manager on a company that is looking to come to Waseca.

Councilmember Mansfield stated that working on additional housing is a positive way to boost Waseca since the City currently is considered a "bedroom community" and to work on the amenities. It is needed to boost not only the positives that Waseca can do for a business but also the great things about the City of Waseca. Besides moving his family to Waseca and watching them "flourish" he has befriended many young couples coming to the City and they all have the same positives to say about why they came to Waseca.

Conversation in reference to building the infrastructure from the City to development boundaries was discussed and how previous bonding attempts to complete some plans to assist in funding had not made it

to the legislature but talking has continued to bring it again to the legislature. The Mayor had a meeting with Minnesota Senator Jasinski to discuss the City of Waseca and share ideas on funding and opportunities.

Councilmember Conrath said that he thinks that growing Waseca will take working on both the housing and the "shovel ready" locations together and not having one without the other.

It has been echoed in many meetings and discussions that property taxes already seem high, Councilmember Mansfield stated that the "majority of property taxes are for the County and the City can not do anything about those." To help keep property taxes lower and the projects moving forward, the best way to get State and Federal funding is to get out and talk to the Representatives, the Senators and the Governor.

Mayor Zimmerman stated that he would like to discuss the idea of a Sales Tax Initiative, for the City of Waseca to use towards a possible Community Center, this would be a place that would benefit people of all ages from young to seniors and could be a great asset to Waseca. Councilmember Ebertowski agreed that it could be a great asset but wants to ensure that after the Sales Tax Initiative finishes out, that it is transparent on how the facility would sustain itself for further use, repairs and upgrades.

Mayor Zimmerman stated that The League of Minnesota Cities has a chart that shows that the majority of Minnesota cities do have a Sales Tax Initiative program for their communities.

Councilmember Schroeder agreed saying that she has had conversations with residents who say that Waseca should have a Sales Tax Initiative where people give back a little bit to the City, even those who are here seasonal for camping or just passing through, and that money can be used to use Mayors example a Community Center to bring more people to Waseca and more people spending their money here and more money staying in the City.

Councilmember Conrath wanted to confirm if a Sales Tax Initiative could be used to offset some fees such as street assessments and it was confirmed that it cannot, the funds do need to go to a community enhancement project.

Councilmember Conrath wants to look at scheduling the joint meeting between the City and the County that was postponed from November waiting for the new and current council session. Councilmember Schroeder echoed that thought with the desire to see the City, County, Local Businesses and the Citizens all work together and support each other.

Branding of Waseca was discussed and Tina Wilson mentioned that Waseca did have a branding done that it is being used and what really needs to be done is to get Waseca out there. This can be done in many ways, the Economic Development Authority (EDA) has some marketing dollars to use on the Recovery Coordinator Grant the City received that if not used will need to be returned. As well as she will be attending site selector conferences to get the Waseca name and benefits out there and to see what people and business are looking for. Councilmember Mansfield said that Tina Wilson being as personable and knowledgeable as she is sending her to meet face to face with these businesses and site selectors is a great benefit to Waseca that he fully supports. Tina Wilson mentioned that the EDA has placed print and digital advertising with Minnesota Site Selector Magazine and she is updating a more available space specific ad for their February edition. The Quad Graphics building was mentioned because it has the railway spur which is a highly desirable benefit for many businesses.

The staffing at the Police Department was mentioned, Police Chief Penny Vought stated that with all Police Departments nationally there is a shortage of police, this is due to many factors, to include; retirement,

illness, switching precincts and lack of new recruits. Waseca has a post for 1 Police Officer position and that one position has been out for several months. The workload has also grown, calls for the month of January were over 600 so the Police Department has been busy. Waseca is very selective on who they hire, the candidate needs to be the right "fit" to ensure the best for the Police Department and the residents of Waseca. Both Chief Vought and Councilmember Schroeder stated that the residents of Waseca show a great amount of support for the Police Officers.

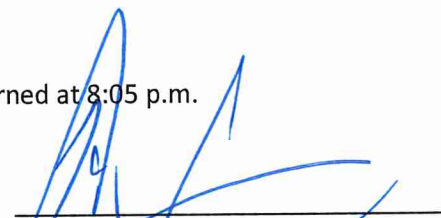
Councilmember Conrath thanked Interim City Manager Carl Sonnenberg for his support and that he is doing a "great job". Councilmember Mansfield seconded that thought and said that he appreciates the communication from the Interim City Manager to the Council. Councilmember Mansfield stated that goes into his point on reviewing the City Charter to see if a City Manager is still the best way to go for the City of Waseca, or if a City Administrator role would be a better fit. Although he would still like to do a review of the full charter he thinks that the progress that Interim City Manager Sonnenberg has shown is how they would prefer the incoming City Manager to be, giving the Council more information. Councilmember Conrath said that if Interim City Manager would like to keep the position permanently, he would happily discuss that idea and look at back filling into Carl's previous position. He has been very appreciative of the updates that he has gotten on City Staffing that he was not getting previous so as people were telling him to cut City staff from the budget he was not aware of what that meant because he wasn't made aware that several staff members were already filling multiple roles. Councilmember Schroeder asked for an idea on how many multiple roles staff was performing but that information was not readily available and will be made available at a later meeting.

Wrapping up back to the City Manager position Councilmember Conrath reminded everyone that the majority of the goals talked about during this meeting needed to be second to filling that position and if needing to hire a "Head Hunter" and interviewing that could take several months. It was requested by Mayor Zimmerman that before the next regular City Council Meeting on February 7<sup>th</sup> they hold a work session at 6:00 p.m. to discuss with the Interim City Manager his thoughts on the position and based on his answers what may be the next steps.

The works session has been set for February 7, 2023 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Council Chambers, followed by the Regular City Council Meeting.

The meeting wrapped with a resounding appreciation and pride for the City of Waseca, The Staff of Waseca, and the Goals of Waseca.

There being no discussion and no action taken, the work session adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

  
JULIA HALL  
CITY CLERK  
RANDY L. ZIMMERMAN  
MAYOR