



## St. Stephen City Council Agenda – March 6, 2019

Call To Order: 6:30 PM

Pledge of Allegiance

Approval of Agenda

Approval of February Meeting Minutes

Reading of Claims

Reading of Receipts

Treasurer's Report

Petitions, Requests and Communication

St. Stephen Fire & Rescue

Emergency Management

2019 Frontline Contract for Service

Reports

Road & Bridge

Planning Commission

Sheriff's Report

Health Committee

2 6th Avenue SE  
St. Stephen, MN  
56375  
320-251-0964

**City Officials**

Jeff Blenkush  
Mayor

Gene Skaj  
Council Member

Danita Traut  
Council Member

Steve Trobec  
Council Member

Tom Vouk  
Council Member

Dolores Supan  
Treasurer

Cris Drais  
City Clerk  
[crisdrais@  
midconetwork.com](mailto:crisdrais@midconetwork.com)

Website:  
[cityofststephen.com](http://cityofststephen.com)

Continued on Back

Unfinished Business

12th Ave NE Appraisal

New Business

Miscellaneous Announcements

Wednesday, April 10, 2019: Property Assessment Open Book Meeting  
@ City Hall, 4:30-5:00 PM

Newsleaders Publication for 2019: March 8 & 22, April 5 & 19,  
May 3, 17 & 31, June 14 & 28, July 12 & 26, Aug 9 & 23, Sept 6 & 20, Oct 4 & 18,  
Nov 1, 15 & 29 and Dec 13 & 27

***6:30 PM Public Hearing: 6th Ave SE Street Improvements***

Meeting Adjourned

*This agenda has been prepared to provide information regarding an upcoming meeting of the St. Stephen City Council. This document does not claim to be complete and is subject to change at any time.*



MINUTES  
ST. STEPHEN CITY COUNCIL  
MARCH 6, 2019

CALL TO ORDER: 6:00 P.M. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE: All together.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Jeff Blenkush – Mayor, Gene Skaj, Danita Traut, Steve Trobec and Thomas J. Vouk – Council, Dolores Supan-Treasurer and Cris Drais-City Clerk.

ABSENT: None.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA: The agenda for the March meeting was reviewed. Gene Skaj made a motion to approve the agenda with the deletion. Danita Traut seconded the motion. Motion carried.

MINUTES OF THE FEBRUARY MEETING: The minutes of the February Council Meeting were reviewed. Gene Skaj made a motion to approve the minutes. Danita Traut seconded the motion. Motion carried.

READING OF THE CLAIMS: The Clerk presented the Claims. The Claims include a plowing payroll for Rodger Bellinger and the Council's 1<sup>st</sup> Qtr of 2019 payroll. The total to date is \$44,528.87. Steve Trobec made a motion to approve the Claims to date. Gene Skaj seconded the motion. Motion carried.

READING OF RECEIPTS: Receipts for the month total: \$4,788.12. Two receipts are from the State of MN and need to be confirmed as FD reimbursement. The website can be accessed but the payment details cannot be opened. SWIFT (StateWide Integrated Financial Tools) will be contacted if the details remain unaccessible. Gene Skaj made a motion to approve the Receipts Register. Steve Trobec seconded the motion. Motion carried.

TREASURER'S REPORT: For the Period: 2/1/2019-2/28/2019

Beginning Balance	\$1,124,713.57
Total Receipts	\$4,788.12
Total Disbursed	\$29,852.49
Ending Balance	\$1,099,649.20
Less Deposits in Transit	\$0.00
Plus Outstanding Checks	\$1,257.25
<b>Total Per Bank Statement</b>	<b>\$1,100,906.45</b>

Gene Skaj made a motion to approve the Treasurer's Report. Steve Trobec seconded the motion. Motion carried.

PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS: **None at this time.**

ST. STEPHEN FIRE & RESCUE: Fire Chief Jeff Drais reported that there were 8 calls in February and 1 so far in March for a total of 20 calls in 2019. The March training is to be determined. Ralph Barhorst will be assigned to the generators. The 2 new fire fighters have completed their background checks, physicals and agility tests. Fire fighter Joe Gordon responded directly from his home to a call, performed CPR and saved the life of the patient.

Relief Association: A Retirement Party/Badge Ceremony will take place on April 6<sup>th</sup>. Breakfast with the Fire Fighters will be on Sunday, April 14<sup>th</sup>. A raffle will take place at Howie's Corner Bar on April 26<sup>th</sup>. An \$8,000.00 donation was made to the Fire Equipment Fund.

EMERGENCY MANAGEMENT: A copy of the 2019 Frontline Contract for Service was received and reviewed. The cost for the 2 sirens is \$500. Gene Skaj made a motion to approve the 2019 Frontline Contract for Service. Tom Vouk seconded the motion. Motion carried.

