

**WORKSHOP MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS
JANUARY 4, 2017**

The workshop meeting of the Council of the City of Vadnais Heights was held on the above date and called to order by Mayor Fletcher at 5:30 p.m.

The following members were present: Mayor Bob Fletcher, Councilmembers: Terry Nyblom, Craig Johnson and Heidi Gunderson.

The following members were absent: None.

Also present were: Administrator Kevin Watson, City Engineer Mark Graham, Finance Director Bob Sundberg, Fire Chief Ed Leier, Planning/Community Development Director Nolan Wall, Attorney Caroline Bell Beckman, and Deputy Clerk Beckie Gumatz.

1. Update on the Rice Street Bridge Project

- Beth Engum, Ramsey County, and Mark Benson, SEH, gave a presentation on the Rice Street Bridge project.
- The project goals include: improving traffic operations, providing access to the former public works site, enhancing the overall economic development potential of the corridor, and providing pedestrian and bicyclist facilities.
- Ms. Engum noted that the Rice Street Bridge beams are no longer deemed as federally protected.
- Challenges to the project include: constraints of recent development activities, the corridor is a part of three communities, current access on and off of Rice Street, there will be extensive property impacts, and there will be high right-of-way acquisition costs.
- Fletcher asked about a solution for closing the Vadnais Inn access. Ms. Engum explained that if the current access points were closed, they would be given an access point off Country Drive, if possible.
- Ramsey County has applied for \$7 million in Federal funding for the project and are asking the 2017 state legislature for \$23.5 million.
- Mr. Benson noted that the design process looked at four different interchange types; diamond with roundabouts or signals, diverging diamond with signals, diamond with a 6-legged roundabout, and single point urban interchange with roundabouts or signals.
- Following a Tier 1 analysis of acceptable traffic operations, the 6-legged roundabout was removed from consideration, as well as some single point urban interchange options.
- Following a second round of further traffic analysis, there were four alternatives remaining. Two options utilized a diamond interchange with four intersections, and three utilized a single point urban interchange.
- A further advanced screening and traffic analysis was done with the five remaining alternatives. The cost of each as well as average time to travel through each alternative was discussed.
- The preferred ranking of the alternatives was: 1) offset single point interchange with roundabouts, 2) diamond with roundabouts, 3) offset single point interchange with roundabouts (one 5-leg roundabout), 4) diamond with signals, and 5) offset single point interchange with signals.
- Johnson asked if the current signal system could be altered to be more effective during peak traffic times. Ms. Engum explained that the county does monitor signal timing and she believes they do a good job of optimizing the signals today.
- Fletcher expressed concerns regarding redoing the entire area for the amount of money it could

cost, for a 40 second time to travel improvement. Ms. Engum stated that they have heard from many residents and businesses that this area is a bottleneck.

- There was concern expressed from the City Council about the impact to the businesses in the corridor as a result of this project.
- Fletcher stated that he would like to see Ramsey County find a solution that does not take away economic development opportunities from Vadnais Heights, otherwise the city may lobby the state legislature against the proposal.
- Ms. Engum outlined the schedule going forward. There will be an Open House on February 21, 2017 at the Vadnais Heights Commons at 4:00 p.m.

2. Discussion of Ice Castles

- Fletcher stated he is always looking for ways to bring people to Vadnais Heights and promote the city.
- Fletcher spoke about the Ice Palace project he worked on during the 1986 Winter Carnival.
- The city could use this as an opportunity to promote itself during the 2018 Super Bowl.
- Fletcher noted that Eric Dayton is working on a project to market all the winter events in the Twin Cities - The Great Northern. The city could be a part of this next year.
- Fletcher mentioned three potential sites for the Ice Palace.
- The preferred site is behind the Perkins and Fairfield Inn area. A site south of Summit Orthopedic is another option.
- Gunderson asked about parking.
- Fletcher stated the tentative thought is that there would likely be some parking on-site, and then satellite parking lots with a shuttle to the site.
- Fletcher outlined the next steps and potential committee structure to make the project happen.
- Johnson asked about liability. Fletcher indicated the group would need to purchase a liability insurance policy.
- Fletcher looking to gauge City Council interest in moving forward with the project idea.
- Nyblom asked if other communities are considering building an Ice Castle for 2018. Fletcher stated that is unknown right now, but would not doubt if some did consider it.
- Gunderson voiced her support for the project.

3. Council Vacancy Process Discussion

- Watson stated that staff is looking for feedback on how the current City Council would like to proceed with filling the vacancy.
- Watson stated that staff has received six letters of interest thus far. The deadline to submit a letter of interest is January 9, 2017 at 4:00 p.m.
- Fletcher would like to fill the vacancy quickly.
- Council consensus to have one round of interviews rather than two.
- Questions to ask potential candidates were discussed.

4. 2017 Street Improvement Project Discussion

- Item postponed.

Adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Prepared for and approved by:

Attest:

Kevin Watson, City Administrator

Bob Fletcher, Mayor