1. **Call to order**

Mayor Spano called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

Councilmembers present: Mayor Jake Spano, Tim Brausen, Rachel Harris, Larry Kraft, Anne Mavity, Nadia Mohamed, and Margaret Rog.

Councilmembers absent: None.

Staff present: City Manager (Mr. Harmening), City Attorney (Mr. Mattick), CFO (Mr. Simon) Assistant Housing Supervisor (Ms. Olson), Transportation Engineer (Mr. Manibog), Senior Engineering Project Manager (Mr. Sullivan), Engineering Director (Ms. Heiser), Communications Manager (Ms. Smith), Senior Management Analyst (Ms. Solano), Public Works Services Manager (Mr. Okey).

Guests: Residents of St. Louis Park

1a. **Pledge of allegiance**
1b. **Roll call**

2. **Presentations**

2a. **Retirement recognition for Office Assistant Jean Zimmerman**

Mayor Spano read a resolution and presented Ms. Zimmerman with a plaque thanking her for her 21 years of dedicated service to the city. Ms. Zimmerman thanked the city manager and council for their support and recognition. Mr. Okey also thanked Ms. Zimmerman for her hard work on behalf of the city staff and wished her the best in her retirement.

Mayor Spano also thanked Bill Ryan for his service to the city as a member of the fire department since 1996.

2b. **Discover St. Louis Park (DSLP) update**

Ms. Bakken presented an annual update on the activities of Discover St. Louis Park, the city’s destination marketing organization. She stated that the lodging tax collection increased in 2019 by approximately $43,450 and tourism’s total economic impact was up 26%. She noted the annual average occupancy rate is 71%, which remains an attractive number for potential hotel growth and expansion in the city. Ms. Bakken reviewed trends related to visitor characteristics and demographics, as well as the marketing tactics utilized by DSLP staff to promote St. Louis Park and Golden Valley as attractive destinations for visitors.
Councilmember Harris asked how to sign up for the bimonthly e-newsletter. Ms. Bakken stated people can sign up to receive the newsletter on the DSLP website.

Councilmember Kraft stated the web traffic from Iowa residents grew dramatically and he would be interested to learn more about that particular increase and asked Ms. Bakken what was most effective thing DSLP was doing from a marketing perspective. Ms. Bakken stated digital marketing is very effective and is something that is used heavily by DSLP staff as a tool to target specific audiences. She noted Iowa residents are particularly interested in sporting and concert events occurring in the metro area and DSLP made a concerted effort to target marketing efforts to Iowa residents and saw the direct impact of those efforts correlate to traffic on their website.

Councilmember Mohamed liked the presentation but noted she did not see persons of color represented in the presentation or materials. She added she would like to see more photos of the diverse population and culture within St. Louis Park because when she is travelling, she likes to see that the places are inclusive and accepting. She likes to see herself in the city. She urged that the representation of diversity within the city be done in an organic and authentic way.

Councilmember Rog noted 52% of tourism is day trippers and asked what the top reasons were for people visiting St. Louis Park. Ms. Bakken stated a lot of people visit the city during the day for restaurants, particularly at the West End, and to attend events in the community. Councilmember Rog echoed the previous comments related to inclusion and making sure the marketing materials are representative of the those living in the community and the state. She encouraged DSLP to look for ways to diversify the members of their board, so the organization is inclusive and representative of the community.

Mayor Spano stated when DSLP was originally formed there was a bit of skepticism related to the need for such an organization in the community. He noted over time the business and hotel owners have become the biggest champions of DSLP and that is a testament to the work being done to promote tourism in the community.

2c. Recognition of donations

Mayor Spano recognized Joe Marks for donating $50 to the Westwood Hills Nature Center for the “Be the Light” winter solstice walk; Joseph and Kristine Cook for donating $300 for a memorial tree to be planted in Wolfe Park honoring Bev and Jerry Slavin; a $2,500 donation from the MN Society of Arboriculture for Jim Vaughan to attend the 2020 International Society of Arboriculture Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico; and, Park Coin for their donation for fire prevention programs and equipment.

3. Approval of minutes

3a. City council meeting minutes of Jan. 6, 2020
Councilmember Kraft noted a correction to item 1a that should read “...He stated we are in a climate crisis and wants us as a council, staff, and community to ask ourselves if we are acting as if it’s a crisis and what would it look like to act this way...”

He also noted several corrections to item 8a.

“...Councilmember Kraft recited part of the ordinance, and then noted that on December 31, 2019, the CDC website was updated to clearly indicate that Vitamin E acetate is associated with the problems being experienced, with black market THC being sold. He added cases have been declining since a peak in September and it no longer appears there is a major health crisis around vaping lung injuries.

“...Dr. Michael Siegel, a Professor in Dept of Community Health at Boston University - who has 32 years of experience in tobacco control and previously testified in a landmark lawsuit against the tobacco companies...

“...He stated that instead of legal and well-regulated, it appears the FDA has been slow in doing their job and we have a legal and unregulated or poorly regulated situation, which could be an argument for instituting a ban until the FDA has either approved or not approved these devices (this is precisely what the American Medical Association has asked for)...”

“...He stated he will vote against the ordinance for four reasons

- it’s an open-ended ban and not dependent on the FDA properly regulating the industry
- ...
- ordinance states the main reason we’re doing this is "in light of the immediate health threat posed by EVALI" - but the latest data indicates that this is no longer the case
- Has had discussions with folks at the schools, and he does not think this will curb vaping at the schools, especially as we already have a 21 and over ordinance in place...”

*It was moved by Councilmember Rog, seconded by Councilmember Mavity, to approve the Jan. 6, 2020 meeting minutes as amended.*

*The motion passed 7-0.*

3b. **Study session minutes of Jan. 13, 2020**

Councilmember Harris noted a correction to a word on page 3, which should be “strengthen.”

