

**WORKSHOP MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS
JANUARY 21, 2020**

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

The following members were present: Mayor Heidi Gunderson, Council Members: Greg Urban, Craig Johnson, Patricia Youker and Bob Morse. The following member was absent: None.

Also present were: City Administrator Kevin Watson, Assistant City Administrator Tim Sandvik, Planning/Community Development Director Nolan Wall, Public Works Director Jesse Farrell, Finance Director Bob Sundberg, Fire Chief Ed Leier, City Attorney Erich Hartman and Caroline Bell Beckman, and Deputy City Clerk Peggy Aho.

1. Presentation on GreenStep Cities

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik gave a presentation on the Green Step Cities program hosted throughout the State. He noted that he and Community/Development Director Wall met with a long-time resident who then met with Council Member Youker to discuss this. Sandvik noted that the program promotes best practices in municipalities in 5 areas: building and lighting, land use, transportation, environmental management and resilient economic and community development. Sandvik noted that the program incentivizes through recognition and best practices can be shared between municipalities that participate. He said that the City may be doing some of the practices already.

Council Member Youker noted that she met with Steve Jorissen, resident. She said that a lot of what can be done under this program, the City is already doing. There is more that we can do, and the City can partner with others such as VLAWMO. She said that Steve has indicated that he would like to take the lead on this. Mayor Gunderson said if the City can get credit for things that it already does, then we should probably participate. Council Member Youker noted the City could get grants for various projects that it is already doing. Gunderson said she doesn't see any harm in being part of the program.

Council Member Morse asked if some of the solar signage that the City has been installing would be a part of this program. Youker replied yes. Steve will compile the information and meet with staff to get the ball rolling but the Mayor will have to sign off on it first. Gunderson asked staff what their thoughts are on this. Sandvik said that staff have worked with other communities on this, it's just a question of how vested the City wants to be in the program. He said as Youker mentioned the City would be eligible through recognition by resolution and be may eligible for an internship with the MPCA to work on this, part time up to full time. It will be a time commitment and will require some time and effort to compile the information needed.

Youker mentioned working with VLAWMO is something that would be recognized. Could work through appropriate commissions, etc. it could be done, but staff's biggest concern would be dedicating enough time to it. Gunderson said we probably do a lot of it already, she doesn't know why we would say no. Wall said he thinks there are motivated community members that might want to dedicate some time for some tasks and that could be something we could work towards and he could explore that as an opportunity.

Sandvik said that staff will put together the resolution for the Council's action and then contact Mr. Jorissen and others.

2. Year in Review – The Commons

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik gave a PowerPoint presentation on the history of the operations of the Vadnais Heights Commons for 2019. He noted that the largest expenditure was labor. Sandvik reviewed a chart showing 2011 through 2019 revenues and expenditures. He noted some of the areas that funds will be expended in 2020 for utilizing proper preventative maintenance.

Council Member Johnson said he doesn't remember talking about CO2 ventilation control and asked if the Commons has been experiencing problems with CO2 ventilation. Sandvik said that it was part of the report by LHB did last year is not part of the HVAC system but is considered important.

Johnson said he is concerned that we scaled up in 2011 and then hit a peak in 2014 and have dropped off significantly since then. He said maybe now was not the best time to increase our rates. Sandvik said that in doing research, he thinks the metro area is saturated right now with event sites. He said it is a valid concern, and that it has been mentioned that we have implemented seasonal pricing in 2021. He said that he thinks the decline in bookings may be coming to an end. He noted that while the venue saw a decrease in bookings, it saw an increase in revenue. He said he thinks we may have lost some bookings because of the fear of uncertainty in the community about who they would be working with. He said that he thinks Lorah Palmer does a great job for the City.

Urban said that it is important to look at the history, this was never built with the intention of generating any revenue, and then the next Council said it needed to, and then local businesses said they didn't like the City competing with them. He said he hasn't heard any complaints from local businesses now so we might be sitting at a good point. City Administrator Watson said that he thinks seasonal pricing may get us more bookings in the winter.

