

1 **WORKSHOP MEETING**
2 **OF THE COUNCIL OF THE**
3
4 **CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS**
5 **MARCH 21, 2023**

6 **OPEN MEETING**

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

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10 The following members were present: Mayor Mike Krachmer and Council Members Erik Goebel,
11 Steve Rogers, Kelly Jozwowski, and Katherine Doll Kanne. The following member was absent:
12 None.

13
14 Also present were: City Administrator, Kevin Watson; Assistant City Administrator, Kaylin
15 Clement; Planning/Community Development Director, Nolan Wall; City Engineer/Public Works
16 Director, Jesse Farrell; Fire Chief, Chris Hearden; City Attorney, Caroline Beckman, and City
17 Attorney, Richard Podvin; and Representatives from Tubman, (Jen and Emily).

18
19 **FUTURE CITY COUNCIL REQUESTS**

20 Krachmer asked the Council if they had any requests they would like to discuss at future
21 workshop meetings. Doll Kanne asked if tree replacements could be added as an item to see what
22 the plans are moving forward. Krachmer suggested a report from staff be presented and then
23 discussions can follow.

24 Rogers suggested discussing lowering the speed limit on city-owned residential roads since the
25 city survey revealed a lot of positive responses on the topic. Doll Kanne was curious about what
26 the Ramsey County Sheriff's office would have to say about the topic. Watson said he thinks
27 they would be indifferent since Arden Hills just lowered their speed limits. He stated that there is
28 a process to be followed, but he hasn't looked into it. Krachmer said that most city streets don't
29 get specific enforcement around speeding unless there's an issue. Watson said when he receives
30 calls from residents about speeding, he will call traffic enforcement and they will go out to
31 observe for a while. However, what they've typically discovered is that it is the neighbors that
32 are speeding and they get pretty upset when pulled over since they've been driving on the road a
33 long time. Watson said that he can get feedback from the Sheriff's office, but they wouldn't stop
34 us from making changes to our speed limits. Watson said there would be a cost involved for
35 signage. Hearden said that by State Statutes, if a speed limit on a residential street is not posted,
36 the speed limit is 30 mph. Krachmer thought he saw somewhere a city had posted at most of the
37 entrance points to their city signs saying "unless otherwise posted, residential speed limits are..."

38 Rogers brought up the issue of adding a dog park to the city. He said the issue was discussed
39 with the previous Council. He sees lots of people walking dogs. He thought that if the right
40 location could be found, adding a dog park would be a way to build community where people

41 could get to know each other and would be another amenity to add to the city. Watson said that
42 he could see adding a dog park coming out of the Parks Master Plan process. Doll Kanne brought
43 up the county property on Vadnais Blvd., at Edgerton Street and Centerville Road, stating that
44 she was wondering if the county would ever give up control of the site to the city for a dog park.
45 She felt the area is under-utilized. Others present felt parking could be an issue at that site, but
46 the site could be discussed when working on the Parks Master Plan.

47 Rogers asked about the process for getting non-motorized boats on west Vadnais Lake. Watson
48 said that he thinks it is possible, but it is a matter of getting the details worked out with St. Paul
49 Water who owns the property around the lake. Rogers thought allowing non-motorized boats
50 would be a nice amenity for residents considering most of our waterways are non-navigable.
51 Watson said St Paul Water doesn't want anyone on the east side of Vadnais Lake so they may be
52 concerned with letting people use boats on the west side. Watson felt it was a good idea, but it
53 may take some work to get St. Paul Water on board with it.

54 Krachmer asked about the role of the city in promoting local ranked-choice voting. He said it's a
55 topic he's been interested in and supporting for a long time state-wide. He indicated that it has
56 been adopted in other local municipalities. Watson said he would check into the process to see if
57 Vadnais Heights is even eligible since we are a statutory city.

58 Doll Kanne would like to discuss what our next native planting will be in the parks. Farrell
59 suggested discussing it during staff updates at the regular meeting.

60 **MUNICIPAL PROSECUTION UPDATE**

61 Beckman stated that she's always happy to give updates on what's happening in the criminal
62 world. She welcomed those present to stop out at Maplewood's Court or downtown at the
63 Ramsey County Law Enforcement Center. She also stated that Podvin from her office spends a
64 lot of time in court on zoom. Beckman commented that they have several attorneys from their
65 office handling prosecutions and it's a full-time job.

66 Podvin stated that their office handles all the petty misdemeanors, misdemeanors, and gross
67 misdemeanors that occur within the City of Vadnais Heights. However, they only handle adult
68 criminal prosecution out of their office. The Ramsey County Attorney handles the juvenile
69 prosecution as well as the felony prosecution for Vadnais Heights. He continued that his office
70 also prosecutes city code violations on unsafe, dangerous properties.

71 Podvin gave examples of petty misdemeanors, misdemeanors, and gross misdemeanors for
72 further clarification. He then went into detail talking about charging and how it takes place.
73 When citations are issued, many times the fee can be paid without going to court. He talked
74 about court appearances and arraignments, stating that most court appearances are initially
75 handled on zoom. Their office sees about 50-55 cases three times per week, but that includes
76 other Ramsey County suburbs as well. Beckman added that they also prosecute for Roseville,
77 North St. Paul, and White Bear Township. Beckman stated this is beneficial to all communities
78 they serve since they can consolidate and not bill us for a full day in court.