REPORTS OF BOARDS AND COMMITTEES:

- 1. Road and Bridge:** Road Overseer Jerome Supan didn't have anything to report at this time. Bob Ferche will be contacted to confirm pushing snow onto his property along 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. If approved, Burski will do the work. Bob Hlebain and Burski removed snow in areas of St. Stephen. LeRoy Supan cleared snow from mailboxes in some neighborhoods.
- 2. Planning Commission:** Chair Dan Schultz reported that he was voted to be Chair again for 2019. Perry Nistler was voted to be Deputy Chair for 2019. Tom Vouk made a motion to approve Dan Schultz as Planning Commission Chair and Perry Nistler as Deputy Chair for 2019. Steve Trobec seconded the motion. Motion carried.

SHERIFF'S REPORT: The report was circulated.

HEALTH COMMITTEE: The 2019 Noxious Weeds Meeting is scheduled for April 3, 2019 during the day and evening, during the Council Meeting. Mayor Blenkush will make an effort to attend or contact the County. Homes in disrepair will be postponed to the April Meeting.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS: 12<sup>th</sup> Ave NE Appraisals: Attorney Tom Jovanovich reviewed the 3 appraisals with the Council. The next step would be for City Staff, the City Engineer and City Attorney to meet with the homeowners individually. It was reported that Bill Waytas did meet with each homeowner.

**Xcel Energy Franchise Agreement:** City Engineer Randy Sabart reviewed the agreement with the Council. Some changes were made and the agreement is acceptable for Council approval. Gene Skaj made a motion to approve the Xcel Energy Franchise Agreement. Danita Traut seconded the motion. Motion carried.

NEW BUSINESS: **Nothing at this time.**

MISCELLANEOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS: The 2019 Newsleader publication dates were listed on the agenda.

Mayor Blenkush read information regarding public hearing conduct. The regular Council Meeting was closed to open the Public Hearing at 6:31 PM.

*Public Hearing: 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE Street Improvements*

Engineer Scott Hedlund began the Public Improvement Hearing. Packets were prepared for those in attendance to follow along.

A residential road vs a collector road was discussed. The 2<sup>nd</sup> St NE project was on a residential road. A collector road such as 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE is a route for a destination.

The determination of a proposed cap was discussed. A proposed cap on assessments would be a Council decision.

It was asked when an exact cost of the project would be known to landowners. That information would be shared at a Special Assessment Meeting. At the Public Improvement Hearing, the numbers shared are preliminary. The next step would be to design the road and get bids and true costs of the project.

The CSAH 5 and CSAH 2 road improvement projects were discussed. Residents along those roadways were not assessed but the projects were not City projects. They were largely funded by Stearns County and the City's paid its determined costs. It was asked why 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE isn't made into a county road. Information was shared that the County is not interested in taking over the road as it has CSAH 2 and CSAH 1 that residents can use vs 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. Has the City asked the County about taking over the road – yes and the County wasn't interested but has since come on board as a supporter of the improvement project in order for the City to apply for the improvement grant.

It was asked if the City's neighborhoods would be assessed as they use 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. Ultimately all residents are assessed a share of the cost. It was asked why the Lakewood Valley Addition specifically isn't being included in the proposed assessments as the addition is attached to 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE. Discussion took place regarding the addition being assessed when its own roads are redone. Those residents will be assessed a portion of the 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE costs along with the other St. Stephen residents.

6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE being appraised was discussed. Lots would be evaluated based on an improved road in front of them and an unimproved road. The process of right of way acquisition was questioned and an appraiser is obtained to determine the value. The timeline of this isn't known currently.

Discussion of the road's location took place as a few homes are closer to the roadway than others. Water collection was discussed and the drainage pattern would need to be maintained.

While discussing assessment, the swampy area of 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE was discussed. Would it be assessed or excluded?

The landowners off of 9<sup>th</sup> St SE own interior land to 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE and the City Engineer will look at adding that area to the road improvement project.

The Council was asked to have a road study of 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE done again to see if there's any change in usage since the last one done prior to the CSAH 2 road improvement project.

The Council was asked why the project was being proposed. The City has CSAH 2 and CSAH 5 for drivers to use. It is believed that by widening the road, accidents will arise.

Discussion took place regarding when 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE was blacktopped. Residents tried to remember. The road has outgrown minor maintenance jobs. Blending the road when it meets Brockway Township's portion of "Townline Rd" was also discussed.

The Brockway Township road improvement project of "Townline Rd" was discussed. The City is not sure of how the Township handled assessments along the area.