Councilmember Rog noted on page 2, it should read, “...discuss removing mint and menthol from the policy...” Councilmember Rog noted a spelling correction, which
should be Latricia Vetaw. Councilmember Rog also noted on page 6, it should read, “...would like to add a state match for local housing trust funds...”

Councilmember Kraft noted on page 2 it should read, “Councilmember Kraft spoke about a study session topic raised by Councilmember Rog and himself on conversion therapy in St. Louis Park”, on page 6, it should read, “...creating net zero energy including with the use of solar panels...”, and on page 8, it should read, “Councilmember Kraft stated he likes the idea of 500 more jobs coming to the city and asked if solar panels could be added to the project, perhaps as a solar car port, and art work in the area facing the light rail”.

It was moved by Councilmember Brausen seconded by Councilmember Harris, to approve the Jan. 13, 2020 meeting minutes as amended.

The motion passed 7-0.

3c. City council meeting minutes of Jan. 21, 2020

Councilmember Kraft noted in the League of MN Cities discussion it should read, “…Wiersum added climate change was a specific topic at the recent league board retreat in the fall and was put on their to do list.”

Councilmember Kraft also noted in the Local Options Sales Tax discussion it should read, “…however, this is a complex issue. He wants to more thoroughly understand any negative impacts to business sales by implementing a sales tax. Sales taxes are more regressive. He stated he is interested in the overall tax burden to city residents and will oppose moving forward on this at this time.”

Councilmember Rog noted on page 10, it should read “…she added since municipalities across the state will be experiencing a shortage of funds, a better strategy would be to lobby the legislature for dedicated funds” rather than “implement a local sales tax which removes the state from what it is obligated to provide.”

It was moved by Councilmember Rog, seconded by Councilmember Brausen, to approve the Jan. 21, 2020 meeting minutes as amended

The motion passed 7-0.

3d. Special study session meeting minutes of Feb. 3, 2020

It was moved by Councilmember Rog, seconded by Councilmember Brausen, to approve the Feb. 3, 2020 meeting minutes as presented.

The motion passed 7-0.

4. Approval of agenda and items on consent calendar
4a. Adopt Resolution No. 20-023 to recognize Firefighter Bill Ryan and Resolution No. 20-024 to recognize Office Assistant Jean Zimmerman for their years of service.

4b. Approve an extension until February 18, 2021 for SLP Park Ventures to record the final plat for Platia Place.

4c. Adopt Resolution No. 20-025 approving acceptance of a $50 donation from Jill Marks for the Westwood Hills Nature Center Be the Light Winter Solstice Walk, $300 donation from Joseph and Kristine Cook for the purchase of a memorial tree to be planted in Wolfe Park honoring Bev and Jerry Slavin and $2,500 donation from Minnesota Society of Arboriculture for Jim Vaughan to attend the 2020 International Society of Arboriculture Conference in Albuquerque, New Mexico.

4d. Approve replacement of 2003 Sterling L8500 Dump Truck.

4e. Approve the settlement agreement between the city and MSP Apartment, LLC for parcel 14, located in the northwest quadrant of Highway 7 and Louisiana Avenue and directs city manager and city attorney to execute terms of agreement.

4f. Approve the Affordable Housing Trust Fund (AHTF) Use Guide to direct the operation and use of the AHTF.

4g. Adopt Resolution No. 20-026 accepting donation to the fire department from Park Coin for fire prevention programs and equipment.

4h. Adopt Resolution No. 20-027 approving labor agreement between the city and the dispatcher employee bargaining group, establishing terms and conditions of employment for two years, from 1/1/2020 – 12/31/2021.

4i. Adopt Resolution No. 20-028 accepting work and authorizing final payment in the amount of $13,370.74 for the annual sanitary sewer mainline rehabilitation project with Insituform Technologies - city contract No. 08-19.

4j. Approve for filing planning commission minutes of Nov. 20, 2019.

4k. Approve for filing planning commission minutes of Dec. 4, 2019.

4l. Approve for filing planning commission minutes of Dec. 18, 2019.

4m. Approve for filing planning commission minutes of Jan. 8, 2020.

It was moved by Councilmember Mavity, seconded by Councilmember Brausen, to approve the agenda as presented and items listed on the consent calendar; and to waive reading of all resolutions and ordinances.

The motion passed 7-0.
5. **Boards and commissions - none**

6. **Public hearings**

   6a. **Public hearing to consider allocation of 2020 Community Development Block Grant (CDGB) funds Resolution No. 20-029**

   Ms. Olson presented the staff report. She stated the proposed 2020 allocation from Hennepin County is estimated to be $147,050. She noted the proposed use of the CDBG funds reflect the city’s priorities to preserve existing housing and increase affordable home ownership opportunities in St. Louis Park. The proposed allocation for 2020 includes two programs, $117,050 for the low-income deferred loan program and $30,000 for the “Homes within Reach” program.

   Councilmember Rog questioned what STEP’s application was for that council supported. Ms. Olson stated that was part of the Hennepin County consolidated RFP that would be used to support emergency assistance.

   Ms. Harris asked why the proposed allocation for 2020 was about $10,000 less than the 2019 allocation. Ms. Olson stated the allocation is based on a formula used by Hennepin County which also factors in things such as population, need, federal funding and poverty rates.

   Councilmember Mohamed questioned how someone could apply for the deferred loan program. Ms. Olson stated homeowners can contact Hennepin County to apply and the information is also on the city’s website.

   Mayor Spano opened the public hearing. No speakers were present. Mayor Spano closed the public hearing.

   Councilmember Mavity stated the CDBG programs are exactly the types of things the city needs to continue to support community development and housing infrastructure. She noted the amount of funding received isn’t enough to address the need and she is glad the city will be supplementing the work being done with community development.

   Councilmember Mohamed stated this is a generous program and urged folks to apply for these loans to help improve their homes.

