

**REGULAR MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS
JUNE 1, 2021**

The 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 7:09 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Upon roll call, the following members were present: Acting Mayor Greg Urban, and Council Members Patricia Youker, Steve Rogers and Erik Goebel.

The following members were absent: Mayor Heidi Gunderson.

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

Everyone present stood and said the Pledge of Allegiance.

City Administrator Watson provided several announcements.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

Upon motion by Goebel, seconded by Youker, it was

21-06-087 “RESOLVED that the June 1, 2021 Regular Meeting Agenda be approved as presented.”

Ayes – 4 Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES

A. May 18, 2021 Regular Workshop Meeting

Upon motion by Youker, seconded by Goebel, it was

21-06-088 “RESOLVED that the Council approves the May 18, 2021 Regular Workshop Meeting minutes as presented.”

Ayes – 4 Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

B. May 18, 2021 Regular Council Meeting

Upon motion by Goebel, seconded by Youker, it was

21-06-089 “RESOLVED, that the Council approves the May 18, 2021 Regular Council Meeting minutes as presented.”

Ayes – 4 Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

APPROVAL OF CONSENT AGENDA

Upon motion by Youker, seconded by Goebel, it was

21-06-090 “RESOLVED, that the Council approves the Consent Agenda Items #7A through #7E for the June 1, 2021 meeting be approved as follows:

- A. Consider Approving Claims #80663 through #80716 and Electronic Claims #1630 through 1634 for Payment
- B. Consider Approving Temporary On-Sale Liquor License for Vadnais Heights Lions during Heritage Days
- C. Consider Amending City Council’s 2021 Meeting Calendar to Cancel the July 6, 2021 Meeting
- D. Consider Approving a Public Outdoor Permit for F&M Bank for their Annual Have Lunch With Us Event scheduled for July 20, 2021
- E. Consider Approving an Agreement with St. Paul Area Chamber of Commerce.”

Ayes – 4 Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Acting Mayor Urban opened the meeting to the public at 7:12 p.m. There being no one that wished to speak, Urban closed the meeting to the public at 7:12 p.m.

PRESENTATIONS:

A. HRA Presentation:

Kari Collins, Ramsey County Community and Economic Development Director, and Commissioner Fretham, gave a PowerPoint presentation on regional economic competitiveness, strengthening of our region, and plan for regional economic development. She gave a history of the economic development in the County.

The County hired an Economic Development Director and decided to do review of economic competitiveness and inclusion plan.

Next steps Ramsey County CED will begin working with Economic Development staff across the County to develop programming across the HRA area. They had HRA levy authority since 1993 which they have not used. At the end of 2019, they launched the County Means Business platform. The Economic Competitiveness and Wellness plan has been the result of their development. As part of the collection of data they wanted to understand their fiscal health and did a community profile of each city. She said the full report is on the website. As part of the Plan, a variety of recommendations have been outlined. They will be going through a request for Board action in July which will set the process for levying funds in 2022 which will be part of the budget process in December.

Acting Mayor Urban thanked Collins and Fretham for coming and giving the Council an overview of the HRA. Urban asked if they were here to tell us what they are doing or a discussion to see what interest the City has in participating. Collins said that this program is a part of the County's larger budget in December. She said that at this time, the plan is to set a levy amount in 2022 which will include Vadnais Heights. Urban said in total the levy will be about \$250,000 a year from the City of Vadnais Heights, which equates to a 5% increase to the City's residents, so there are cost impacts that are concerning. He said she said that ½ of the money would be used outside of St. Paul and he asked how she sees the funds being used in Vadnais Heights. She replied that it would be for equity preservation, single family rehabilitation, opportunities for affordable housing and for redevelopment. She said that the City would need to request the funds and also pledge support for the project.

Urban asked who and how would individuals qualify for funds for rehabilitation of single family homes. Collins said they would need to qualify as a low to moderate income individual or be in a low to moderate census tract when applying for a HUD loan and she thinks these funds may work the same way.

Council Member Youker said she looked at the Economic Inclusion and Competitiveness Plan and is wondering why the HRA taxing authority hasn't used it before. Collins replied that about 5 years ago the County decided they wanted to go the path of an Economic Development Authority and for an EDA Ramsey County would need to get special legislation and all the communities would need to buy in, but the communities did not want to, so it was pulled. But in last few years there has been an emphasis on housing infrastructure and the Board decided they wanted to do something and be a part of the solution.