79 Podvin continued discussing pre-trial hearings that involve negotiations between a prosecutor
80 and a defense attorney. If no resolution is reached, then a six member jury trial is scheduled.
81 They also handle sentencing hearings, court trials, and other contested hearings. He stated that
82 the majority of his time is spent at the Maplewood Courthouse.

83 Podvin said they have a lot of collaboration with law enforcement agencies, including the
84 Ramsey County Sheriff's Office and the State Patrol. They spend a lot of time reviewing reports,
85 gathering evidence, preparing a case for trial, and making charging decisions. He added that not
86 every case that makes it to his office gets charged. They review the facts and make sure there is
87 probable cause. They want to make sure that only crimes that are worth prosecuting move
88 forward.

89 Podvin presented the filings by the City Attorney for the last five years and talked about trends.
90 He then introduced Tubman, which is a non-profit that works with their office to provide legal
91 advocacy for victims of domestic assault. Tubman handles all contacts with victims, including
92 notifications of upcoming court hearings. Tubman also handles the intervention requests of law
93 enforcement. Tubman is the first point of contact for victims to talk about safety planning and
94 resources before a case is even charged. Tubman also helps victims out with obtaining Orders for
95 Protection, which is essentially a no contact order. Additionally, they help with housing, therapy,
96 and a multitude of other services.

97 Podvin discussed the Diversion Program, which is an out of court process for first-time offenders
98 requiring some programming, class attendance, meeting attendance with case workers, and other
99 conditions. After a six month process, if all conditions are met, the case is dismissed. They work
100 with individuals to try to get them heading down a better path.

101 Beckman talked about how domestic violence impacts the family, including the children. Those
102 children go to school and act out. She stated that the circle of violence continues so domestic
103 violence is not just a private family matter. Beckman stated that Tubman supports the victims;
104 whereas, the City Attorney needs the victims to be witnesses, so they perform different roles.
105 Beckman stressed how much Tubman does for the community.

106 Representatives of Tubman were present to answer questions. They presented some written
107 information on their organization for those interested and talked in detail about the services they
108 provide, specifically their legal advocacy services. They stated they have three full-time
109 advocates on the Ramsey County Team. Tubman has really focused on a Racial Equity Plan in
110 the last three years that has come to the forefront of how they do their work. They discussed in
111 detail about that plan and how they are implementing it. They indicated that the work that they
112 do is difficult, but worth it.

113 They indicated that Tubman has experienced some funding cuts. Ramsey County does not fund
114 Tubman at all anymore. Tubman has also received funding cuts from other sources, and have
115 found it difficult to replace those revenue sources. They have already cut staff members and

116 services provided. They would like to increase services, and find more sustainable support and
117 funding for their programs so they're not always at the mercy of grants.

118 They came up with a formula to show how much services cost for Vadnais Heights. They
119 commented that they are visiting all of the communities that they service with these same
120 conversations. For 2022, the services that they provided to Vadnais Heights was about \$14,077
121 in staff time. They are looking to receive at a minimum of \$14,000 annually from Vadnais
122 Heights to help cover service costs going forward.

123 Krachmer asked if Vadnais Heights has ever covered these costs. Watson said that we have not
124 contributed in the past. However, his initial thought when he spoke with Tubman about this is
125 that it is comparable to Northwest Youth & Family Services (NWFS) and we do contribute to
126 them. Watson felt this was a worthy cause for the city to budget for in 2024.

127 Rogers stated that one of the City Charter's goals is to protect and provide safety to our residents,
128 and he felt that Tubman provides that safety. He said he is familiar with Tubman and knows they
129 do good work.

130 Beckman mentioned that by Statute, they are required to provide the victim services. She said
131 that there are law firms that are bringing on their own advocates, but then the boundary between
132 the law firm and victim is no longer there. The law firms doing this will pass on the cost of the
133 added employees to the cities they represent so cities will have to pay for it one way or the other.

134 Krachmer was impressed with the services Tubman provides and thanked them for attending the
135 meeting to educate those present.

136 Doll Kanne was supportive of pursuing funding as a 2024 budget item. Watson said he could
137 look into providing partial funding in 2023 if the Council was supportive. Doll Kanne stated that
138 she is conflicted since she feels that every time they have a workshop, they are talking about
139 spending money in 2023. She said there is a reason there is a budget process and they cannot do
140 everything that's needing to be done this year.

141 Jozwowski asked Watson if he had time to take a quick look at this year's budget to see if there's
142 any funding available. Watson said that the city does have a very small \$50,000 contingency
143 fund available for small things that pop up during the year, but it could go quickly. Doll Kanne
144 was wondering what type of emergencies have surfaced in previous years where the contingency
145 funds have been used.

