

**WORKSHOP MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS
MAY 18, 2021**

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 Gunderson and Council Members Greg Urban, Patricia Youker, Steve Rogers and Erik Goebel. The following member was absent: None.

Also present were: City Administrator, Kevin Watson; Assistant City Administrator, Tim Sandvik; Planning/Community Development Director, Nolan Wall; City Engineer/Public Works Director, Jesse Farrell; City Attorney, Caroline Bell Beckman; and Deputy Clerk, Peggy Aho.

1. Discussion about Places of Public Accommodation

City Administrator Watson noted that the Governor lifted the mask mandate last week. He said that the City has shifted some operations in the Council Chambers at the beginning of COVID and asked if the Council would like to keep the arrangements as we've been doing this past year or go back to how meetings were set up prior to COVID. Mayor Gunderson said she would like to hold the Workshops in the Conference room because it's less formal but she would consider how others feel about it. After discussion, the Council decided to go back to the set up pre-COVID.

2. Bluebird PUD Project

Planning/Community Development Director Wall noted that Harstad is at the meeting to address the Council about the Bluebird PUD Project. Wall stated that the current application is an active application concerning the PUD, they initially extended beyond the 60 days. That deadline expires on the 18th of June, so that leaves two Council meetings within the timeline to take action. If there is any extension beyond that that would be due to an applicant's request.

Harstad said he has attended many Council meetings and public hearings and said that the last one was the most uncomfortable meeting he had ever been at. He said that he appreciates the awkward position the Council is in. He said he is not used to a project coming to a vote and not having more consensus from the community. He said it takes two to negotiate. Sometimes the public sector does not understand how the process works and the rules developers have to stick to whether it be a zoning code or laws of the state, there are rules that are spelled out.

Harstad said since the last meeting he attended, he has looked at this project from a different perspective. He may propose coming back with something but he needs the help of the City, City staff, Council and numerous other people, because what he is ultimately going to be asking is as much a community project as a personal one.

Harstad then reviewed a layout of the proposed Bluebird PUD project. He noted that the first thing a developer has to figure out is where the wetlands are. First they would delineate the

wetlands. He said that he looked deeper into City and zoning maps at the history of the wetland on that property. He said that he is working on a new plan and may have an alternate layout to bring forward. He reviewed what the alternative layout could look like including turning the wetland into storm water ponds, a cul de sac off of Tessier Trail, and a trail to Bear Avenue North with a breakaway gate at each end for emergency access.

He asked that the Council find a way to support the plan and let VLAWMO know that you support it.

Mayor Gunderson thanked Harstad for speaking at the meeting and said she sees so much value with regards to the wetland issue.

Council Member Youker said that she likes the idea of cleaning the stormwater and bringing it down properly and it looks like it will alleviate a lot of problems in that area.

Council Member Urban thanked Harstad for bringing forward a new layout. He said he likes what he sees and shared his concern about increased traffic. Urban said that he is not sure he would support the creation of the trail because the neighborhood is happy with their little neighborhood and does not have a need for a trail. Urban also asked why the developer is proposing a pipe to move water to the south rather than a ditch. Harstad said that what happens is one lot to the south has been split into two lots and there is a drainage and utility easement that goes through but then another lot does not. It was determined that where it would need to cross is in private party's hands and a pipe would be put in the area of an easement. Urban asked if it would make sense to work with the City to clean out the ditch in the area and that that might be less cost to the developer. Harstad said he doesn't have the right to go onto anyone's property to clean out the ditch, he is proposing the pipe to make the least impact. He said he will look at that option.

Council Member Rogers questioned the status of the property being deemed a wetland earlier, and that now we are saying it's not a wetland, it's a storm water/sewer. Harstad said he is not making that case. Wall said that first it will first go through the Technical Evaluation Panel which is made up of members from Ramsey County, Bauser, DNR, Core of Engineers, etc. where a plan would get reviewed and they will say yay or nay and then it goes to VLAWMO. There would be many issues outside of this development meaning stormwater management and public safety issues.

Council Member Goebel said that he likes the plan, he thinks this may be a win/win. He asked Harstad to help him learn what the benefit of wetlands are and why we protect them so strongly. Harstad responded that wetlands, in their natural characteristic, have plant life that takes a long time to recreate it, the hydrology the cleansing of the water, because we need water to get back into our system. Stormwater ponds help because they clean a lot of stuff up before the water is discharged into the water system. He said there is also a wetland bank where you replace wetland at 2 to 1 at a different location. He said that the wetland in this area is highly degraded. Goebel asked if we get the same benefit from a stormwater pond as we would from a wetland even in its degraded condition. Harstad replied that it would be better for the City having a pond.

Gunderson said that she thinks she is hearing that there is some support for the developer that he further explore this plan. Harstad said that he is going to take the other plan and set it off to the side, but he needs the City's help to make the new idea happen, but if the new plan gets shut down he will go back to the other plan.

Gunderson thanked Harstad for working on this and that she is excited about the idea of tackling some of the water issues in this neighborhood.

