

**WORKSHOP MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS
AUGUST 4, 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 6:00 p.m.

The following members were present: Mayor Heidi Gunderson, Council Members: Greg Urban, 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, Finance Director Bob Sundberg, Public Works Director Jesse Farrell, City Attorney Caroline Beckman, and Deputy City Clerk Peggy Aho.

1. High Level CARES Act Discussion

City Administrator Watson Kevin reviewed the CARES Act and stated that the City will be receiving CARES act fund. He detailed how the funds can be used, and when they need to be used by. He said that he wanted to have a discussion with the Council about how the Council would like to spend the funds. He noted that these funds would be eligible to be for public safety costs, and the City pays a tremendous amount each year for police and fire services, and he said that it is his understanding that those costs would be eligible. He said if the City where to use the funding for police and fire, the money it does have allocated for those costs could be used elsewhere. Such as to cover the cost of lost revenue, granting grants to the business community, hospitals, school districts or other entities. He said that staff are looking at improvements to the HVAC system at City Hall and certainly that has ties related to COVID. Watson asked what the Council would want staff to explore as opportunities to use these dollars.

Council Member Urban asked if the funds remaining after using the CARES Act funds for police and fire could be used to help reduce the negative carryover amount for next year. Watson replied yes, and there are expenditures the City has made for items such as masks and hand sanitizer. Urban said if the City is going to go into next year with a \$600,000 short fall why can't it use those funds to cover the shortfall. Mayor Gunderson said she understands that there other opportunities to use the money, but she would like to make the taxpayers as whole as possible. She said that grants sounds great, and if we can't exhaust this money then we can look at doing grants. Urban said that he would support shuffling money around internally.

Finance Director Sundberg noted that when the City receives the funds, and uses it to pay some of the 2020 police and fire expenditures, the City will have a surplus of about \$350,000 at the end of the year. Gunderson said that she believes the direction is clear, and that staff should look at how to spend the funds before the November deadline. Gunderson suggested that staff bring a list of CIP purchases that have been pushed off and then the Council can discuss what purchases could be made this year. Urban suggested that staff bring the entire list of the CIP requests and the Council can prioritize spending \$300,000.

Council Member Morse said that at the last meeting the Council talked about trails being a low priority, and said he is wondering about being able to utilize some of the funds for the trail system or a park. Watson replied that they certainly can look at that. Gunderson asked if a project such as that could get done by the end of the year.

Watson said that staff will bring back the CIP list and that he will have Public Works Director Farrell explore priority trails that need work.

2. Goals Amendment – Ditch Maintenance

City Administrator Watson noted that staff amended the Goals worksheet per Council direction. Changes included changing the Street Infrastructure Plan to Street Investment Plan.

Public Works Director Farrell noted that pavement condition was a big deal to the Council. Street improvements allow the City to rip up the street and replace utility structures that need improvements which increases the investment in utilities. He noted that ditches are also very important to the Council, so the first Goal was modified to include pavement, structure under pavement, and ditches.

Mayor Gunderson said that this is certainly important and that trying best to coordinate those projects seems correct way of doing it. Watson said that the amended Goals will be brought to Council for formal approval.

The Council then discussed cleaning of ponds. Farrell noted that someday he will be asking for a utility rate increase to increase the amount of funds available for pond cleaning. He noted that some ponds are possibly contaminated, and said that the work to clean them out can be disruptive to a neighborhood. He said it would be better if the City could get into a program and do a certain amount of maintenance each year.

Gunderson said that a resident had contacted her to ask why the City does seal coating. Farrell responded that some people think it's a good idea and others do not. He said it is one tool in the toolbox and that some cities do more mill and overlays rather than spending funds on seal coating.

Gunderson suggested adding the Engagement Committee under the Communication and Engagement Strategies in the Goals document. Watson replied that they will.

Council Member Youker asked if there has been any responses from residents that are interested in being on the committee. Assistant City Administrator Sandvik said that they have had a few residents reach out. He said that the notice is in the newsletter which is being sent out this month.

Council Member Morse asked how many people have responded to the Polco survey. Sandvik replied that they have had close to 50 respondents. Staff will continue to promote the survey.

3. Staff Updates

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik handed out a letter that he had received from an individual that has rented the Commons for a wedding in July of next year. The individual is asking that

they be able to cancel their rental of the Commons with full refund. Mayor Gunderson said she can't blame them, and if we said no, we would have an unhappy customer. Gunderson and Council Member Urban said that they should allow the individual to cancel the booking and return their money. Sandvik asked said if the Council is comfortable with staff making this type of decision without having to bring it before them for approval. The Council said they approve of staff making the decisions.

4. Future Council Requests:

Mayor Gunderson said that she would like a budget workshop schedule and asked that a doodle poll be sent out to Council Members.

She also asked if someone could work on creating useful data, as a result of the Facilities Management Plan which was done last year, so that the Council can begin looking at the data for long term planning.

Gunderson also asked about recycling and frequency of pick up. She wondered if residents could ask for weekly pickup and or additional bins. Assistant City Administrator Sandvik said that more people are staying home so recycling has increased. He said that Vadnais Heights residents can get larger or an extra bin at no charge. He said that our haulers do not have the capacity to do weekly pickup of recycling.

There being no further information, the meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Watson, City Administrator