



NORTH BRANCH

Minnesota

CITY COUNCIL

WORK SESSION AGENDA

TUESDAY, JANUARY 16, 2018 – 6:30 PM

CITY HALL, 6408 ELM STREET, NORTH BRANCH, MN 55056

Kirsten Hagen-Kennedy
Mayor

Robert Canada
Councilmember

Kathy Blomquist
Councilmember

Kelly Neider
Councilmember

Jim Swenson
Councilmember

<u>Topic</u>	<u>Presenter</u>	<u>Time Allocation</u>
1. Call to Order		
2. Pledge of Allegiance		
3. Roll Call		
4. GreenStep Cities Presentation	Diana McKeown	30 Min.
5. Council Member Reports	Mayor Hagen-Kennedy	15 Min.
6. Sign Ordinance	Sondrol	15 Min.
7. City Council Compensation	Fry	15 Min.
8. Requests Being Made to Chisago County HRA EDA	Fry	10 Min.
9. Strategic Planning Part 6	Fry	30 Min.
10. Technology Training	Varma	30 Min.
11. Adjourn		



**City of North Branch
Staff Report**

Prepared By: Ragini Varma, City Deputy Clerk/IT Coordinator
Kathy Blomquist, Councilmember

Date: January 16, 2018

Subject: GreenStep Cities Presentation

Diana McKeown will be attending to give a presentation regarding the GreenSteps Cities Program.



**City of North Branch
Staff Report**

Prepared By: Renae Fry, City Administrator

Date: January 16, 2018

Subject: Council Member Reports

Does the council want to adopt a template for providing notes of the meetings attended by council members as the designated liaison/representative? Should there be standing items on the city council meeting agenda to prompt verbal reports?



**City of North Branch
Staff Report**

Prepared By: Nathan Sondrol, GIS Planning Specialist

Date: January 16, 2018

Subject: Sign Ordinance

City Staff is respectfully requesting that the City Council provide discussion and/or direction on amending the City's sign ordinance. The current sign ordinance presents multiple challenges for handling signage requests whether it be for clustered establishments, sites along the I-35 corridor or just for consistent interpretation of how the code is written. Ideally, modifications could be made to allow for more flexibility on handling these items and to allow for a more appealing environment and streamlined process.

If the City Council is interested in moving forward with this, city staff will identify areas for possible modification and bring proposed changes to an upcoming planning commission meeting for a public hearing to obtain comments and feedback from the public.



**City of North Branch
Staff Report**

Prepared By: Renae Fry, City Administrator
Richard Hill, Finance Director

Date: January 16, 2018

Subject: City Council Compensation

I asked Attorney Stevens to analyze and provide his opinion of possibly conflicting language that has been used historically in the ordinance setting annual compensation and the resolution appointing council members to various boards and commissions. The following is his response:

Ms. Fry, I have reviewed this issue and, in particular, Ordinance 273-17 and Resolution #03-01-03-17, along with the definition of per diem (daily allowance to cover expenses). My legal opinion is that the city ordinance and resolution making committee appointments are perfectly inconsistent in language pertaining to council members' compensation. A reasonable interpretation can be made either way. It appears to be a reasonable interpretation, made in good faith, that the mayor is allowed to receive per diem payments for committees, in addition to annual salary. This is consistent with the plain language used in the resolution itself appointing the mayor.

However, given this clear inconsistency, it will be important for the City to clarify this difference in the future for prospective application. The City Council should make a decision about whether to allow for additional per diem compensation for committees or one total salary only.

Because I believe a reasonable interpretation can be made either way, this becomes more of a political issue than a legal issue. I do not find that the mayor's receipt of per diem compensation was unlawful, nefarious, or made in bad faith. It should be noted that a court would unlikely find this to be an egregious wrong, especially considering the extremely low salary amount versus the time commitment.

This work session item is intended to respond to Mr. Steven's recommendation that you discuss and give direction to staff about a possible resolution that explains and memorializes the policy on council member compensation as it relates to service on committees, internal and external.



**City of North Branch
Staff Report**

Prepared By: Renae Fry, City Administrator

Date: January 16, 2018

Subject: Requests Being Made to Chisago County HRA EDA

I have asked to be placed on the January 30 agenda for the Chisago County HRA EDA to make two requests. The first is that I am asking for a contribution to assist with the application fee for the Minnesota Design Team program. The total application fee is \$7,500. I have applied for a grant from the Initiative Foundation; I asked for \$5,000. I am asking the HRA EDA for \$2,500 to cover the remaining balance.

Second, I am asking that the Chisago County HRA EDA consider buying two buildings at the intersection of TH 95 and County Rd. 30. That intersection continues to be difficult for trucks to navigate, particularly for west bound trucks that want to turn right at Co. 30. The two buildings in the NE corner are currently vacant and for sale.

Do you have any questions or concerns about either request?



**City of North Branch
Staff Report**

Prepared By: Renae Fry, City Administrator

Date: January 16, 2018

Subject: Strategic Planning Part 6

At the October meeting, you reached general agreement on the wording for the five strategic goals. For each goal, I crafted a strategy statement and consulted with the department heads about projects/tasks that could be undertaken in support of the goal. Following your review and comment on the proposed projects at the November work session, I worked with the department heads to establish proposed timelines for accomplishing the tasks. Attached is the working draft of the plan with time lines. My goal for this meeting is to discuss the timelines and prioritize projects, as needed, and discuss metrics for each.