   *It was moved by Councilmember Mavity, seconded by Councilmember Brausen, to adopt Resolution No. 20-029 approving proposed use of 2020 Urban Hennepin County Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) funds and authorize execution of sub-recipient agreement with Hennepin County and third-party agreements.*

   *The motion passed 7-0.*

6b. **Oak Park Village Apartments – private activity revenue bonds Resolution No. 20-030**
Mr. Simon presented the staff report. He stated the request is for private activity revenue bonds to acquire and rehabilitate the property known as Oak Park Village apartments. He noted the project budget for rehabilitation work is approximately $41,000 per unit. Upon closing, the owner intends to renew the existing section 8 contract for an additional 20 years. He added the bonds will not impact the city’s debt capacity or obligate the city to pay for the bonds in any way.

Councilmember Kraft questioned if Vitus is the current owner of the property.

Brian Maloney, Vitus, stated they are the current owner of the property.

Mayor Spano opened the public hearing.

Hussein Abdi asked what the benefits of the funding would be to the residents. The project owner, Brian Maloney with Vitus, stated the benefits will be new playground equipment, new appliances in all the units, and overall updates to the building, including new siding, to make it a better and safer place to live.

Fatuma Irshat, 7229 Oak Park Village, asked what will be included in this project. She stated as tenants, they want to provide input on the project. Mr. Simon read the scope of work provided by Vitus stating the rehabilitation will include replacement of windows, siding, cabinets, high efficiency appliance and lighting, painting the floors, playground, raised beds for gardens, and curb cuts for parking.

Ms. Irshat asked if the tenants will be included in the conversation, and what is the process for being involved in that.

Councilmember Harris stated in a tenant meeting last fall with Vitus, there was discussion about specific improvements and a request for weekly communications with the residents during the construction process so there could be clarity around timelines and schedules related to specific units.

Mr. Maloney stated the timeline is still dependent on the finalization of funding. He noted the project is anticipated to start in the spring. He explained once an exact start date is known that will be immediately communicated to the tenants and prior to any work beginning on a specific unit, 30-day notice will be given that will detail the work that will be done.

Councilmember Mohamed asked who residents can talk to about the project and where they can find information about the project. Mr. Maloney stated the property management company has a general scope of work that can be shared with tenants now upon request and once a detailed scope of work is finalized for each unit, it will be shared with the tenants.

Councilmember Mohamed asked about the property owner’s commitment to renewing the section 8 contract and questions if the housing will remain affordable. Mr. Maloney
stated as a part of the financing package for the project they are committing to a new 20-year section 8 contract and a 30-year affordability requirement through MN Housing.

Councilmember Mohamed asked if there would be any changes to the existing parking. Mr. Maloney stated there will be no parking changes and there will be over 100 parking spots, which equates to slightly more than one spot per unit.

Councilmember Rog asked what the process is for residents to provide feedback on the improvements they feel are important. Mr. Maloney stated there was a meeting in October with the tenants to discuss a preliminary scope of work and get a sense for what the residents would like to see at the property. He noted at that meeting the developer also discussed which improvements would be feasible and prioritized within the scope of the project and the funding available. Councilmember Rog asked for more interaction with residents as decisions are made around priority funding.

Saharla Salah, 7265 Oak Park Village, stated at the October meeting, the owners stated there will be another meeting in February and so far, it has not happened. Mr. Maloney stated that meeting will be held prior to the start of construction, once the financing is finalized. He noted the meeting date will be communicated to residents once scheduled.

Mr. Abdi asked if there will be any rent increases after the project is completed. Mr. Maloney stated tenants will continue to pay one-third of their income in rent, as is required under the terms of section 8.

Mayor Spano closed the public hearing.

Councilmember Harris stated she has heard the request for a community center from tenants and has not forgotten about it. She is currently looking for funding and the owners have also heard this request. However, the owners have stated they are focused first on bringing the complex up to a better standard of living, including energy efficient improvements. She added if funding becomes available in the future, she will be in touch with residents.

Councilmember Mavity thanked the residents for coming forward today. She stated there have been several projects in St. Louis Park with poor communication, so it is important that Vitus continues clear and ongoing communication with residents. She added the most important part of this project is that the Section 8 federal subsidies would otherwise expire and leave the building, unless this owner refinanced the property and made a new commitment to meet section 8 and affordability requirements. So, 100 affordable units are being preserved in this community as a result of this project.

Councilmember Kraft reiterated communication with residents is very important. He added Vitus seems to want to communicate as the project is finalized but asked that they rethink their strategy and communicate with residents on an ongoing basis. He stated preserving the affordability for 30 years is wonderful, but he also wants to
highlight the owners’ commitment to investing in energy efficiency improvements that will lower the monthly utility bills. He noted that combination story can be incredibly powerful and he is very interested if this facility will fall under the city’s new benchmarking ordinance that will require public reporting of energy usage, and even if it doesn’t he would ask that the owners consider creating a partnership with the city to compare what the energy usage was prior to the improvements and what it is after the improvements are completed. He asked if the property owners have also considered the installation of solar panels as another way of lowering long-term energy costs.

Councilmember Mohamed stated overall, she wants to highlight the effort to improve the quality of life for residents of the property while being able to maintain the section 8 housing, and she is proud that this project will do that. She added communication is important with residents on an ongoing basis, adding that sometimes there is a language barrier and she hopes the property owner and management will considered that as well.

Councilmember Brausen stated he lived in the Oak Park Village in the 1990’s and is very interested in the project. He stated he is happy to support the project and agreed that communication with the tenants is paramount as well as involving them in the process.

Councilmember Rog asked if the staff report the council received can go to the tenants so they can see some the project details. She indicated she appreciates keeping this as affordable, section 8 housing that also offers 2- and 3-bedroom units, which are not found in other areas of the city. She noted for many people, this is their forever home, and they will live at the property for many years. She stated as this group of residents works to keep their community strong, she would urge the property owners to look for ways to provide a community room for residents in the future.

It was moved by Councilmember Harris, seconded by Councilmember Mavity, to adopt Resolution No. 20-030 authorizing the issuance, sale, and delivery of multifamily housing revenue obligations for the benefit of Oak Park Village Partners, LP and authorizing the execution and delivery of documents related thereto.