Youker asked how this differs from the Metro HRA, Met Council Housing and Redevelopment Authority. Collins said the Metro HRA owns homes and public housing, they have their housing stock and manage the families that rent them. She said it would be the County's goal to get a finance for projects and work with the developers.

Youker asked how the program will be measured. Collins said one way to measure it would be to do an annual report. Youker asked about the oversight plans and what happens if we find out that the funding isn't doing what it meant to do. Collins said if the data is trending that Vadnais Heights is not seeing a return on the investment they could invite the HRA back in, but in the meantime that City staff would sit down with them earlier to say that it is not working. She said

they do not want to create programming that is redundant or doesn't work and that she is committed to the process and in working with City staff.

Council Member Rogers had a question about process, he said he is hearing there is minimal staff and no comprehensive expansive program. He asked who will be assigned from Vadnais Heights and how long would it take to get feedback if there are questions. Collins said they actively working to hire a full time staff HUD specialist/multifamily specialist. They want to build up staff capacity this year so they can be part of the conversation. On the redevelopment side they have identified an opportunity for a TOD specialist and also an entrepreneurial expert. This will build out the team to advance the plan. Rogers asked who the City would work with. Collins said at this time she would be the point person and that they intend to hold monthly meetings as they build out the plan.

Council Member Goebel thanked Ramsey County for coming out. He said he thinks it's a good thing for the residents of Vadnais Heights.

Urban asked if it is fair to say, over a five year basis, we can expect that what our City puts in it will get back. Collins said that is absolutely the goal. He asked about one thing that was discussed which was reinvestment in single family properties, what sort of investment could we expect in our City so people that are on fixed incomes might expect to get assistance. Collins said that at this stage she can't give specifics on that particular programming but she urged him to have conversations with staff to ensure when building out programming that single family would be part of the plan. Urban encouraged it to be a program that we think of as small and get down to single/owner occupied homes. He said we need to keep the single family housing market strong and in good shape and he hopes that would be a priority and focus of this program.

Commissioner Fretham, spoke about the program and said that Ramsey County wants to help fund redevelopment and said that if anyone has any questions they should contact her.

Urban brought up security issue in Sucker Lake Park because there has been historically high usage and high rate of break-ins that came with the increased use. He said that the City is hoping for some help with getting a camera installed in the parking lot in the County Park. Fretham replied that she is waiting for feedback from County staff and that she has requested data from them about the parks they have prioritized. She said that she will follow up with the City on what she hears back and also with more information about the decision making process and the prioritization of the projects.

Fretham suggested people take part in the 21st Century Parks and Recreation and said that she would send out, in a follow-up email, a link to the survey.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

OLD BUSINESS

- A. Consider Approving the 2021/2022 Workplan and Goals

City Administrator Watson noted before the Council for final approval is the 2021/22 workplan and goals that were developed at a Council Workshop in March with assistance from a consultant. He said that at that Workshop, the Council reviewed the last plan, conducted a swat analysis and developed new goals for 2021/2022. Watson reviewed the five goals.

Council Member Goebel said that at a Workshop the Council also talked about adding pursuing sustainable opportunities to the goals under #5. Watson replied that this will be added to the final document.

Upon motion by Youker, seconded by Goebel, it was

#21-06-91 “RESOLVED that the Council approves the 2021/2022 Workplan and Goals as amended with the addition of pursuing sustainable opportunities.”

Ayes – 4

Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

B. Consider Approving an Agreement for a Compensation and Job Class Study

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik noted that at a previous Workshop the Council discussed the process of doing a job and classification study by contracting with an outside party. Sandvik noted that the importance of doing this is compliance, retention, and to attract talent. He noted that staff have reviewed four different quotes and processes.

Acting Mayor Urban noted that the quote from Abdo Eick & Meyers is broken down by multiple items. He asked what Option Sandvik is recommending. Sandvik noted that staff are advocating for the higher price of the two options. He noted that staff recommend the increased funding needed come from the contingency fund.

Sandvik said that after the study is completed, staff would report to the Council with options and then Council would decide what to do at that time.

Council Member Rogers asked if the City goes ahead with this plan, how often would the City need to redo it. Sandvik said there is a precise number for that, the City hasn't done it for a several years. Sandvik said that he thinks there is an inherent efficiency with doing this every few years.

Upon motion by Goebel, seconded by Youker, it was

#21-06-92 “RESOLVED that the Council authorizes the City Administrator to execute a contract for services with Abdo Eick & Meyers LLP for a Position Classification & Compensation Study as recommended by staff.”

