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: Patricia Youker, Greg Urban, Craig Johnson 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, Caroline Bell Beckman and Deputy City Clerk Peggy Aho.

Others present: Shannon Watson, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce.

1. **Presentation by St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce**

Mayor Gunderson thanked Shannon Watson, St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce, for reaching out to tell the Council about the St. Paul Chamber.

Watson noted that the SPACC’s focuses on the entire East Metro and they are a source of information for the City. She gave a PowerPoint presentation on the SPACC.

2. **Ramsey/Washington Cable Commission and Cable Cast**

City Administrator Watson said that he doesn’t think it’s worth paying the Ramsey/Washington Cable Commission $4,300 a month for the services they would provide through the remainder of the year and that he is recommending that the City walk away. He noted that he has been talking to various experts in the AV world and he thinks the City can make the transition seamless and can get its meetings live quickly but it’s the equipment that needs to be ordered which will take a month. The City will be able to record the meetings and go live, but may not be able to repeat them on the channel until equipment is installed. They can be taped and put on line.

Council Member Johnson asked if we paid them the $4,300 a month and does the Cable Commission have a legal argument that would make us pay them. Watson said he doesn’t believe so.

Mayor Gunderson noted that the services with the Cable Commission will continue to be offered for tonight’s meeting, so if everyone is comfortable with the plan to move forward with CTV, the full support of the Council is needed. Watson said that the Council agenda will have an action item to enter into a contract with CTV, North Suburban Access Corporation for the webcasting services.
3. **Bear Park Chip Trail**

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik gave an update on the Bear Park Chip Trail project which the Parks, Trails and Recreation Commission identified as a possible project for the City. The trail would be located on City owned property and staff would perform the work. Reached out to residents adjacent to the area and overall positive feedback was received. There was some concerns about increased traffic and crime. Sandvik said that he is looking for Council input on the potential project, either in support of or not.

The Council reviewed the location of the trail which staff are proposing to be in the middle of the property and take the path of least resistance. Sandvik said that tree removal and water mitigation would be taken into account. He said that there is a pretty big drop-off on the Tessier side of the property, which means the trail won’t be ADA compliant but will not improve surface standards. The Council discussed the use of the property and the cost. Sandvik said that the primary cost will be staff time and fuel to use the equipment.

Council Member Morse said that he has heard from a lot of the neighbors in support of the project.

4. **Discussion of the 2020 Draft Budget**

Mayor Gunderson noted that Council Members should have received an email from City Administrator Watson which recapped the Council’s budget discussions. Watson noted that staff need direction from the Council so that the 2020 Budget can be finalized. He noted that letters about the truth and taxation hearing will be sent out to residents prior to the December 3rd Public Hearing and the final levy needs to be finalized prior to that.

Gunderson said that she would like to start by talking about any items the Council Members wish to remove from the budget or if they have any questions about items.

Council Member Urban asked if the Parks request is the same as before. Watson replied yes. Urban asked about the new microphone system and kitchen equipment replacement at the Commons. He asked if this was previously budgeted for. Assistant Administrator Sandvik said the mic system will no longer be compliant with FCC and the kitchen equipment has met its life expectancy.

Urban then asked about the LED lighting upgrades and asked if staff have done an analysis on how long it would take to pay back. Public Works Director Farrell replied that staff have and does with each project. He said that this particular budget item is just an ongoing initiative, going to do street lights for parking lots, Council Chambers, etc. Urban said we shouldn’t look for projects to the extent that we are going retrofitting lighting to LED, do we look at the payback. Farrell there is an economic driver and established payback and staff look at it. A major driver of this is staff time that has been needed for replacing the lights, ballasts and other components. Farrell said that update will allow staff to do other things. Urban asked if the economics of it can be justified to spend money on the LED conversion. Farrell replied yes, it is a worthy project.
Urban also questioned the potential list based on what percent, what projects would get us on the preferred projects. He asked if the list is in staff preferred order. Watson said yes.

Council Member Youker asked when talking about the sidewalk tracking machine and $55,000 for a Tool Cat Bobcat, what is the purpose of the Tool Cat Bobcat, is it to access areas that can’t otherwise be reached except by foot. Farrell replied yes, it will be used primarily to get to areas that aren’t accessible to trucks. Farrell said if they had to choose between the bobcat and the trackless machine, staff would choose the trackless machine. Council Member Morse asked for more detail on how the trackless machine is proposed to be used. Farrell detailed how staff might use it and how it would save staff time and improve response time.

Morse asked whether staff have looked at debt service for the North Service Center and refinancing options to save some money. Finance Director Sundberg said that it wouldn’t affect the 2020 budget year and because we get a rebate from the government on the interest, it may only be a savings of $20,000. Morse asked when Sundberg will know about the refinancing. Sundberg replied perhaps this week. Urban asked if the cost of doing the refinancing would include the costs of reissuing the debt. Sundberg replied yes. Urban inquired about the City’s current credit rating. Sundberg said that he believes the City is above junk about two notches.

Youker asked if increases to the contractual services line items of $20,000 in the water utility department and sewer, could we be done together. Farrell said that he thinks improving information system on the City’s assets is important and that the City should have GPS on them. The Council discussed the purpose of having GPS locations on all City assets and the process for getting the work done. Council Member Johnson said that the City had purchased a GPS system five years ago and how staff said that they would do the work during their down time. Farrell said that the reality is that there is no free staff time, it would be necessary to hire someone to do the locating. Gunderson said that she appreciates the idea of knowing where everything is, but how would we get it done. Farrell said that more than likely the City would need to contract with someone who would hire interns to do the work. Farrell said that some of the challenge will be finding the assets, there are some that are located under pavement.

Council Member Johnson said that he feels comfortable with the current levy, not necessarily that it will be spent where it is, we are short on our streets. He is also concerned with the water levels in the City and where VLAWMO has drawn the wetland line.

Urban asked about ditch maintenance and VLAWMO and the lack of ditch maintenance. Watson said that the City has a seat on the VLAWMO Board and the City could ask VLAWMO to come to a meeting to give an update to the Council. Watson said maybe as a member of the Board, the City needs to put an emphasis on moving water along. Youker noted that Stephanie McNamara with VLAWMO has said that she would come to a Council meeting to talk about Lambert Creek and the work they are looking at doing now that they have received a grant. Gunderson said that would be a good to have at a workshop.
Farrell said that he sees VLA WM O as a partner and they will be reconstructing ditches, he will advocate for the ability for our community to train and accomplish the goals of water quality. He said that he sees a partnership on the pipe on Eagle Creek Drive. This is a project we could put in an improvement like a box culvert to make it more natural and accomplish their goals. We have a seat at the table and the Board and on the Technical Commission.

Gunderson said the Council may need to look at funding ditch cleaning in the near future. Watson we do have storm water utility fund balance, so we have a little flexibility for a ditch project. Farrell said there is a dollar amount for this in the draft 2020 Budget and if that project gets included in the budget he can start on project development. Gunderson said that no final decision on the Budget is needed at this meeting.

Farrell said that with big capital projects, and the fact that the budget isn’t finalized until December, he will need to start projects ideally a year in advance. Right now he is focusing on 2020, but in future years he will be looking out two years. He relies on the guidance the Council provides to be ready for 2020. Farrell will need direction on the street projects and Willow Lake Boulevard so he will be asking for approval to start some of the projects in 2019 before the 2020 has been approved.

5. **Staff Items:**

Fire Chief Leier said that there is a house at 5 Star that is vermin and bug infested. He noted that County Health Department is going to condemn the manufactured home and are evicting the tenants tomorrow.

The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

________________________________
Kevin Watson, City Administrator