The motion passed 7-0.

6c. First Reading to rescind Ord. 535 and multiple resolutions supporting intersection traffic control

Mr. Manibog presented the staff report and reviewed the traffic committee’s recommendation.

Mayor Spano opened the public hearing. No speakers were present. Mayor Spano closed the public hearing.

It was moved by Councilmember Mavity, seconded by Councilmember Harris, to approve first reading of the ordinance and set second reading for March 2, 2020.

The motion passed 7-0.
6d. Southeast area bikeway project

Mr. Sullivan presented the staff report. He noted that council was provided with a supplementary packet of public comments that had been received by staff within the last couple days, after the staff report for the public hearing was provided to the council. Mr. Sullivan reviewed the history of Connect the Park and the purpose to develop a system of bikeways, sidewalks and trails that provide local and regional connectivity, improve safety and accessibility, and enhance overall community livability.

He stated during the 2007 Vision St. Louis Park process, the community provided input that better and more sidewalks, trails, and bike facilities was important. Council heard that feedback and from that, an active living sidewalk and trails plan was developed. In 2013 the city council approved a Connect the Park capital improvement plan that was focused on a 10-year strategy to identify where bike facilities may be located and what they might look like, recognizing the need for continued public engagement and design work. The Vision 3.0 process and the 2040 Comprehensive Plan reaffirmed the council and community support for a robust system of bikeways, sidewalks, and trails that promote connectivity and support climate action initiatives that recognize the need to prioritize other sources of mobility in the community besides vehicles.

Mr. Sullivan reviewed the objectives for this specific project, which is a part of the overall Connect the Park plan, and the desire of the council to meet their strategic priorities and follow the modal priorities outlined in the comprehensive plan. He noted in addition to the council priorities and policy directives, the selection and design considerations for the project also take into account best practices of the industry, state rules and guidelines, route characteristics, and community feedback. He added the public process related to this project began in December of 2017 to gather feedback and modify some of the alignments as the design has progressed. Mr. Sullivan stated one of the biggest challenges is identifying route characteristics and using that information to determine what the best bike facility will be for each of the five segments included in the project spanning 1.72 miles of bikeways. He noted characteristics such as volume and speed of traffic, width of roadway, parking, trees, sidewalks, driveways, and community connections all factor into the designs proposed for each segment.

Mr. Sullivan provided an overview of the proposed design for each of the five segments and reviewed some of the key features and considerations that factored into the proposed design. He clarified that no changes to crosswalks were proposed for the Wooddale Avenue segment from 42nd ½ Street to 44th Street and, because of the desire to not widen the road in this area, 63 on-street parking spaces would need to be removed. Through the community engagement process the neighborhood provided feedback that the loss of on-street parking was a concern. Staff looked at ways to preserve on-street parking and because of the tree-lined corridor and the existing width of the roadway, staff proposed the construction of five (5) parking bays along the corridor to provide 13 parking stalls. The construction of the parking bays would require the removal of ten trees along the corridor, ranging in size and species. He reviewed the proposed project timeline and noted the council would not take action on the item at the meeting tonight.
Councilmember Mavity asked for clarification on some of the specific project details. She referenced the petition the council received from the Save our Neighborhood group and asked how many trees were proposed to be removed along the Wooddale segment. Mr. Sullivan stated 10 trees were proposed to be removed and those trees were selected in conjunction with the city forester to limit the removal, as much as possible, to smaller, less mature trees.

Councilmember Mavity stated the neighbors along the Wooddale segment are also very concerned about the potential removal of four (4) crosswalks in the area and asked staff to clarify the plan related to crosswalks in the Wooddale segment. Mr. Sullivan stated there are no crosswalks being removed in the project area. He noted at 42 ½ Street, one of the things proposed is a transition from an on-street bike lane to a share the road facility at the three-legged intersection. The proposal is to add green cross-bike striping that would help to align bikers and alert drivers to where bicyclists would and should be.

Councilmember Mavity asked about the crosswalk area near Susan Lindgren that does not currently align with the street and whether or not any modifications were proposed to improve that area and make it safer for kids walking to school. Mr. Sullivan stated staff has proposed moving the last 30-50 feet of the trail to the South, so it better aligns with the stop sign and the crosswalk location.

Councilmember Mavity questioned if state law currently allows bikes on any road to take up as much of that roadway as they need to, similar to what vehicles are allowed to do. Mr. Manibog stated this is correct. A bike can take the lane on any roadway, except a highway. Councilmember Mavity questioned why the city is doing this project if the “share the road” concept is essentially state law. Mr. Manibog explained the purpose of these types of project is to heighten awareness of other modes of transportation on the road and to increase safety for all users – whether that is dedicating space for both vehicle lanes and bike lanes, or in the case of share the road designs, general awareness through signs and striping of those users.

Councilmember Mavity noted the petition references that the project will cost taxpayers $425,000 and she clarified that the cost referenced is for 1.7 miles of bikeways, not just the Wooddale segment. Mr. Sullivan stated this is correct.

Councilmember Mavity stated the 1.7-mile corridor includes many different recommendations for the design of the bike facilities in each segment. She asked staff to expand on how the different characteristics along the corridor impacted the design recommendations and how they determined what type of design would be best for biker safety along each segment. Mr. Sullivan stated as traffic volumes and speeds increase, there is a need for greater protection for a bicyclist from an automobile. On a segment such as Wooddale, with a higher volume of cars and relatively higher average speeds (~32 mph), that is when you need to transition into dedicated lanes (as proposed) or buffered bike lanes, for added protection and so all users understand the expectations for how to manage travel along the corridor.
Councilmember Mavity asked if a stop sign at Morningside Avenue would be a helpful addition to the corridor for safety. Mr. Sullivan stated staff recommends waiting until the spring to further study and collect data related to how pedestrians and vehicles navigate the intersection. He noted the preliminary analysis indicates that the intersection doesn’t meet the current criteria for an all-way stop, but a final determination has not been made pending further analysis.

