



# CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Richfield, Minnesota

## City Council Work Session Virtual Meeting held via WebEx

**May 12, 2020**

<b>CALL TO ORDER</b>
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The meeting was called to order by Mayor Regan Gonzalez at 6:00 p.m. held via WebEx.

Council Members Present: Maria Regan Gonzalez, Mayor; Mary Supple; Simon Trautmann; and Ben Whalen.

Council Members Absent: Edwina Garcia

Staff Present: Katie Rodriguez, City Manager; Neil Ruhland, Communications and Engagement Manager; Blanca Martinez Gavina, Executive Analyst; and Kelly Wynn, Senior Office Assistant

Others Present: Lisa Sorensen, Sorensen Consulting

<b>ITEM #1</b>	<b>COMMUNITY COVID-19 IMPACT SURVEY</b>
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City Manager Rodriguez introduced the agenda item and Neil Ruhland.

Communications Manager Ruhland provided a background of the survey since the onset of COVID-19 (coronavirus), the City wanted concrete information about what the residents were thinking, feeling and needing regarding housing, food, utility and health. He reviewed 26 similar surveys from surrounding communities to compile a short but informative survey. It consisted of 14 questions, focused on qualitative data, had a strong demographic component and was made available in both Spanish and English. The survey was then distributed by email, social media and through partner organizations such as Richfield Public Schools, Richfield Foundation, Chamber of Commerce, La Red Latina and MIRA.

Communications Manager Ruhland continued with response rate and information gathered. A total of 736 residents responded. He then discussed the demographics surrounding the residents who responded. He then went on to discuss that 74 percent of residents are social distancing most of the time and 91 percent of seniors are social distancing either "all" or "most" of the time.

Communications Manager Ruhland then spoke of the top COVID-19 related stressors. 66 percent of residents stated getting cleaning supplies was very or somewhat stressful followed by reduced wages, getting food and school closures. More specially, the Latinx respondents stated the possibility of reduced wages and hours were very or somewhat stressful. He also included results of top concerns regarding COVID-19. Getting sick was rated highest at 79 percent while stock/investments and not being able to work followed respectively at 35 and 25 percent. The results

also included people of color ranking top concerns as getting sick, accessing medical care and paying rent/mortgage while seniors' concerns were getting sick, stocks/investments and accessing medical care.

Communications Manager Ruhland discussed where residents are getting their information regarding COVID-19, concerns accessing basic needs, and what residents need to feel safe in the community. He also spoke about how residents' mental health is being impacted by the Stay-At-Home order. 36 percent of all respondents somewhat agreed the order was negatively impacting their mental health.

Communications Manager Ruhland concluded with the following takeaways:

- Overall: Residents are following guidelines, wanting positivity, requesting one another to follow the rules, concerned with everyday necessities like cleaning supplies, and people are turning to the City (and other government sources) for accurate information about COVID-19.
- Regarding people of color are they expect needing to access assistance programs at a much higher rate than Caucasians, have concerns about lost hours and wages are relatively high in Richfield's Latinx community and paying rent/mortgage is a concern.
- Seniors have been mentally strong throughout crisis, health care and medication access rank as high concerns, not anticipating needing to access assistance programs, and most aggressive at adhering to social distancing.
- Parents are extremely worried about schools, access to child care services is a concern and more than half of parents are nervous the Stay-At-Home order is negatively affecting their mental health.
- Renters are concerned about food accessibility, paying rent is an every-present worry and work hours/job security rates as high concern.

Council Member Supple asked if there was an indication if people wanting to access medical care need it for preventative care or COVID-19 related concerns. Communications Manager Ruhland believed the need was directed toward COVID-19 related issues but the questions were not vetted out to differentiate.

Council Member Whalen wondered if conversations between parents and schools have been arranged to develop more ways to support families and parents during this time. Communications Manager Ruhland explained how many organizations are jumping in and help when possible. Many people have the same belief that the smoothest way to get through this is together.

Council Member Trautmann thanked Communications Manager Ruhland for his work and depth of insight. Communications Manager Ruhland stated he is always available for questions.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez gave praise to Communications Manager Ruhland and how fortunate the City is to have his expertise.

Communications Manager Ruhland also thanked Kate Aitchison, Housing Specialist/Communications Specialist. She also put in many hours of work on this project and has been a great asset to the City.

<b>ITEM #2</b>	<b>COUNCIL – STAFF PLANNING RETREAT UPDATE</b>
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Mayor Regan Gonzalez introduced Lisa Sorensen with Sorensen Consulting.

Lisa Sorensen shared what she is hoping to get from the session. She is hopeful Council and staff will be able to share information, strengths, challenges, roadblocks, frustrations, and wins. The session should also allow Directors to get feedback from Council and each other. This session will then set up for the second session in determining goals and priorities desired in the next 12 months. This leadership team is in uncharted territory but hopeful to come out of this better and stronger. This session will help set priorities and timelines as well as some assistance in adjusting the budget for the months to come. It will also create an environment to discuss the 'new normal' that has come to be. Notes will be compiled during this meeting and then dispersed before the second session.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez thanked Lisa Sorensen for her time and appreciates her format in what everyone is facing not only at work but in personal lives as well. She spoke of how this is a time to either grow together or possibly break and is excited in the direction they are headed of only growing stronger as a whole.

Council Member Supple appreciates that there will be time to think and reflect and is happy that there will be two sessions.

Council Member Whalen agreed that giving everyone time to process information and feedback in order to actively participate in both sessions. He spoke of how there aren't too many opportunities anymore to discuss and brainstorm visions where there aren't decisions being made. He believes this is exactly the right move to break this into two sessions.

Lisa Sorensen did ask Council and staff what their energy level was currently in a questionnaire between 1 and 5. Almost everyone is at a 1 or 2 and at very low levels of energy which is to be expected. There has been a lot of change in Council, staff and leadership in the last year and this will give people a chance to come together again.

There was discussion of whether this meeting should be in person or held virtually. As much as people would like to have this type of meeting in person, it was determined to be held virtually. As it may reduce the sense of companionship, it will not put anyone or their loved ones at risk during this pandemic. Everyone would like to promote safety and comfort.

Mayor Regan Gonzalez thanked Lisa Sorensen for her time and is looking forward to both of the upcoming sessions.

## ADJOURNMENT

The meeting was adjourned by unanimous consent at 6:55 p.m.

Date Approved: May 26, 2020

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Maria Regan Gonzalez  
Mayor

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Kelly Wynn  
Senior Office Assistant

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Katie Rodriguez  
City Manager