



(VIDEO STILL)

Robbinsdale councilmember Tyler Kline responds to calls from fellow councilmembers to resign his post at the Feb. 2 meeting.

Kline announces plans to remain on Robbinsdale council despite calls to resign

Two ask freshman councilmember to step down

By **ALAINA ROOKER**
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Members of the Robbinsdale City Council clarified their stances on fellow councilmember Tyler Kline's alleged misconduct involving a car accident and drunk driving arrest on

Highway 100.

Councilmembers gave statements at the end of the council's Feb. 2 regular meeting, some calling for Kline's resignation. Kline, who was present at the meeting, announced his plans to remain on the council.

Of the five that make up the Rob-

binsdale City Council, councilmembers George Selman and Pat Backen called for Kline to step down.

Selman said it was "the responsible and professional thing to do."

"If it was me, I would've already resigned," Selman said. Selman recounted the hours he had spent fielding calls from the public about the

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New Hope city manager announces retirement plans

McDonald will leave the city in June after three decades as a staff member

By **SETH ROWE**
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With a new city hall, New Hope will soon be looking for a new city manager.

The current man for the job, Kirk McDonald, announced he will retire June 1 after working

in the role for the last 15 years and spending more than three decades working for the city.

In a Feb. 1 letter to Mayor Kathi Hemken and City Council members, McDonald wrote, "After 32 years of employment with the City of New Hope, I have decided it is time for me to

join my wife in retirement."

He said he decided to provide four months of notice to give the city enough time to decide how to fill the position.

"I will be glad to assist in the transition process any way I can," McDonald wrote.

McDonald also served as community development director for New Hope for 17 years before taking on the job of city manager.

"I am proud of all the great

projects and programs that have been completed over the years and have enjoyed working with a variety of elected officials, residents and local businesses and my peers in other communities," McDonald wrote. "Most of all I have developed a deep appreciation for the dedicated employees I work with every day who do their best to make this city operate in an efficient and friendly manner. New Hope is very fortunate to have such a great work

force."

McDonald has used his leadership to bring financial stability and redevelopment to the city, according to a city statement announcing his retirement.

He and city staff have worked to redevelop the City Center while planning the construction and opening of a new city hall, police station and aquatic park,

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Kline

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incident, the majority of which were supportive.

“Everybody in the community is pulling for you ... as for me, I think it’s time to make this less painful for the entire community and step aside and let us move forward,” he said.

He added that he was relieved that the situation hadn’t been any worse, and he wished Kline and his family well.

Kline was reportedly observed by police shortly after midnight Jan. 24 leaving the scene of a vehicle crash driving the wrong way on northbound Highway 101 near Brooklyn Boulevard in Brooklyn Center. Kline allegedly fled police and upon capture was found to have a blood alcohol concentration of 0.20, more than twice the legal limit.

He has since been charged with two counts of driving under the influence and one count of fleeing a police officer in a motor vehicle.

Two days later, Kline formally apologized and shared that he was enrolling in a six-week treatment program.

At the Feb. 2 meeting, Backen praised Kline for enrolling in an addiction

treatment program, but also asked him to resign.

“Residents place their trust in us, and when that trust is breached it makes effective representation difficult I think,” Backen said. “An incident of this nature is just a tremendous breach of trust.”

Backen added that news coverage threatened to undo years of work improving the city’s image.

“When our city is in the news for alleged misconduct, the focus is no longer on the residents and the business as it should be, it’s on alleged misconduct,” he said.

Backen concluded that his request for Kline to step down was not personal, and he would offer the same should any member of the council commit the same actions as Kline had.

Councilmember Sheila Webb and Mayor Bill Blonigan expressed their awareness of the issue, but stopped short of calling for Kline’s resignation. Blonigan said the decision was up to Kline’s constituents.

“I’ve never called for any politician to resign over any charges of criminal activity,” Blonigan said.

Webb said she respected “the voice of the people” that had voted Kline into office, and a decision to resign was Kline’s alone. How-

ever, she made clear that the incident had effects on the council.

“I can’t tell you the amount of brain time this incident has caused me personally,” Webb said. “I am not in the position to answer questions about why you did it, what happened, where you were going, where you were coming from.”

Still, she said she didn’t believe in “pouring water on a drowning man.”

At the meeting, Kline reaffirmed his decision to remain on the council. He admitted that there were “no amount of sorrys” to offer to his constituents, family and friends for his decisions Jan. 24.

“I understand why there are people on this council or people from the community that are calling for me to resign. I really think that that is not the example I want to lead,” said Kline. “I want to show people that you can fall and pick yourself up, you can get better, and you can still do good in this community.”

Kline said an “overwhelming number” of people had reached out to him personally and encouraged him to stay on the council, which helped him formulate his decision and was helping him “get through” his treatment program.



(SUBMITTED PHOTO)

New Hope City Manager Kirk McDonald

McDonald

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the statement says. Additionally, he has helped lead efforts to expand commercial and industrial businesses, develop housing and make infrastructure improvements.

He first joined the city as a management assistant in 1990. Before coming to New Hope, he worked as the Tonka Bay city administrator for five years.

The New Hope City Council will discuss a transition plan at an upcoming meeting, according to the city statement.

The council appoints the city manager and provides annual performance evaluations. The city manager then makes recommendations to the

council for consideration.

“Council members and residents count on the city manager to provide complete and objective information about local operations, discuss the pros and cons of alternatives, and offer an assessment of the long-term consequences of decisions,” a description of the role on the city’s website states.

The city manager helps prepare a budget for the council to consider, oversees financial operations, serves as the council’s chief advisor and carries out the council’s policies, according to the description. Additionally, McDonald oversees the operation of the city on a day-to-day basis for the part-time council. He recruits, hires and supervises city staff members.

City manager goals

Last month, the New Hope City Council approved a lengthy list of goals for the city manager.

Redevelopment topped the detailed list, including coordination on the Windsor Ridge development and coordination with St. Therese Nursing Home on a three-year phased expansion or renovation of its campus. The document identified other redevelopment options at Winnetka Shopping Center, the District 281 bus garage site, multifamily housing properties on 62nd Avenue, Conductive Containers Inc. and AC Carlson.

The New Hope City Council also set a goal to acquire six new properties for scattered-site housing rehabilitation projects and pointed toward

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