Councilmember Kraft asked as part of this project, if there are any planned changes to current road classifications. Mr. Sullivan stated there are no changes proposed to current classifications with this project.

Councilmember Brausen asked if the designation as a major collector is based on current traffic volumes. Mr. Sullivan stated yes, noting this is a highly desirable north-south route through the community and there are no other parallel routes to it, so higher traffic volumes are experienced. Councilmember Brausen clarified that whether or not a bikeway exists along Wooddale the road designation would not change because it is based on existing traffic volumes. Mr. Sullivan stated that is correct.

Councilmember Harris asked about continuity of markings and asked staff to explain the reasoning behind the various types of markings that are proposed, particularly for the Wooddale segment. Mr. Sullivan stated on the northern portion of the segment, near Susan Lindgren, the proposed markings will include on-street bike facility markings with chevrons and off-street signage notifying users that they should expect to see bikers in the area. Moving South onto Wooddale, there will be a transition to on-street, 6-8” wide longitudinal white stripes designating bike lanes. Councilmember Harris asked why different markings are proposed within the segment. Mr. Manibog stated different road characteristics within the segment result in the different markings. He noted some of those characteristics includes traffic volumes and speeds.

Councilmember Rog asked staff how drivers will be educated on these advisory bike lanes. Mr. Sullivan stated staff will look at how other communities have educated the public and learn from them. He noted staff plans to install signage for both bikers and motorists, and to have a very public presence in the community through multiple outlets including cable television, electronic signage, YouTube videos, social media, website, and print materials to help the public learn how to navigate the new bike facilities.

Councilmember Mohamed questioned what would happen if the project was not approved. Mr. Sullivan stated staff would follow the directives set forth by the council on next steps.

Mayor Spano opened the public hearing.

Mayor Spano stated the council was provided with written comments from the public who were not able to be at the meeting and those will be added into the public record.
Ryan Bell, 4328 W. 43rd ½ St., stated the current proposal for the Wooddale segment does not serve the city’s goals of improving safety for bikers. He noted he has always found Wooddale to be one of the safer places to bike. However, he does feel that improvements should be made to add this street and the southeast corner of the city to the Connect the Park system. Removing road striping for cars and replacing it with street signage and on-street markings for bikers would be a good first step. Increasing, improving, and modernizing crosswalks would also be a good measure to implement. A share-the-road plan increases the awareness of drivers to the presence of bikers and will help reduce traffic speeds. He added the city’s proposal for this segment does not prioritize biking and will not be safe for bikers. He encouraged council to support share-the-road options for the Browndale neighborhood.

Ryan Alberstein, 4820 Park Commons Drive, stated the area at Quentin and Park Commons Drive has become a more dangerous intersection due to Fresh Thyme, the lack of a stop sign from Quentin to Park Commons Drive, and the driveway to the Fresh Thyme parking lot that is less than fifty feet from the intersection. He stated there is a lot of confusion between pedestrians, bikers, and vehicles in the area. He noted there is angled parking at Fresh Thyme and asked what will be done to ensure bike safety in that corridor. He also questioned where the land was coming from to implement the bike and pedestrian path on the north side of Park Commons Drive.

Lynn Wagner, 4506 Wooddale Ave., commented that the proposal for the Wooddale segment does not make financial sense and will widen a historic and quiet section of a residential street, thereby increasing traffic speeds. She stated the residents’ quality of life will be diminished due to the loss of mature trees and on-street parking. She added the proposed plan does not promote biker safety. She felt a safer and less expensive alternative would be a share-the-road plan to encourage biking in the neighborhood. She asked the council to listen to the residents and vote against the proposed plan for the Wooddale segment.

Mary Ponthan, 4354 Wooddale Ave., stated she has lived in her home since 1984 and the average age of residents in the Wooddale area is 64 years old. She stated her husband has recently been diagnosed with a condition that will require home care. She expressed concerns about the loss of on-street parking and the impact it will have on her ability to host family events. She stated when she asked where visitors would park if the proposed plan was approved, she was told guests can take an Uber or she can move. She added all of this inconvenience for the residents along Wooddale is to accommodate 5 bikers per day. She noted nobody wants to eliminate biking on Wooddale but would like the council to look at the plan more thoroughly and consider alternatives, such as a pilot program.

Debra Fisher Goldstein, 4340 Wooddale Ave., stated she wants St. Louis Park to be a leader in bike and pedestrian safety and suggested making the Wooddale segment a pilot program to find a solution that will work and be safe. She asked for collaborative dialogue with bikers to find alternatives. She stated the “interested but concerned” cyclists do not feel comfortable with bike lanes, may bike on sidewalks even if bike lanes are provided, and may not bike if bike facilities do not meet their needs for perceived
comfort. She added that the interested but concerned biker does not require the most direct route. They prefer the safest and most comfortable route. She stated the target audience would not bike on Wooddale under the proposed plan. She added an unprotected, striped bike lane provides a false sense of security and is not a safe option on Wooddale due to traffic speeds. She reiterated the proposed plan for the Wooddale segment is not the safest option and the traffic volume on Wooddale warrants a share-the-road bike facility.

Harvey Goldstein, 4340 Wooddale Ave., stated he is a confident recreational cyclist, who bikes approximately 2,000 miles each year. He stated biking on Wooddale Avenue is unpredictable due to people’s driving habits and painting a white line on the road to confine a biker will not prevent odd things from happening, especially with the service and delivery vehicles that travel along Wooddale and will block the bike lane. He is thankful for the existing wide sidewalks and thinks Wooddale Avenue would be best served by a clearly marked, share-the-road facility similar to what was done on 44th Street. He questioned why this bike lane had to be located along these particular 2.5 blocks along Wooddale. He invited Mayor Spano and Councilmember Brausen to walk on the street and stand where the bike lane is proposed to be located. He reiterated his fears for biker safety on Wooddale Avenue.

