

**REGULAR MEETING  
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE  
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS  
APRIL 7, 2020**

The meeting of the Council of the City of Vadnais Heights was held on the above date and called to order by Mayor Gunderson at 4:00 p.m.

Everyone present stood and said the Pledge of Allegiance.

**ROLL CALL**

Upon roll call, the following members were present: Mayor Heidi Gunderson and Council Members: Craig Johnson, Bob Morse, Patricia Youker and Greg Urban.

The following members were absent: None.

Also present were: Kevin Watson, City Administrator, Tim Sandvik, Assistant City Administrator, Nolan Wall, Planning/Community Development Director, Jesse Farrell, Public Works Director, Bob Sundberg, Finance Director, Chris Hearnden, Interim Fire Chief, Caroline Beckman, City Attorney and Peggy Aho, Deputy City Clerk.

City Administrator Watson provided several announcements.

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

Upon motion by Johnson, seconded by Youker, it was

20-04-059      “RESOLVED that the April 7, 2020 Regular Meeting Agenda be approved as presented.”

Ayes – 5                      Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

**APPROVAL OF MINUTES**

A.      March 17, 2020 Regular Workshop Meeting

Upon motion by Urban, seconded by Morse, it was

20-04-060      “RESOLVED, to approve the March 17, 2020 Regular Workshop Meeting Minutes as presented.”

Ayes – 5                      Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

B. March 17, 2020 Regular Council Meeting

Upon motion by Morse, seconded by Youker, it was

20-04-061 “RESOLVED, to approve the March 17, 2020 Regular Council Meeting Minutes as presented.”

Ayes – 5                      Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

**APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA**

Upon motion by Youker, seconded by Urban, it was

20-04-062 “RESOLVED, that the Consent Agenda Items #7A-7H for the April 7, 2020 meeting be approved as follows:

- A. Consider Approving Claims #79078 Through #79161 and Electronic Claims #1482 Through #1486 for Payment
- B. Consider Approving Execution of a Partnership Agreement with Mn/DOT
- C. Consider Authorizing Sale of Surplus Equipment
- D. Consider Approval of an Amended 2020 Compensation/Employee Recognition Plan
- E. Consider Accepting and Acknowledging F&M Bank Movie in the Park Sponsorship
- F. Consider Approval of Two Polling Place Agreements with Ramsey County
- G. Extension of Lawful One-Day Gambling Permit for Ducks Unlimited Chapter 209
- H. Consider First Amendment to a Development Agreement with The Luther Company, LLLP.”

Ayes – 5                      Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

**OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Mayor Gunderson opened the meeting to the public for comment at 4:05 p.m. There being no one that wished to speak, Gunderson closed it at 4:05 p.m.

**PRESENTATION(S): None**

**PUBLIC HEARINGS: None**

**OLD BUSINESS:**

A. Update City Council on COVID-19 Response

City Administrator Watson gave an update on the City's response to COVID-19. He noted that the City has split shifts for some of the departments. Public Works staff are working on Saturday to spread the staff to three 10 hours shifts. Watson noted that City business is continuing to operate as usual even through City Hall is closed. He said that he is continuing to monitor what peer cities are doing. There is an interest in everyone being the same from city to city, especially those that share the Ramsey County Sheriff's services. The Sheriff's office has a COVID-19 Help Team that can help anyone that needs help.

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik noted that when staff are in City Hall they are spread out and doing split shifts and are able to accomplish what normally gets done, it just looks a little bit different. Will continue to plan and respond as is appropriate. The Park and Rec Department is in a holding pattern with events and activities cancelled through May10.

Public Works Director Farrell noted that the Public Works and Parks Department staff operated in split shifts the first two weeks, two 10 hour shifts with one crew Monday and Tuesday and another Thursday and Friday, and when the Governor extended the order for the month of April, Public Works was falling behind so they have modified it to do two work crews doing three 10 hours shifts (Monday through Wednesday and Thursday through Saturday). Farrell said they are still falling behind on a few things. Staff are doing a better job with cleaning and have a proposal to contract for some sanitizing services. They also have workers in separate vehicles in order to isolate them.