Council Member Morse asked how many residents are renting the site. Sandvik said we don't have those numbers but could get them. Mayor Gunderson said that Palmer had said that she was going to expand her marketing efforts to try to get more weekday and weeknight bookings and asked what Palmer has done on this. Sandvik said Palmer is professional in what she does and has a network of people. Currently, not 52 weeks a year, but about 38 Mondays, yoga is held at the site and trying to get a booking on a

Monday is near to impossible, but we want to use the venue for local programs. He said that hosting the anniversary party was very creative and we may see results from that. It is staff's understanding Council wants a balance of local and revenue focused events.

Gunderson asked if Palmer keeps data on why someone chooses to not use the Commons whether it be cost, the venue, etc. Sandvik said that he could ask her about that.

3. Purchase of a Toolcat Bobcat 5600

City Engineer/Public Works Director Farrell reviewed the memo prepared by Public Service Supervisor LaCasse regarding the purchase of a Toolcat Bobcat 5600. Farrell said that we would be buying it from a distributor on the State's list and noted that the City could choose from anyone of the vendors on the list. Cost is \$53,000 which is under the \$55,000 budgeted amount. The price includes one attachment. Farrell said that if the Council is supportive of this purchase, he will put it on the next Council meeting consent agenda for approval.

Council Members Urban and Johnson asked what makes the trackless machine better than the Toolcat for snow removal. He suggested that staff do a comparison/opinion of the trackless machine versus the Toolcat (cost and uses). Farrell said he will look into this.

Mayor Gunderson said she would support the purchase of the Toolcat Bobcat being added to the Council agenda for approval. Council Members all agreed.

4. Discussion of Park Dedication Fees

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik introduced the Park Dedication Fee which was set by the Council in the 2020 Fee Schedule. He said that the Council has asked that the item be brought back for discussion. Council Member Urban said there was some confusion when the multi-family fees were set to switch multi to residential which results in a substantial increase for multi-family use per unit pricing. He thinks this increase is far too much. He said he is proposing to keep the \$2,000 per unit residential rate but to cap it at 8% of FMV for multi-family or to do the \$2,000 per unit on 1 to 3 units but any development 4 or more would be \$1,250 per unit. He said he doesn't understand how the FMV works. He said that perhaps a tiered pricing would be more appropriate or setting a cap but he thinks tiered might be best. Mayor Gunderson said she thinks that sounds fair and that she could support that and asked staff how it will fit into the Code. Wall said that the Code was written the way it was and that it references the fee schedule and the fee schedule is meant to change and can change. Staff would prepare an ordinance.

5. Service Agreement with Alpha Video

City Administrator Watson introduced the item. Alpha Video sent the Council a proposal for support services. He asked the Council if they wish to pursue this or would they be ok with not entering into a contract at this time for these services. The Council said they are not interested in pursuing a contract for the support services.

6. Staff Updates:

Farrell reviewed his vision for ditch maintenance in the City. He said that last spring he brought an idea to the Council to use a drainage consultant to evaluate the whole city and then use that evaluation to prioritize where to do the project. We ended up not doing that because it was expensive. He said that tonight's action before the Council on ditch maintenance will extend the work previously done. Farrell reviewed a graphic in Agenda Item 12e of the Council meeting packet. He noted that County Ditch (CD) 14 is primarily the responsibility of VLAWMO and they have said that they likely will be spending a lot of money on CD 14 within the City in coming years. He said that Branch 5, 5A has a culvert by Bear Avenue and the next step will work on this area. He said that the next logical project will be making sure the rest of Branch 5 is good.

Council Member Urban asked about permanent staking around County Road F on underground pipes that would allow the City to maintain them going forward.

Council Member Johnson said he is still waiting for a summary of all buildings and future needs. City Administrator Watson said that staff can bring this back for discussion.

Mayor Gunderson thanked Farrell for the update on the ditches and said that she appreciates his work on this and him creating a priority list for Council's consideration.

The meeting adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Watson, City Administrator