Carolyn Rusch, 4328 W. 43 ½ St., stated the bike plan proposed for the Wooddale segment was not brought to resident’s attention until May of 2019, and by that time the plan for parking bays had already been implemented. She believes the city is not open to alternative ideas for this segment of the project. She added the residents in the area are generally older and the proposed plan along Wooddale will make bikers uncomfortable because of the designated bike lane and traffic speeds. She stated the residents in the area rely on cars for their transportation needs and parking is vital. She asked the council to not approve the project as proposed with the parking bays and instead consider a pilot program on Wooddale and Browndale Avenues using share-the-road facilities.

Ed Idzorek, 4335 Wooddale Ave., is a lifelong bicyclist and has lived on Wooddale Avenue for 33 years. He noted he is also a licensed professional engineer who has worked in the areas of traffic and transportation. He stated he agrees with the transportation goals and priorities outlined in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. He noted he also agrees with providing a safe bike network that will attract “interested but concerned” bicyclists. He stated the proposal for striped bike lanes on Wooddale Avenue will not attract the “interested but concerned” bicyclist. The residents of the Browndale neighborhood would like to propose a pilot program for the Wooddale segment of the project that recognizes the dispersed origins and destinations of bicyclists in the neighborhood. The Browndale, Wooddale, Grimes, Joppa corridors could all be designated as share-the-road facilities and would provide a more attractive facility for the highly confident and confident bicyclist. He stated the “interested but concerned” bicyclist is already served by the 6-foot wide parallel sidewalks that exist along Wooddale Avenue. He proposed the existing sidewalks become designated as shared-use trails. He noted the mailings for the second and third open houses related to the project included the Browndale and Joppa corridors as future bikeways. He asked
the council to not approve the plan for the Wooddale segment as proposed because it fails to attract the targeted bicyclists, it is very expensive, and has unacceptable environmental and livability impacts.

Eric Curran-Bakken, 4333 Wooddale Ave., stated he has lived in the area for 30 years. He is an avid biker and used Wooddale Avenue to bike to his job when he worked in the city. He stated the only crash he ever had was on Wooddale Avenue as it is not a safe road for bicyclists. He noted his main concern related to the Wooddale segment is that the proposal will effectively widen the road and increase traffic speeds as a result. He asked for council to consider a pilot project for a share-the-road bike facility on Wooddale and to also include Browndale and Joppa in the pilot. He feels the Wooddale segment of the project is very expensive and will be even more costly if there is a mistake.

Monika Weeks, 4238 Wooddale Ave., stated she is primarily concerned about safety. She explained the traffic speeds on Wooddale Avenue have increased over the years, and by removing trees and parking, it will change the character of the neighborhood. She feels passionate about this project and the residents feel they are not being heard. She asked the council to consider alternatives.

Sue Spraguer, 4250 Wooddale Ave. S., stated she would like the council to amend the proposed plan for the Wooddale segment. She expressed admiration for cyclists who ride throughout the year, noting those types of riders are the minority. She believes most bicyclists fall into the “interested but concerned” category and ride primarily where they feel safe - on sidewalks or trails. They take in the landscape, greet neighbors, and stop to shop or eat along the way. She asked who the city is targeting with the proposed plan and questioned if it makes sense to remove trees and street parking for a two-block stretch that will serve the minority of bikers who would utilize the bikeway. She feels the plan for the Wooddale segment does not make sense and asked the council to consider alternatives.

Reed Heffelfinger, 4375 Glen Place, stated she has lived in her home for 32 years. She stated simplicity is the best option and the current system doesn’t seem to be broken, so it is unclear what the city is trying to fix. She asked the council to vote against the Wooddale segment of the project.

Marianne Herrmann, 4386 Wooddale Ave., thanked Councilmembers Mohamed, Harris and Kraft for walking along Wooddale Avenue with residents, listening to their concerns, and experiencing the situation firsthand. She invited Mayor Spano and Councilmember Brausen to do the same. She stated one matter of grave concern with the proposed plan relates to the safety of bikers, pedestrians and children. She explained her daughter was hit by a car at the corner of 44th and Wooddale Avenue, thankfully not seriously injured; however, she was traumatized for years after the accident and was terrified to cross the street. After this accident, crosswalks were added at the intersection by St. Louis Park and Edina after her daughter and husband advocated to both city councils for safety measures at the intersection. She noted in opposition of the proposed plan, the residents of Wooddale have become worked to learn more about pedestrian and bicycle
safety, spending much of their time researching the subject, consulting traffic and transportation experts, and developing alternative proposals. The residents do not feel the proposed plan is based on the most authoritative research such as NTSB, and think it fails to consider the high density of driveways along Wooddale Avenue (38) which create conflict points that intersect with the designated bike lane. She stated these circumstances alone should disqualify the proposed plan because of the hazards created for all cyclists. She asked the council to prioritize safety and vote no on the proposed plan for the Wooddale segment or, at the very least, establish a 2-year pilot program to study the effects of a share-the-road design and adjust the plan to be in line with the latest safety research.

JC Beckstrand, 4386 Wooddale Ave., stated he has lived in his home for 32 years and also serves on the city’s charter commission. He explained sometimes, despite our efforts, sometimes people get things wrong. The residents of the neighborhood attended this meeting to stop the proposed plan for the Wooddale Avenue segment because it is simply wrong and misses the mark. He stated the current plan does not fit the intended purposes, does not fit the target cyclist, is overly costly, does not follow the best safety practices, does not conform to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan, will reduce property values and will result in bodily injury if implemented as proposed. He noted when his daughter was struck by a car on Wooddale Avenue he and his family had to fight for safety on that street and he continues to do so now. He added this is a car-first plan, masquerading as a bike plan because the proposal does not attempt to reduce the posted speeds, or the traffic volumes and bike and pedestrian safety will be compromised as a result. He stated Wooddale is a local, residential street with 38 driveways and four intersections along 2 ½ blocks and the residents do not want this project because of the associated safety concerns. He added the residents would prefer a pilot project that would turn Wooddale, Browndale, Grimes and Joppa into share-the-road facilities. He asked the council to not approve the plan as proposed.