The Road & Bridge Fund was discussed. A portion of residential property taxes goes into the Road & Bridge Fund. That money is used for maintenance activities. Examples of other uses of the money would be snow removal and crack filling projects. The Council was asked if the Road & Bridge money is liquid and has been used to buy equipment. Road & Bridge Fund money was used to buy a plow truck. The equipment referenced was the fire truck (Unit 12). It was stated that money was used to pay off the fire truck loan (Unit 12) as the City had surplus money as a way of saving on interest. The money was a loan within the City and the surplus money was borrowed against. The money used to pay off the fire truck loan has been tracked so it is known when the fund will reach a zero balance.

It was shared that the residents don't seem to want the road but that the Council does. It was stated that the City and LeSauk Township tried to get the grant money. The City received the grant which needs to be spent by 2020. It was shared that the County, the Townships and the APR were approached regarding fixing the road. Again the

County has a parallel route and is not interested in taking over "Townline Rd". Years past the City passed a resolution to dedicate the road to the County along with the Townships and it was not received by the County.

It was suggested to put 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE back to gravel. The City Engineer shared that decades back when roads were paved the expense wasn't as high as today but to unpaved a road and put it back to a gravel road is not a practical option. It was stated that it would be impassable in the winter when it was gravel as it would be all mud.

Questions regarding construction were: Will physical barriers be in place? Will right of way limits be enforced? Will construction run over crops? Will a driving path be passable for example for a tractor to use? Will the utilities in the ditches need to be redone? Who pays for the work? What happens with sprinkler systems in the way?

The timeline of a project was discussed. MNDOT understands that the project may not be completed in 2019 due to the timeline.

When will the assessment percentage be shared with the residents was asked and based on the current timeline, that information may be shared in August.

Mayor Blenkush asked if anyone had any more questions. He asked a second time.

Including the Lakewood Valley Addition to the assessments was brought up again.

Mayor Blenkush asked if anyone had any more questions.

It was asked how is it fair to assess a resident because they live on the road.

The cost of the project was reviewed. The City's cost could potentially be \$1,377,950.00 and the \$750,000.00 grant would be added to reach the total project cost.

Mayor Blenkush asked if anyone had any more questions. He asked a second time. He asked a third time.

It was asked if the City has looked at a less expensive alternative for road improvement. City Engineer Randy Sabart stated that the road has exceeded its 30 year longevity mark. The road can no longer be overlaid. It needs to be rebuilt.

Mayor Blenkush asked if anyone had any more questions. He asked a second time. He asked a third time.

It was asked if the Council will hold future special meetings, meetings between Council meetings or neighborhood meetings. It was asked how the Council will vote on assessments. This will be done after bid costs are viewed.

Project time was discussed and the importance of inconvenience vs economics.

Mayor Blenkush asked if anyone had any more questions. He asked a second time. He asked a third time.

The Public Hearing was closed at 8:57 PM. Council discussion took place.

Steve Trobec asked for confirmation of the next step. The next step would be ordering the improvement and preparation of plans.

Gene Skaj said the Council needs to look closely at the assessment process after bids would come in.

Danita Traut stated that the City should save more money for the project. She stated that she is hearing from residents that they don't want the project.

Tom Vouk stated that if the City is to do the project entirely the Road & Bridge Fund monies would need to be increased. How can the City give up a \$750,000.00 grant?

Discussion took place regarding the road encroaching on personal property and the residents desires. Gravel road maintenance was discussed.

Danita Traut made a motion to not go ahead with the project. Motion not seconded; motion failed.

The cost of the Feasibility Report was requested: \$20,000.00. The cost of preliminary engineering was requested: \$5,000.00-10,000.00.

Jeff Blenkush made a motion to approve the Resolution Ordering Improvement and Preparation of Plans for 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE (Improvement No. 147974). Steve Trobec seconded the motion.

Tom Vouk asked for a five minute recess.

The meeting reconvened at 9:19 PM.

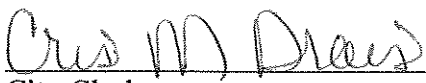
The motion on the table is a motion to approve the Resolution Ordering Improvement and Preparation of Plans for 6<sup>th</sup> Ave SE (Improvement No. 147974).

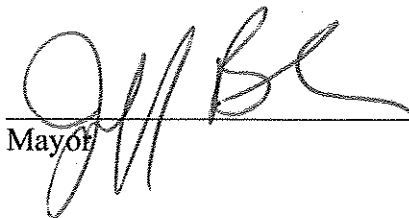
Jeff Blenkush – Yes, Gene Skaj – Yes, Danita Traut – No, Steve Trobec – Yes and Tom Vouk – Yes. Yes – 4 and No – 1. Motion carried.

ADJOURNMENT: There being no further business, Gene Skaj made a motion to adjourn. Steve Trobec seconded the motion. Motion carried.

TIME: 9:21 PM

Respectfully submitted,

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
City Clerk

  
\_\_\_\_\_  
Mayor