

**WORKSHOP MEETING  
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE  
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS  
APRIL 5, 2017**

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

The following members were present: Acting Mayor Terry Nyblom, Councilmembers: Craig Johnson, Heidi Gunderson and Greg Urban. Mayor Fletcher arrived at 6:22 p.m.

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, City Attorney Caroline Bell Beckman, and Deputy Clerk Beckie Gumatz.

**1. City Attorney Update**

- James Erickson Jr., Kari Quinn, and Natalie Staeheli, along with City Attorney Caroline Bell Beckman gave an update on the areas in which they assist the city.
- Mr. Erickson Jr. detailed the recent changes in the scheduling system.
- Ms. Staeheli explained the biggest change she has seen recently relates to immigration issues. There have been changes made at the Federal level that have trickled down and led to many unknowns in the court system.
- Ms. Staeheli also outlined the law changes passed by the state legislature in 2016. The biggest change for Vadnais Heights is that controlled substance cases will now be handled by Erickson, Bell, Beckman and Quinn, P.A. rather than the county attorney.
- Ms. Quinn explained the vehicle forfeiture process and how it has changed in the past 10 years.
- Johnson asked about leased vehicles. Ms. Quinn stated in that instance, the vehicle would go back to leaseholder.
- Ms. Quinn explained that when a vehicle is forfeited, it can be used for official purposes, it can be returned to leaseholder or lean holder, it can be salvaged, or it can be auctioned to attempt to recover costs.
- Ms. Staeheli spoke about criminal case fines. Judges in Ramsey County have been issuing less fine amounts than what used to be given. Generally, if a client has a public defender, they usually will see a \$50 fine.
- It was also noted that a lot of these fines do not get paid.
- Ms. Staeheli noted that last month she was in court 19 of the 20 days. Generally, cases will start at the Law Enforcement Center where bail or conditions of release are set, a first court appearance will happen in Maplewood, if there is a jury trial it is in downtown St. Paul. Sentencings also happen in downtown St. Paul. She added that the 19 days encompass cases for all cities that they work with.
- Mr. Erickson Jr. stated that the city's biggest producer of criminal activity in Vadnais Heights is at the Walmart.
- Mr. Erickson Jr. also spoke about prostitution cases coming out of massage establishments. Ms. Bell Beckman added these can sometimes be sex trafficking cases as well.
- Ms. Staeheli commented that the biggest issue coming out of Vadnais Heights is DWI offenses.
- Urban asked how frequently they prosecute theft or quality of life crimes coming out of Vadnais Heights. Ms. Staeheli responded that the value of the theft may make it a felony crime, and that she usually will see cases with under \$1,000 in theft.

- Ms. Staeheli outlined other specialty court programs that they send cases to; including Veterans Court, Mental Health Court, DWI Court, and Drug Court.
- Ms. Bell Beckman touched on the issue of drones in cities.
- Ms. Bell Beckman noted that the state legislature has also allowed Sunday liquor sales this year. Beginning on July 1, 2017, liquor stores will be allowed to operate from 11:00am to 6:00pm. The current city ordinance is in compliance with state statute.
- Ms. Bell Beckman also provided an update regarding small cell wireless technology. There was a push in the state legislature this year to make it mandatory for cities to allow access in the right-of-way on street light poles for companies seeking to install small cell wireless technology.
- Ms. Staeheli noted some changes she is seeing in court related to police body cameras or squad car cameras.

## **2. Discussion of Purchasing Fire Department Pickup Truck**

- Leier noted that the pickup truck that is proposed to be replaced is 17 years old.
- It has an electrical short in it somewhere and sometimes will not start. It is not a dependable emergency vehicle.
- The Fire Department purchases its vehicles on the State of Minnesota contract.
- The estimate for trading in the current vehicle is \$3,000.
- The other option would be to take it to the surplus auction. Based on other 1999-2001 Ford F-150's that have been auctioned it was estimated that city would get between \$70 and \$2,000.
- Leier recommended trading in the truck to Midway Ford as is.
- Leier noted that going to auction would require staff to remove all the lettering and striping on the truck.
- Nyblom stated he also looked at the state surplus auction website and does not believe there were any good comparisons. He would like to auction off the truck and he believes it is valued too low.
- Urban noted that the value of the truck would likely decrease at an auction because stripping of the decals will make the truck look worse.
- There was discussion of developing a policy for selling city vehicles.
- A majority of the City Council recommended staff bring this item to the next regular City Council meeting for approval of purchasing the new truck and trading in the current truck.

## **3. Other Staff Items**

- Wall previewed the Urban Land Institute presentation to take place at the next workshop.
- Nyblom asked how this group is funded. Wall replied they have sponsors who fund them.
- Fletcher would like to shorten the presentation and have it taped and available to the public and business community.
- Urban also mentioned that he would like to look into getting the City Code on Municode or a similar service to make it more searchable.

**Adjourned at 6:59 p.m.**

Prepared for and approved by:

Attest:

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Kevin Watson, City Administrator

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Bob Fletcher, Mayor