Paul Baudhuin, 2750 Idaho Ave., stated he is an avid cyclist who heavily uses bike lanes and infrastructure and is a fierce advocate for it wherever he can find it. He explained he is concerned about the Wooddale Avenue segment and the loss of 10 trees along the corridor. He stated Wooddale Avenue feels safer now than it would with the proposed bike lane, adding the former bike lane on Wooddale Avenue in Edina, was a deathtrap. He asked the council to try a share-the-road program. He thanked the council for working on this project, providing access to 44th and France for families, and encouraged the council to work further with Edina to find a safe solution for this proposal.

Bryan Schmidt, 4301 Branson St., Edina, stated he spends quite a bit of time driving or biking down Wooddale Avenue. He explained he is not a fan of the proposed plan or a share-the-road option. He is concerned about vehicles injuring pedestrians and cyclists and does not think shared roads are the solution either when vehicles don’t even follow the posted speed limits along Wooddale. He added the bike lanes should have bollards or a curb for biker’s protection. He would be more in favor of making the street safer through design to slow down traffic such as narrowing the street along with no parking.
John Curren, 4370 Wooddale Ave., stated he has lived here for over 34 years. He stated responses to his concerns regarding the proposed plan from the city are that they can’t make everyone happy. He questioned who would be made happy by the proposed plan. He noted the majority of the neighbors along Wooddale are vehemently opposed to this project, taxpayers won’t be happy with the cost, and pedestrians won’t be safe with the reduction of existing traffic-calming features and no barrier between the street and the sidewalk. He stated the cyclists should be the happiest, but they will also seek out the best routes for themselves and he does not think Wooddale will be the best route. He added that Browndale, Grimes, and Joppa are all good alternative routes and will be the ones that bikers will choose because of the significantly lower volumes of traffic. He stated he understands that not every plan can appease everyone, but he still doesn’t understand who will be happy with this proposal because it harms the council’s constituents. He encouraged the council to consider a less intrusive option.

Brenda Rosenhamer, 4262 Wooddale Ave., stated she has lived there for 20 years. She stated she believes the future of biking is safety through design of the roads so that all users of the corridor will be comfortable and safe. She added she feels the city should be following the recommendations of the NTSB, published in November 2019 study that was commissioned as a result of an uptick in biking fatalities. She is concerned that the studies used by the city to develop the proposed plan are not based on bike-specific safety and are not progressive. She stated the residents asked for traffic calming features, lower road volumes, and reduced speed as recommended by NTSB and FHWA, and the proposed plan should have been disqualified because it does not recognize those standards that are specific to bike safety.

Jon Erickson, 4370 Glen Place, stated he opposes the proposed plan for the Wooddale Avenue segment. He stated there is a better plan available that would utilize an existing bikeway to connect to 44th Avenue and would meet all of the goals outlined in the Connect the Park plan related to safety and the prioritization of bikes and pedestrians. He recommended the council not approve the proposed plan and look at an alternative.

Jane Haakenstad, 4380 Wooddale Ave., stated she is a recreational cyclist and finds the inconsistency in bike lane markings between segments confusing. She also noted the costs of the project are too high. She explained livability requires access to residential properties. She stated many of the driveways along Wooddale are not very long and are not accessible by some vehicles including delivery and construction vehicles, which all need access to the homes they are serving. She noted that busy streets like France and Xerxes Avenues still provide parking on at least one side of the street. The current plan with parking bays does not serve the residents well and will negatively impact the elderly and safety of children. She stated this plan ignores livability and better options exist.

Mike Daly, 2749 Brunswick Ave., stated cyclists, according to the State of Minnesota, must follow the same rules of the road as vehicles.

Helen Hughes, 4272 Wooddale Ave., has lived here more than 34 years, which she chose because of schools, location, and city government. She added she has sold homes in this
Stephanie Schwartz, 4378 Dart Ave., stated she is the block captain on the street. She stated she is concerned that the proposed plan will make Wooddale Avenue less safe because the bike only lane and parking bays will give the perception of a wider street that will result in drivers going faster. She stated she routinely sees drivers on Wooddale not following posted speed limits and ignoring stop signs and pedestrians in crosswalks. She noted she is also concerned about the cost of the proposed plan for the Wooddale segment and the removal of trees along the corridor. She added this proposal impacts everyone in the Browndale neighborhood, and if people cannot park on Wooddale Avenue, they will park on Dart Avenue. She asked the council to listen to their voices and consider the impact of the proposed plan on all residents in the area.

Daniel Bell, 4328 W. 43 ½ St., stated the proposed plan on Wooddale Avenue increases the amount of pavement which will increase stormwater run-off, and further exacerbate existing problems with flooding. He added the city should be planning for the future and increased precipitation as a result of climate change and do everything possible to reduce stormwater run-off. He encouraged the city council to reject the proposal and implement a share-the-road pilot program for bikeways on Wooddale and Browndale.

Jim Jerney, 4269 Wooddale Ave., stated he commutes downtown and uses the Bryant Avenue bike boulevard, a share-the-road facility. The worst portion of the commute is a stretch in which he has to use a designate lane that is between parked cars and moving traffic. He stated before voting for the plan, councilmembers should bicycle along that stretch in Minneapolis so they can experience how unsafe it is.

Matt Wandzel, 2832 Georgia Ave., stated he is a frequent cyclist and supports the Connect the Park initiatives in the city to provide more access and safe options for cyclists and commuters in general. He noted many people will soon be going through the corridor to access the light rail station and other commuter facilities and he supports the proposed plan.

Ron Hobson, 4156 Alabama Ave., stated overall, he is a proponent of the Connect the Park plan and the idea of creating north-south and east-west connections the community. He explained he would like to see intuitive routes so that he knows where he is going. He stated the other benefit of the north-south route is that it has a destination, the Rec Center. He added he is a fan of the proposed designated bike lane on Wooddale Avenue, especially because of the boundary/guide it provides for kids.

