

**WORKSHOP MEETING  
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE  
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS  
JULY 20, 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; Planning/Community Development Director, Nolan Wall; City Engineer/Public Works Director, Jesse Farrell; Fire Chief Chris Hearden; Deputy Clerk, Peggy Aho and City Attorney, Erik Hartmann.

At 5:30 p.m., Mayor Gunderson opened the meeting. At 5:30 p.m. she closed the Workshop and the Council went into a Closed Session.

At 5:55 p.m., Mayor Gunderson resumed the Workshop.

1. Discussion about the Commons

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik gave an update on the Vadnais Heights Commons Committee noting that they have met a number of times over the past few months. He noted that the Commons Committee has reviewed revenues and expenditures for 2020 and to date in 2021.

Sandvik noted that the City will need to begin reinvesting in areas of the venue. He said that there are some pieces of equipment in the kitchen that need to be replaced as well as improvements to the exterior of the building.

Sandvik said that how people are reserving the Commons is changing as well as what it is being used for. He said in prior years, people reserved out 2 to 3 years, but they are not seeing that anymore.

Sandvik said he is looking for input from the Council on things he noted in the memo. Council Member Youker said that it would be nice to review the current and historical rates that the City has been paying to Palmer and the pricing discounts for residents, weekly rates, etc.

Mayor Gunderson said that conducting RFP for vendors was done when she first came on the Council. She asked if this is the type of RFP process Sandvik is recommending. Sandvik said that he is advocating for going to go out for RFP for all but two services, Palmer and MJW Services (building hosts, clean up and set up). He recommends that the City make small increases to their current contracts. He said they are talking about expanding the preferred vendor list, and also perhaps formalizing a relationship with a hotel in the area.

Gunderson asked if Palmer would come in and do a presentation. Sandvik said that we could get her in and get a presentation on how things have been changing.

Council Member Rogers asked what is the vision we have for the Commons, it has been a very popular wedding venue but this may change because of the trends. He said that the Committee came to the agreement that we are not in the wedding business, and can't keep up with the trends, but we can keep investing in what we do have and what we do well, and let's focus on filling it up with community events as much as possible. He said let's focus on what we are good at and invest in what we can, he said that the Commons is the one center of town.

Youker said perhaps we could add a marketplace or vendor/resource fair. Those different types of activities, because there is so much more that can be done there. Sandvik said when we talk about value to the community, there is also an opportunity that we use it as a chip with some of the organizations we work with, and there are opportunities for those operations to use it at certain times. Sandvik said we need to look at updating prices for 2023 and talked about options for an opportunity to expand the neighborhood community rate. Sandvik said that the City has formal relationships, but there could be an opportunity to get people in the door for an at cost rate or a slight revenue generator.

Council Member Goebel asked what percentage of time is the Commons occupied, weekend versus weekday. Sandvik said in 2013, 2014 and 2015 it was about 65% booked and annually about 250 total. He said that the most weekend events we've had was 78.

Goebel asked if we have ever looked at a dynamic pricing model. Sandvik replied no, but we do get into the reasonable pricing and we could certainly explore dynamic pricing.

Sandvik said that staff have begun budgeting more for maintenance and equipment. He said he will begin bringing contracts forward for Council consideration at future Council meetings and that he will schedule presentation by Ms. Palmer at a future Workshop.

## 2. Munch Bunch:

The Munch Bunch (Alysse and Dan Sorensen) made a presentation about their services. They are proposing two grazing's per year for 1 to 2 years and one grazing in years 3 to 5 depending on seed bank, and possibly planting native seedlings after presence of seed-producing buckthorn removed from area. The Sorensen's showed photos and reviewed their operating standards. They said that the goats stay on site 24 hours a day and receive water, minerals and salt and staff usually check on them every 2 to 4 days. Munch Bunch sets up net fencing and moves goats to new areas as needed. Public communication includes a Goat Drop to answer questions, professional signage placed on paths, and fence warning signs placed every 1 to 2 feet on the energized fences. Live view and trail cameras are set up on site, and a public phone number that reaches all herders is posted.

Watson noted that the goats will be arriving on the 28<sup>th</sup> of July and staff sent out a letter to all the property owners along the fence line.

## 3. Other Staff Items:

Council Member Goebel noted that there will be a meteor shower peaking on August 12<sup>th</sup> to the 13<sup>th</sup> and he said it would be nice to have a dark sky event and relax the rules for the parks so that

people can go to the parks and see the meteors. City Administrator said we can promote it on the website. Mayor Gunderson and other Council Members were fine with that idea and moved it to Council Department Reports.

The meeting adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Approved