Ayes – 4

Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

NEW BUSINESS

A. Consider Resolution Supporting the Pursuit of an Alternative Plan for the Bluebird Grove Planned Unit Development

Planning/Community Development Director Wall discussed the Bluebird Grove PUD project and said that the last action taken by the Council concerning the application was when it tabled the action on the PUD. He noted that the applicant has subsequently presented an alternative development plan for the PUD. In the new plan, there would be no extension of Bear Avenue North but it would require wetland filling and mitigation, which will be guided by a separate regulatory process guided by the Conversation Act that is monitored by VLAWMO.

Wall noted that the current PUD plan expires on June 18th if the developer decides that the alternative development plan will not work, the City would have to take action at its next meeting on the original plan unless the developer requests an extension. He said only the developer has the right to extend. There are a number of moving parts with the alternative plan but effectively there is still pre engineering and analysis and staff and VLAWMO review. Wall noted that staff put together at the developer's request, a resolution that came out of a discussion at the last Council Meeting that the developer is asking the Council to consider.

Acting Mayor Urban said that this new proposal is a great plan and said that he thinks the biggest winners on this alternative plan are those that live on Colleen. He questioned that part of the resolution has to do with a paved trail between the Tessier Trail extension and Bear Avenue North. He said he is not on board with the trail, and asked how much not having the trail would hurt this proposal from potentially getting approval? Wall responded that he doesn't know and said that there needs to be justification to the proposed benefits.

Urban said he is opposed to the trail being put in off of Bear Avenue North. City Administrator Watson said that the developer has said that he thinks the trail is needed to get the project approved by the TAC Board and that if the Council asks for any changes to the alternative plan, he would come back with the original plan and then ask the Council to make a decision at the next meeting on that plan.

Urban said if the Council is only being asked to pass a resolution in support of the new plan, he could go along with that.

Council Member Youker said if it comes down to having to choose between the previous project and this one, she would support the new one. Council Member Rogers said that

the Bear Avenue North residents are very clear in that they don't want a road, he thinks the new plan may be a solution.

Upon motion by Rogers, seconded by Goebel, it was

#21-06-93 “RESOLVED that the Council adopts the attached resolution in support of the applicant exploring an alternative development plan for the Bluebird Grove Planned Unit Development.”

Ayes – 4 Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

B. Consider Approval of an Individual 2021/2022 Liquor License and Renewals

City Administrator Watson noted that before the Council for approval is approval of the 15 individual liquor licenses for the period July 1, 2021 to June 30, 2022. He also noted that the City is still waiting to hear from two applications.

Upon motion by Youker, seconded by Rogers, it was

#21-06-94 “RESOLVED that the Council approves the 15 individual liquor licenses for the period of July 1, 2021 through June 30, 2022 conditioned on the establishments passing their Fire Certificate of Occupancy inspections.”

Ayes – 4 Nays – 0

The resolution was adopted.

COUNCIL AND STAFF REPORTS

Fire Chief Hearden noted that the Health and Public Safety Committee met, but they did not have a quorum. He said that they will be posting to fill vacancies on the Committee and then will develop a schedule for the remainder of the year.

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik noted that the Parks and Rec have opened up the summer activities. He said that the City's website has all events posted. Sandvik said that Public Works is still looking for seasonal Public Works staff.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Farrell noted that the street reconstruction project activity will begin soon and that the water tower project may begin in early July. The lift station project will begin in August and the contractor will need to accommodate traffic control for school uses. Farrell noted that MnDOT will be starting a project next month to connect MnPass on I35E to the north. City staff have been doing patching on City streets.

City Attorney Beckman noted that there has been a pre-trial on the DNR water appropriation appeals made back in 2018. She said that the City is consolidated with 18 other parties. She will work with Farrell on how to address the appeal.

City Administrator Watson noted that on June 17 the City will dedicate the playground at Kohler Park in Joe Momsen's name.

Council Member Rogers asked when Martin and Suzanne road construction will begin. Farrell replied that we should have an updated schedule sometime later this week. Rogers noted that the City wants to make Heritage Days the best weekend ever. He asked those interested in volunteering to reach out to Katie Everett.

City Administrator Watson noted that staff will be meeting with people about using goats for buckthorn removal.

Motion to adjourn by Council Member Youker at 9:25 p.m. Meeting adjourned.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Watson, City Administrator