Wall said that he will talk with VLAWMO because there is still significant amount of work that needs to be done on the engineering. Wall will circle back with the developer because there are many steps that need to be done that are out of the control of the City.

City Administrator Watson said that he hears that Council Member Urban is not interested in the trail but Harstad thinks that TAP will see a benefit of the emergency access. Urban again said that he does not want the trail because he hasn't heard any support for the trail from Bear Avenue North residents. Watson stated that it is all about trying to fill a wetland and Harstad thinks that the emergency access may be a benefit and help his project. Urban said he thinks the biggest benefit will be to the properties on Colleen Avenue.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Farrell talked about the stormwater and utility access in the future in this area and said that he thinks public safety is a bigger factor than the water issue. Urban said that Farrell should look at dredging the ditch and have the County look at the culvert size underneath Edgerton.

3. 2021/2022 Work Plan and Goals

City Administrator Watson said that this a discussion at a Workshop back in March where the Council came up with the Workplan for 2021/2022. The documents before the Council were conveyed to them by Mr. Kern and are for discussion of the Council. Watson asked if anyone had any amendments. Mayor Gunderson said that Kern did a nice job of encapsulating the Council's discussion. Watson noted that the report is a synopsis of how the discussion went. Council Member Goebel put some emphasis on sustainability and potentially adding to the document. Gunderson asked if everyone would be okay with that change. Council Member Youker said it looks like sustainability would fit under #5 unless Goebel wants it as a standalone item. Goebel said he would be okay with adding it under # 5.

Mayor Gunderson suspended the Workshop at 6:56 p.m. to go into the Council meeting.

Gunderson called the meeting back to order at 7:59 p.m.

4. Discussion on County Park Camera

City Administrator Watson said that the discussion before the Council today is the up tick of crime in the Ramsey County Sucker Lake Regional Parks, especially in the parking lot area. He said this is for discussion because Council Member Urban has asked how much it would cost to

get a camera on-site. Watson said the cost would be about \$8,000 for a camera, \$5,500 for a new pole, \$3,500 to \$6,000 to run power, plus monthly wireless charge. Watson said that he has not spoken with anyone at the County about sharing in the cost of installation of a camera at this park. He cautioned if we fork over money for this and do it on our own will the County then expect us to do other services on our own that they normally are responsible for. Mayor Gunderson said she agrees that it could be a slippery slope. She said that she likes the idea of installing a camera but without significant support from the County we may be opening the City up to taking on more responsibility from the County. Goebel said he has reached out to Commission Fretham's office but has had no response and said he would reach out to her again. Gunderson said if we pay for it who would be responsible for the data. Urban said he spoke with someone from the County and they said if we build it they will take it over as far as the maintenance and data. He said he also reminded them that the County Parks Department has received a lot of federal money this past year and said that perhaps they could spend some of it on improving the parks.

Goebel asked if we could ask the city of Shoreview to chip in on the costs. Gunderson said we could. She agreed that the cameras are needed, but she doesn't support the Council using 100% of Vadnais Heights taxpayer's dollars to fix this issue but she would be willing to share in the cost. She said that this is a County issue, and the County should at least chip in, and that she thinks Commissioner Fretham should step up and help out the community. Watson thinks a formal letter might be the next step to contact Fretham about the camera and share data on crime statistics and costs with her. Watson said he will draft a letter tomorrow and Gunderson will sign it and send it out. Gunderson agreed that we need a response from the County.

5. Compensation and Job Class Study

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik reviewed the memo and materials regarding the Compensation and Job Class Study. He reminded folks that in 2020 the City was not in compliance with the State's Pay Equity Program. He said with short-term adjustments, the City was deemed compliant after the second submission. He noted that the City currently has 29 full-time employees and several part-time employees and every three years a city is required to go through the Pay Equity Program. He said that the City always has the opportunity to update the job classifications and compensation levels.

Sandvik talked about high level considerations for the City when considering a contract for services for a compensation and job class study. The key considerations are: compliance, retention, and attract talent. Sandvik noted that staff would take direction from the Council and then come back in a couple weeks with a recommendation.

Mayor Gunderson said that this is optional for the City, but that the City has not done this in quite a while. Sandvik said that staff believe it should be done in its entirety. Sandvik said that the best value would be to do all of the components. He said this has been budgeted or, and if need by the City can allocate contingency dollars. Gunderson asked if the City was to do a study more frequently, would it be cheaper to do, Sandvik continued.

Council Member Youker asked what the City could get for \$15,000. Council Member Rogers said the City is only as good as the staff. Sandvik said that he will work with the vendors and bring back for Council's consideration at the next meeting.

6. Other Staff Issues

7. Future City Council Requests:

Council Member Youker said she would like staff to look at getting goats in the City to chew up the buckthorn. City Administrator Watson said he will look into it to see who they could use.

A motion was made by Council Member Youker to adjourn the meeting 8:37 p.m. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Watson, City Administrator