Attachments:

Strategic Plan 2018 - 2020 110917 v4 with proposed timelines rev.

CITY OF NORTH BRANCH STRATEGIC PLAN

2018 – 2021

Goal 1 - Expand housing inventory by promoting development of new homes that offer options for all stages of life, including, first time buyers, workforce housing, executive style homes, apartments/condominiums, and senior housing.

Strategy – Collaborate with organizations and developers to expand housing inventory and provide resources for buyers and renters

Activities:

- Participate in Chisago County Housing Study Process 2018
- Communicate results of study with area developers 2018
- Encourage area developers to consider gaps/needs in future development plans Ongoing
- Partner with Greater Minnesota Housing Fund, USDA and similar organizations to offer housing assistance and develop a resource guide to communicate to residents and prospects area and regional financial assistance programs 2018
- Conduct developer information sessions to improve city/developer communication, to update developers on regulatory matters and housing trends and data and collaborate to find solutions Annually
- Establish and offer development incentives 2019

Goal 2 - Engage in planning to address short term and long term traffic concerns, such as anticipating traffic movement east and west through the city, establishing safe pedestrian crossings and positioning the city for additional interstate exits and overpasses.

Strategy – Separate commercial traffic from car and pedestrian traffic, and increase access to I35 to provide for safer and more efficient movement throughout the city

Activities:

- Implement pavement management plan and identify funding sources to supplement the local levy to pay for necessary improvements and maintenance efforts 2020
- Undertake and complete the realignment of Hemingway Ave. south of TH 95 to Lincoln 2018
- Identify possible traffic corridors to by-pass historic downtown 2019
- Convene meetings with MnDOT, Chisago County and elected officials to review traffic needs and identify opportunities for funding Ongoing
- Develop a Transportation Plan or develop an “official highway map” 2020
- Host a Bikeable/Walkable community workshop
- Complete Street Policy and Development and

Implementation

2020

Goal 3 - Promote parks, trails and outdoor recreation by:

- a. **Updating the City's Park Comprehensive Plan; and**
- b. **Offering year-round recreation, by expanding biking and walking paths safe for all ages and various seasonal uses**

Strategy – Expand and promote recreational opportunities to attract and retain residents, businesses and visitors to area

Activities:

- Update Park Comprehensive Plan (PTOS) 2018
- Continue efforts to complete Sunrise Prairie Trail from 410th to Harris 2018
- Implement recommendations from Safe Routes to Schools Plan Ongoing
- Research opportunities to bring outdoor events (such as a 5k, triathlon, bike race, etc.) to North Branch 2020
- Convene and facilitate conversations about ways to fund and expand athletic facilities, community center, hockey arena, splash pad, interpretive centers etc. in North Branch 2018
- Develop a Pedestrian and Bicycle master plan that connects neighborhoods, parks, schools, downtowns, etc. 2019
- Establish and foster partnerships with existing organizations – i.e. health care, athletic associations, schools, St Croix River Valley, DNR, Chisago SWCD and other civic groups to provide programming or enhanced services to people of all races, ethnicities, incomes, abilities and national origins. 2019
- Utilize social media to promote and engage residents in the use of the park and trail system and programming 2019

Goal 4 - Establish and implement plans to identify and target commercial industries and industrial uses, attract new businesses to the city, redevelop/redefine “Main Street”, and aggressively market the city's industrial park.

Strategy – Revitalize existing commercial/retail areas and sell available city owned industrial land to solidify tax base and bring in new revenue to reduce the dependency on the levy for debt payments and to financially support community services and growth

Activities:

- Participate in Minnesota Design Team Program 2018
- Develop an EDA Strategic Plan 2018
- Complete Comprehensive Plan update 2018
- Revise city code to align planning and zoning 2019
- Establish North Branch as a GreenSteps City 2019
- Consult with Gaughn to assess marketing plan; implement changes Ongoing

- Assess market potential of vacant land, consider zoning changes to attract more interest 2018 - 2019
- Support efforts of businesses to locate here and for existing businesses, to grow and expand their presence in North Branch Ongoing
- Conduct inventory of existing businesses and identify gaps or needs in the community or business that complement existing industries 2019
- Identify and participate in programs that promote the community, such as Main Street USA, U of M Building Minnesota Cities Programs 2020

Goal 5 - Develop a brand for the city that celebrates the city's rich heritage, incites enthusiasm and pride, entices visitors to the community and promotes the city's location as the crossroads of place, time, outdoor living.

Strategy – Define and distinguish North Branch from surrounding communities and establish a sense of identity to promote

Activities:

- Promote CGI videos by encouraging businesses and residents to link to video and increase viewership 2018
- Seek funding to contract with a consultant to develop North Branch's "brand", updating the logo, establishing a tag line and possible city awareness campaign; establish a volunteer committee to promote branding efforts 2019 - 2020
- Promote Hay Days 2019
- Implement welcome sign program 2020
- Establish North Branch as a monarch butterfly flyway 2020
- Expand I ♥ North Branch campaign Ongoing
- Promote natural history of area 2020



**City of North Branch
Staff Report**

Prepared By: Ragini Varma, City Deputy Clerk/IT Coordinator

Date: January 16, 2018

Subject: Technology Training

Monthly Technology Training