

**WORKSHOP MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS
MARCH 7, 2023**

OPEN MEETING

The workshop meeting of the Council of the City of Vadnais Heights was held on the above date and called to order by Mayor Krachmer at 5:31 p.m.

The following members were present: Mayor Mike Krachmer and Council Members Erik Goebel, Steve Rogers, Kelly Jozwowski, and Katherine Doll Kanne. The following member was absent: None.

Also present were: City Administrator, Kevin Watson; Assistant City Administrator, Kaylin Clement; Planning/Community Development Director, Nolan Wall; City Engineer/Public Works Director, Jesse Farrell; Fire Chief, Chris Hearden; Recreation & Facilities Manager, Katie Everett; and MN Senator, Heather Gustafson.

ADDITIONAL FULL-TIME POSITION IN RECREATION DEPARTMENT

City Administrator Watson stated that one of the ideas that the Council has pushed is improving our engagement with the community. One thought is adding capacity to our Parks & Recreation operations which basically would free up Recreation & Facilities Manager Everett's time. The thought was to add an entry-level recreation person that could help build that capacity, along with Everett and Recreation Assistant Jessica Currier who do a lot of our engagement efforts.

Everett thanked those attending for considering the request. She stated additional staff is a long-term need and addresses priorities that have come up with our new Council. She stated that there are a lot of ideas that surface and usually time is our limiting factor in implementing them. She commented that any offerings we release to the public, we want to do well. We want to program with intention and be able to offer lots of quality programming. Right now we are maxed out on what we can offer as well as benefitting the City in the Parks and Recreation world. There is a need for this type of position. Everett said she has been in touch with the Parks & Recreation Department at Mankato State who indicated that if they put an ad out, it would definitely get filled. Everett said that if we are able to design a position that is tailored towards someone who has a degree, they will have creative ideas they can bring us. With the new person on board, Everett and Currier would have more time to focus on soliciting engagement.

Watson said that recreation is our gateway into the different communities within our City and is an easy way to connect with residents. This could be our foot in the door to engage with populations we are not currently serving. He stated this position is anticipated to be budgeted for in 2024 and he is just preparing for the budget process. He asked if the Council had questions or thoughts to discuss with Everett.

Council Member Rogers would like to see the request quantified to justify the added expense. He requested more specific information showing how much additional programming and events would be added, how the additional staff member would free up Everett's time, and any other data that would help the Council be comfortable with the additional expense. Everett responded saying quantifying programs can be hard to do, but she will do her best to provide more information to help with an informed decision.

Rogers was wondering if the position could be hired early to help with the Parks Study. He stated we have already allocated \$50,000 this year. Watson clarified that \$50,000 is dedicated to parks. The money could go toward a handful of projects that were identified, but ultimately, it's the Council's call. Rogers thought when the Parks Master Plan was discussed, \$50,000 would be dedicated this year and \$50,000 next. Watson said that was the original idea, but it did not get approved by the previous Council. Watson said that he will present to the Council how they could pay for the Parks Master Plan and that may not necessarily be with the \$50,000. Rogers said that he sees an opportunity with the position to save money and get someone acquainted with the parks system. Council Member Doll Kanne stated that's an ambitious idea, but felt that it wouldn't work out too well. She didn't think our consultants would welcome working with staff in the process and questioned how much money it would actually save. Rogers felt it may be better to hire the person when they are fresh out of college rather than wait until 2024. Doll Kanne agreed, stating that people who are looking for a role like this are looking for them right now. Doll Kanne stated that she definitely wants to hear more about this possibility. Krachmer added that the sooner we are able to increase community engagement, the better.

LEGISLATIVE VISIT

Mayor Krachmer thanked MN Senator Gustafson for her presence at the meeting. Krachmer asked her what she would like us to know that relates to our City. Gustafson stated that she could tell them what she has been working on, but would rather hear from them. She continued sharing about initiatives she has been focusing on including funding of schools, public safety, and small business tax relief. She felt the northern suburbs have been overlooked and have not been invested in, so the drawback of that oversight is that we are property tax heavy. She said they are trying to fix this problem to help cities balance their budgets. She asked for input relating concerns from the City's perspective. Gustafson commented that Vadnais Heights is her hometown and she wants to make sure that the people in Vadnais Heights matter too.

Council Member Doll Kanne asked about Local Government Aid (LGA), stating that Vadnais Heights gets nothing. She felt that Vadnais Heights is being overlooked, but maybe that's because she doesn't quite understand the full intent of how it's calculated. Gustafson stated that LGA is not her area of expertise as much as education. She stated that several other cities in the northern suburbs are in the same predicament as Vadnais Heights getting next to nothing in LGA. She does believe the LGA formula needs to be fixed. Rogers agreed, stating that Mounds View, which is similar in size and demographics to Vadnais Heights, is getting \$850,000 and Vadnais Heights gets nothing. Discussion followed about how LGA funds are used and allocated to certain cities. Rogers wanted Gustafson to know how the LGA issue affects the residents. He