Interim Fire Chief Hearden stated that the Fire Department is operating normally with limited crews doing level one response and staging in the area and working with Allina and the Ramsey County Sheriff's office. He noted that it is difficult to social distance when in fire apparatus so they have some guidelines in to protect themselves with certain PPE. Hearden said that the Department has also implemented new cleaning guidelines. He said that things are normal, although a little more stressful.

Finance Director Sundberg noted that the Finance Department functions are relatively unaffected and are operating normally. Renee Prola has been very flexible and comes in when needed and is currently running the utility bills. She has also been issuing a lot of refunds for cancelled Parks and Rec programs. He said that Accounts Payable is running normally. Sundberg said that the City has plenty of cash reserves and a healthy fund balance and property tax revenues come in early July. He also noted that that building permits and business activity have been continuing.

Planning/Community Development Director Wall noted that the Building Department is small and they are rotating working remotely or in the office as needed. He said that the City's contracted building official continues to do inspections and is pushing off any nonessential interior inspections. Wall said that construction projects are going strong. He is working to make sure the VHEDC and the City's website have up to date information on business resources which are changing daily. He said that the only project on hold is the Luther Cadillac project, all others continue to move forward.

Watson noted that staff have been doing an excellent job navigating the new normal and are prepared to continue to operate like this if need be. There are some things that the Council needs to move forward on and will need to start thinking about those.

Council Member Urban asked how the City will proceed with the public hearings for the At Home Apartment project. Wall said that the Public Hearing has been rescheduled for Wednesday, April 15. He said that the first part of Public Hearing process was done with presentations by staff and the developer and the Planning Commission then tabled the Public Hearing to a later date. He said he is hopeful that the Commission will make a recommendation to the Council at the April 15<sup>th</sup> meeting. The City has set up an online submittal form for anyone who wishes to comment on the project prior to the Public Hearing. They have also set up a Google sign up page for anyone that wishes to speak at the Public Hearing. Intent would then be to have another public hearing before the Council at their May 5<sup>th</sup> meeting.

Urban asked why the Planning Commission did not to take action at their last meeting. Wall said that it was predetermined before the meeting that the meeting would only have presentations and that the Hearing would be continued to a different date. Information on this was put on the City's web page and we strongly encourage people to make electronic comments.

Urban asked what is open and what is closed in the City parks. Watson said that the playgrounds and shelters have been closed and staff have put up signage. Urban asked who would be consulted prior to any further closures. Watson said that the COVID-19 Committee consisting of himself, the Mayor, Council Member Johnson and various City staff made the decision to close the playgrounds and shelters because the Governor had suggested that playgrounds be closed. He said if they decide to close basketball or tennis courts, they will circle back with the Committee as well and will take direction from the Governor. Urban urged the City to keep them open so that people can go outside. He said that we need to make decisions in the best interest of our City and not just because our neighbors do something.

Council Member Morse asked Finance Director Sundberg about the City making payments on time or are we seeing more late fees being paid. Sundberg said he hasn't

noticed any difference. He said we will have a pretty good idea when the first quarter financials are done.

Gunderson thanked everyone for their hard work.

## **NEW BUSINESS**

A. Planning Case 20-002: Dakota UPREIT LP – Planned Unit Development Amendment and Site Plan Review at 905-955 East County Road E (Planning/Community Development Director)

Planning/Community Development Director Wall reviewed the applicants request for a development amendment and a site plan review. The applicant purchased the property in 2016 and at the same time the area was rezoned. He noted that Xperience Fitness Center closed in November 2019 which has left a large open space. Foss Swim School has been identified as one of the main tenants. They are proposing to split the space to up to 3 suites. Staff does recommend approval of the request based on the findings of fact with four conditions. At this point they have indicated that their desire is to find only one other tenant in addition to Foss but are asking for approval to split the space into up to three different units in an effort to save time.

Council Member Youker asked if there is anyone else interested in the remaining space. Wall replied that he is not sure but that he does know that they have been in negotiations with a national tenant for the remaining space. He said until they get a signed lease they don't divulge who the tenants are. He said that Foss Swim School has submitted applications and are anxious to get started. Council Member Morse asked if we know how long the lease will be for and when they expect to open. Wall said this is not known by the City and the City is not involved in that. Morse said he wonders about inspections of the space, and that he is assuming the City has already looked at that the safety and working order of the pool. Wall replied that we have not inspected it yet, and is waiting to issue the permit until the City Council approves the amendment.