Brandon Eddy, 3274 Blackstone Ave., stated he moved to St. Louis Park because of the Connect the Park program. He bikes 3,000-4,000 miles per year and while he recognizes that the Connect the Park plan is not perfect, it is a step in the right direction and a major reason why younger people choose to live in the community. He added he has three children and is excited by the access and connections the new routes in the area as well and is opposed to this plan because of the tree removal and parking bays installed along Wooddale. She does agree with the goal to increase commuter biking and use of public transportation. She stated the loss of property value due to diminished curb appeal will be extreme. She asked the council to not approve the proposed plan.
proposed plan will provide to desirable destinations. He gave kudos to staff for their work on the Connect the Park system and asked people to realize that the bikeways are needed to provide connections in the community, and this is a step in the right direction.

Marc Berg, 2913 Webster Ave. S., stated he is in favor of the plan. He noted he has biked for 40 years and typically avoids this area when biking because of the higher speeds and traffic volumes on the road. He is in favor of the striped bike lane on this segment of Wooddale Avenue, as both cars and bikers will have a designated space, and this is a safer alternative with a traffic calming effect.

Al Wallin, 4258 Wooddale Ave., stated he has lived in his home for 56 years. Yesterday he counted 29 cars going by his house in the span of 8 minutes. He stated the traffic volume is too high on Wooddale for a bike lane and it isn’t safe for cyclists.

Jim Kramer, 4346 Wooddale Ave., echoed all the comments previously made by his neighbors. He stated the people who live on Wooddale Avenue know the characteristics of the area better than anyone else and the impacts that will be felt if the proposed plan is approved. He added that barriers are needed, but staff said it was not feasible or cost effective due to the existing width of the street. He stated designated lanes will not be safe on Wooddale and if there is a serious accident, the neighbors will say, ‘we told you so and you turned a blind eye.’ He asked the council to find a different route, like Joppa, that goes straight up to the Rec Center. He stated he is opposed to the plan for Wooddale Avenue and asked the council to reject it.

Tara Sorrud stated her parents live at 4255 Wooddale Ave., she visits frequently, and if she does not have a safe place to park, that will be a barrier to her visiting. She encouraged the council to find an alternative plan.

Marilyn Tursich, 4017 Wooddale Ave. S., stated it is true that the parking along Wooddale does naturally slow traffic through the area. She noted the project is creating a parking plan that will limit residents at times when they need parking for their families. She added this is not just about St. Louis Park, it also impacts surrounding cities, noting that a share-the-road plan has worked in Edina. She stated this evening, she heard the council tell residents of the Oak Park Village project that they are heard, and the city will communicate with them. She stated she would like the same treatment for residents on Wooddale concerning this project.

Eric Klingbeil, 2601 Hampshire Ave. S., stated he is a civil engineer. He likes Connect the Park program and is the primary reason why he has stayed in St. Louis Park. He stated this project will bring the city closer to a complete bike network build-out. He encouraged the council not to get distracted by those who oppose one segment of a larger system that is a part of a vision for the entire city. He stated this project is a 1.7 miles segment within a 30-mile bikeway the city is trying to provide for all residents. He stated bike lanes don’t endanger bikers, they make roads safer. He felt that on Wooddale Avenue, bike lanes are safer and asked the council to approve the project as
recommended and move closer to a complete biking system and help prioritize biking over driving.

Michael Dungan, 4216 Wooddale Ave. S., stated he appreciated all the opinions and people giving their perspectives. He wants to see safe streets and noted this is a concern on Wooddale Avenue. He is concerned about folks being discriminated against because of their age which is not appropriate, noting the main concern should be the safety of everyone along the corridor.

Julie Idzorek, 4335 Wooddale Ave., stated she is most concerned about losing the canopy of trees on the street and about losing parking along the street because she often has groups of visitors to her home.

Bruce Trapp, 4350 Wooddale Ave., stated he has lived here for over 40 years. He stated at the neighborhood meeting, the bikers did not want to detour and wanted a more direct route. He asked why the residents of Wooddale Avenue have to ‘take a bullet’ for the rest of the community, noting they are losing trees and being asked to disrupt their way of life.

Karen Rex, 4371 Dart Ave., stated she feels the whole council has missed part of the point. She stated she supports biking, maintaining trees, and providing sidewalks, but there are other people impacted by this project on 44th Street. She is concerned that when people can’t park on Wooddale, they will park on 44th Street creating an unsafe condition for those who already have difficulty pulling out of their driveway.

Matt Spraguer, 4250 Wooddale Ave., stated he has flooding concerns related to increased water runoff. He added he already has issues with flooding in his back yard with any major rainfall, it becomes a lake. He is concerned about adding any hard surface to the street because of the increased runoff that will cause.

JC Beckstrand placed into the public record the petition from residents. He noted the information referenced in the petition was based upon the information that was produced by staff for the December 3, 2019 listening session. He stated the council has heard from the residents along Wooddale and they are very proud of their time in the community. He added if the project moves forward the residents fear it will damage the characteristics that make the neighborhood such a special place to live. He thanked the council for their time and encouraged all councilmembers to visit the area.

Mayor Spano closed the public hearing.

_Council will take final action on this project at the March 2, 2020 meeting._

7. Requests, petitions, and communications from the public – none

8. Resolutions, ordinances, motions and discussion items - none

9. Communications
Councilmember Harris stated there is a free health fair on Feb. 22 at the Middle School at 11 a.m. and noted there is more information on the city website. All are welcome.

Councilmember Rog noted the Wish Cycling Workshop on Thurs., Feb. 27, and sign up is available on the city website.

10. **Adjournment**

The meeting adjourned at 10:17 p.m.

____________________________________  ______________________________________
Melissa Kennedy, city clerk                Jake Spano, mayor