

**WORKSHOP MEETING  
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE  
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS  
APRIL 6, 2021**

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 Urban at 5:30 p.m.

The following members were present: Acting Mayor Greg Urban, and Council Members: Patricia Youker, Steve Rogers and Erik Goebel. The following member was absent: Mayor Heidi Gunderson.

Also present were: City Administrator, Kevin Watson; Assistant City Administrator, Tim Sandvik; Planning/Community Development Director, Nolan Wall; Finance Director, Bob Sundberg; Fire Chief, Chris Hearden; City Attorney, Caroline Bell Beckman; and Deputy Clerk, Peggy Aho.

**1. Meander Project Update**

Phil Belfiori, VLAWMO, thanked the Council for its leadership and vision and for working with VLAWMO on the Meander Project. He thanked the City their vision and for working with VLAWMO on moving this critical project forward.

Belfiori reviewed the work done on the Meander Project which included two components: sheet pile replacement on the pond and the meander. He said that both projects were successful and they are very happy with the outcome.

Belfiori gave an overview of the project background and the location which is south of County Road F and west of I35E on the Lambert Creek. Belfiori said that this is a strategic location for water quality and quantity flows and system maintenance. He noted that five outcomes were achieved through building the project: flood protection, access to Lambert Lake flood plain; drinking water support (serves over 400,000 people), sediment removal, and resilience to an otherwise over-taxed system.

Belfiori noted that there are two more steps in finalizing the project that will take place in 2021, vegetation restoration to stabilize the meander curves and build the root structure and the bio char that goes in a basin along the pond.

Council Member Urban said this initiative is a great, and the City should follow-up with its own project, the branch ditch. Urban asked if any sediment was removed from the pond as part of this project. Belfiori said that the pond is looking pretty good, the sediments levels haven't filled up so they didn't do anything with it and said that they will monitor it on a regular basis.

Council Member Rogers asked if in 40 years will the meander still be in good shape and how long would this construction last into the future. Belfiori said if we do regular minor maintenance, which they should, he doesn't see why it can't go permanently.

Council Member Youker thanked Mr. Belfiori for the presentation and the expertise and partnership with VLAWMO.

## **2. Purchase of 2022 Fire Truck**

Fire Chief Hearden noted that in 2007 the City purchased two identical first out engines. At that time, the Department operated in two separate department. He said that the 2022 budget includes the dollars to purchase a new engine. He said that they need to start the process to purchase now because it can take 16 months for delivery of a truck and they will purchase it through the State bid process. Hearden noted that there are some financing options.

Acting Mayor Urban asked where this sits in the City's CIP but it is significantly higher than what we generally budget for CIP. Sundberg noted that this is budgeted in 2022 CIP, and normally we would use our capital fund balance. He said over the next 5 years we have about \$6 million in capital improvements plans. Over the next five years we will basically use up our whole balance. Our goal is to continue to use the capital fund balance, because our goal is to smooth out the levy. We have enough to use cash for this vehicle. Urban said that Hearden mentioned that there is a February cutoff, but when would he want to place the order. Hearden replied that once you have the chassis built you have to pay for it, that takes about 4 to 6 months so he would look at placing the order in the next couple of months.

Council Member Youker thanked all the fire staff and surrounding communities for working on the fire last week. Urban said that the residents were tremendously appreciative for what the Fire Department did.

Urban asked if we should consider refurbishing or rebuilding the engines and asked if Hearden had looked into the prospect of refurbishing them. Hearden replied that there is always some opportunity to refurbish some vehicles, but the first out engines typically it's the chassis system that gets beat up, cabs start to rust, doors don't open and electronics stop functioning. It can be done, but not typically with the first out engines.

Urban asked what the next step is. Hearden replied that staff will work on the design and have it priced out and then come back before the Council with preproposed pricing and for approval to go ahead with the purchase. He said they will also discuss financing at that time. Urban said the Council authorizes staff to begin spec'ing a truck with Rosenbauer.

## **3. Code Enforcement Issues**

Fire Chief Hearden noted that 95% of the time, a code enforcement issue is resolved after one or two letters. He said we've spoken with this resident in the past about a different property and they didn't respond. He noted that in December 2018 a code enforcement letter was sent to the property owner at 1311 County Road D and were given 30 days to reply, but due to the severe winter and lots of snow, we re-approached it again in the spring. They did not reply so we went to citations. Code enforcement is a low priority for the court system. COVID has backed up court cases. There has been a warrant out for the property owners arrest since 2019. Hearden said that we are looking at alternative options. We continue to get complaints from businesses and residents near this property.

City Attorney Beckman noted in a memo the process that could be taken. Acting Mayor Urban asked if we would just clean up the property and leave the house. Hearden replied that this

would be an outdoor clean up. Beckman said we have dealt with this property owner before. She gave a rundown on the past experience which included going through the process and a public hearing. They appeared (will need to get a title report to serve all the proper people), but we had the public hearing, council ordered clean up, and at the last minute they did not do it, and before the order took affect they appealed to district court. Then if they go to civil court, we do a public hearing before the judge, they have right to be heard, then if the judge orders the clean-up, we can do that and tax back any expense through a public hearing as a part of an assessment hearing.

Urban said in his opinion we should get the process started. Council Member Youker asked if would be going inside to look at it? Hearden said we would have to get a warrant to get into the property and we would have to justify that. Council Member Goebel said that he thinks we should start proceeding and asked that the City provide them with any help that may assist them to clean up the property. Hearden said he will work with Beckman on starting the process. Beckman noted that she needs permission to do a title search on the property to make sure that we are giving notice to all property owners.

City Administrator Watson asked what the City spent on the abatement process for the previous house. Finance Director Sundberg said that the total was about \$58,000.

## **5. Other Items**

Acting Mayor Urban noted that the Council had previously discussed putting cameras in our area parks and said that residents have recently reached out to him about this. He said that that the lot on the north side of County Road F really needs it. He said that this would be a community asset. Urban said we should check with the County to see if they would be willing to assist with funding for the cameras. City Administrator said that we can send a letter to the County about the cameras. Urban suggested perhaps contacting the County Manager, and he would like that done right now. Watson suggested reaching out to our County Commissioner. He wouldn't be against funding it ourselves. Council Member Goebel said he would like to see an estimate of the costs of equipment and maintenance and who will do the on-going maintenance. Council Member Rogers said that it is a situation he feels is a result of Covid and asked what happens after Covid and things return to normal, will it go back down. He said this is a big expense and a lot of work to maintain it. Rogers said move forward to look at the price. He asked if other parks are experiencing this type of theft. Urban replied yes.

Watson said we need to get the County to participate this because it is their property. Goebel said he can talk to Commissioner Frethem. Urban asked if we can get a firm cost of how much it would cost to install a camera and Goebel asked for updated data from the Sheriff's department.

Council said they would like the John Choi discussion on May 4th taped.

Council Member Goebel asked for a quarterly update on the 2021 Budget. Finance Director Sundberg said that he usually does a quarterly budget report to the Department Heads and he can share that with the Council.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Approved