Upon motion by Johnson, seconded by Morse, it was

20-04-063 “RESOLVED, that the Council approves a Resolution approving a planned unit development amendment and site plan request at 905-955 East County Road E with the following conditions:

1. A development agreement amendment between the property owner, and all others with interests in the subject property, shall be entered into with the City, to be recorded at the applicant's cost with the offices of the Ramsey County Recorder and/or Register of Titles, prior to issuance of a building permit.

2. Building and demolition permits in compliance with all applicable code standards shall be submitted prior to commencement of any construction activities on the subject property, to be reviewed/approved administratively.
3. Sign permits in compliance with all applicable code standards shall be submitted prior to any sign(s) being installed/relocated on the subject property, to be reviewed/approved administratively.
4. The existing “minor anchor” space shall not be divided into more than three separate tenant spaces without approval by the City Council, after review by the Planning Commission.”

Ayes – 5                      Nays - 0

The resolution was adopted.

B. Authorize City Administrator to Allocate Resources to House/Feed First Responders and Public Works Staff (City Administrator)

City Administrator Watson noted that he is looking to get some authority from the Council that in the event some of our staff have a family member or someone they are close to comes in contact with COVID-19, we want to give them the option to stay in a hotel room and still serve the City in whatever capacity we need. He is looking for the authority to spend up to \$25,000 on hotels and food if we have to.

Upon motion by Johnson, seconded by Youker, it was

20-04-064      “RESOLVED, that the Council authorizes the City Administrator to spend up to \$25,000 to house/feed first responders, public works staff and other critical staff to ensure continuity of operations in the City.”

Ayes – 5                      Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

**COUNCIL AND DEPARTMENT REPORTS**

Public Works Director/City Engineer Farrell noted that one of the projects we are working on is the box culvert work which is going to begin tomorrow on Oak Creek Drive West. They will be doing a lot of tree removal. He said that he has met with most of the property owners in the area and has also sent out letters about the work and who to contact with questions. He said that they will be erring on the side of removing more trees because every tree is a future maintenance problem and will be removing sediment and will be putting in riprap. He said that there will

need to be a temporary closure of the road, along with the noise disruption associated with a large generator running 24/7.

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said that he spoke with Frattalone about his 42 lot subdivision and Frattalone indicated that he intends to continue his project as soon as he gets all the permits in place.

Finance Director Sundberg told people that when they get their utility bills, and based on Council direction they will be flexible on payments.

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik appreciates staff and City Council with their patience and being flexible.

City Attorney Beckman said that their office is open, but the building is closed. Prosecution charges continue, but all trials and other criminal cases are on hold.

Council Member Morse said Public Works has done a great job in getting out and working on the roads. He asked that people try to use local businesses to help them out. He said that he had recently held a virtual dinner, people ordered takeout food and supported local businesses. He noted that the White Bear Chamber site has a list of businesses that are open and that are delivering and also think about purchasing gift cards as well from the local businesses.

Council Member Urban said Morse's comments are good comments. This is a tough time for small businesses. He hopes we can keep the parks and rec items open so that residents have something to do. He urged staff to keep things open.

Council Member Youker thanked staff for all their hard work. She added this is an unusual circumstance and everyone has kept up with it. She thanked the Mayor for the Easter egg idea and for Katie's help in getting it out to people.

Council Member Johnson said it's been a tough couple of weeks. He has been trying to support the local businesses whom are saying that they've seen about a 75 percent drop in business. He said that as he has been out walking the City trails he sees that people are doing a good job at social distancing.

City Administrator Watson thanked the Council for their flexibility in this unique time and we are trying our best to continue to serve the residents. He said that they are allowing folks to put up signs with no particular timeframe. He said that the Council should expect to hear more about liquor licenses at the next meeting which get renewed in July. He said he has been on a couple phone calls with the County, and as Sundberg noted, property taxes are our main source of revenue.

Mayor Gunderson thanked staff for their hard work and flexibility, and thanked the Council for their diligence and residents for using local businesses. Stay healthy.

There being no further business, Council Member Johnson made a motion to adjourn the meeting at 4:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Kevin Watson, City Administrator

Approved