146 Rogers stated that he was very interested getting the services funded, but was uncomfortable
147 discussing details in front of Tubman. He suggested continuing this issue to another workshop
148 meeting. Doll Kanne appreciated learning so much about Tubman and felt they do such
149 important work. Rogers suggested that if Ramsey County is no longer providing funding, maybe
150 the cities within Ramsey County could band together to say this is important and take the issue to

151 the County Commissioners. Doll Kanne was wondering too if city to city, there was a way to
152 support Tubman. Tubman wasn't sure how successful that strategy would be.

153 Krachmer thanked them again for attending, stated that the Council supports them in spirit, and
154 hoped to support them in other ways in the future. Beckman asked Watson to follow up with her
155 on next steps.

156 **NEW FIRE DEPARTMENT LADDER TRUCK**

157 Hearden stated that the city is in the process of building a new fire engine currently, and the
158 estimated delivery time is going to be about 10-12 months longer than the initial 14 months
159 stated. Therefore, it will be almost two years before they receive the new engine. Hopefully, it
160 will be received by this October. In the 2025 CIP, the proposed replacement of our 2000 ladder
161 truck was included. Since it's taking so much longer to get the engine, he reached out to vendors
162 to find out their expected turn-around time. Currently, turn-around is about 30-36 months for
163 delivery on a ladder truck. Also discussed were the expected cost increases. The vendors had
164 been saying to expect a 3-6% increase per year on the engine. Right now, they are saying to
165 expect a 10-15% increase in costs per year on the ladder truck.

166 Hearden stated that he did get rough estimates on ladder truck costs and it's ranging between
167 \$1.5-\$2M for the new ladder truck. In the 2025 CIP, they had estimated \$1.7M so that puts them
168 in the ballpark. However, that expense wasn't until 2025 so now that number will go up a
169 minimum of 20% in that timeframe. He stated that there is a 3-4 month long process involved
170 that includes meeting with the manufacturers, laying out the specifications within our range, and
171 different options. Once a contract is signed, that's when the 30-36 month build process begins.
172 However, once you sign a contract, you are locked into that price so if it takes longer to build,
173 there isn't an increase in fees. Fees are not expended until the truck is delivered. Hearden stated
174 that depending on which vendor is chosen, options for savings could be explored.

175 Hearden asked if the city was committed to funding the ladder truck in 2025 since he didn't want
176 to put in the time and effort of planning for it, if it's not going to happen. He also restated that
177 currently the \$1.7M budgeted for the ladder truck would not cover the cost if we do not start the
178 process until 2025.

179 Doll Kanne asked if the goal was to start the project in 2025 for delivery in 2028. Hearden stated
180 that at the time it was budgeted, delivery of a ladder truck was expected in 12-14 months. He
181 stated that a commitment is needed right now if we want the ladder truck to be delivered by
182 2025-2026. Doll Kanne asked how the current truck is holding up. He stated that it is 25 years
183 old and is a diesel truck that will last forever. However, he discussed some issues they are having
184 with the truck which is causing concern. The cost of maintenance is increasing too due to its age.

185 Goepel stated that he had fully intended to support the purchase and the city has been saving for
186 it for a while. If the only thing that is changing is a request to get moving sooner so the truck can
187 be received at the same time, he was supportive of the change.

188 Hearden said if they get quotes and the price is less, they could wait a year to start the process.
189 Doll Kanne felt unsure that they would have money for a down payment this year, but fully
190 supported them starting to get specifications. Krachmer gave his blessing in starting to begin the
191 process of obtaining ladder truck specifications.

192 **NO MOW MAY**

193 Doll Kanne suggested moving this topic to the next workshop since she felt there wasn't time left
194 to address it. She stated that several emails were received from residents that were supportive of
195 No Mow May. Krachmer felt the discussion would be brief so he suggested they continue
196 discussing.

197 Jozwowski stated that she would like to pinpoint a city property where it could be done
198 strategically. Doll Kanne stated that she felt the emails supportive of No Mow May were in
199 reference to allowing it on private property. Doll Kanne felt that public property should be
200 considered separately from private property. She said she thinks everyone is okay with allowing
201 No Mow May on private property. In talking to Ken Lacasse of the Public Works Department,
202 she said he commented that No Mow May caused a lot of extra work for them to do it on city-
203 owned property. Doll Kanne suggested allowing Public Works to do it on city property where it
204 made sense, but without additional burden on them. Farrell said that doing No Mow May on city
205 property for only a month was non-productive and generated a lot of comments both good and
206 bad. He stated that there are a lot of areas on city-owned properties that are already left
207 unmaintained.

208 Watson suggested adding No Mow May to the next regular meeting agenda to generate more
209 conversations on the topic. Staff will prepare a resolution waiving the city code regarding
210 mowing during the month of May for private residential and commercial properties. He
211 suggested letting Public Works figure out the public property side. Doll Kanne wanted to discuss
212 methods of informing residents that their neighbors may not appreciate their decision to
213 participate in No Mow May. She said she intentionally mowed the borders of her property since
214 she has neighbors that are very particular about their lawns.

215 **OTHER STAFF ITEMS**

216 None.

217 There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 7:00 pm.

218

219 Respectfully submitted,

220

221 Kevin Watson, City Administrator