

**WORKSHOP MEETING
OF THE COUNCIL OF THE
CITY OF VADNAIS HEIGHTS
AUGUST 4, 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; Fire Chief Chris Hearden; and Deputy Clerk, Peggy Aho.

1. Presentation on Audit

Finance Director Sundberg introduced Bonnie Schweiger, Abdo, Eick and Meyers, who gave a presentation on the audit Abdo completed for the City. Her presentation included a summary of the detailed audit report and management communication. She noted that the City's audit opinion is clean and unmodified. Schweiger said that in addition to financial statement audit they went through the City's federal expenditures from the CARES Act fund and everything was spent appropriately.

She reviewed key performance ratios and debt ratios in our sizes groups, and then expenditures per capita.

2. 2022 Budget

City Administrator Watson noted that the Council was presented with a draft 2022 Budget at the last workshop. Staff are asking if the Council has any direction to give staff or any questions. Council Member Urban asked where we left off at the discussion about a proposed tax increase. Finance Director Sundberg noted that the draft budget has the levy at 10.3 percent. Urban said he would like us to be in the single digits. Mayor Gunderson said if the Council wants the levy to be set at a lower rate, it needs to decide what to remove from the budget. She suggested having a bigger discussion at the next Workshop and said that she is open to ideas.

Council Member Goebel said that he and Farrell had spoken about adding an additional person in Public Works. Goebel asked what type of impact adding another staff person would have on the levy. Farrell said that it would be significant, about an additional 1 to 2 %. Farrell noted that there is also a demand for increased infrastructure spending.

The Council discussed how much the average residence pays in taxes to the City. Sundberg noted that that amount is about \$500 and with a 10% increase to the levy it would be an additional \$50 a year.

Gunderson said that the Council needs to make some decisions and come back to next Workshop to have additional discussion on the levy and budget. City Administrator Watson suggested waiting until we see what the numbers are from the County and then come back to a Workshop in September to discuss. He said that once staff receives the information from the County, they will send the numbers to the Council

3. EAB Dollars

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik talked about emerald ash borer (EAB) and said action will be in front of the Council tonight because staff are asking for additional dollars for this project. Sandvik noted that it has gotten to the point that infested trees have to come down, and the City has been in a reactive phase. Staff found an opportunity to apply to the State to receive grant funding. He is asking the Council to consider at tonight's Council meeting, a management plan and authorization to submit a grant application. He said that, annually, the DNR puts out grant funding for mitigation, treatment and removal and also replacement of emerald ash. Sandvik noted that a requirement to submitting an application, is that the City must have an EAB Management Plan in place. Sandvik said that the grant application we would be applying for does not include funding for replacement and that the City would advocate for a mitigation and removal component in the amount of \$75,000.

Sandvik noted that the City would be required to do a match to the grant if it was received. Sandvik noted that this item is on the Council meeting agenda tonight under new business.

4. Community Cat Discussion

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik reviewed the cost of feral cats to the community. He said that feral cats do have a unique set of protections in the state statutes. He said City Code does have language about no feeding of wild fowl and deer being allowed in the City, but nothing specific to the feeding of feral cats.

Sandvik noted that he is looking for feedback on possible code amendment and/or entering into a contract for spading and neutering cats.

City Administrator Watson said that the City needs to adjust its policy so we can penalize anyone caught feeding feral costs, and also needs to decide if we should address a safe neutering program. Council Member Urban said he can't spend support spending \$5,000 for this.

The Council discussed putting out a letter about feeding of feral costs being a general public nuisance. Sandvik said we could start with that.

4. Other staff items:

Assistant City Administrator Sandvik noted that staff are beginning to gear up for the community survey. He said that the 2016 community survey is on the City's website and said he would appreciate if Council could take a look at and review the questions that were asked. He encouraged the Council to reach out to City Administrator Watson with any questions.

Planning/Community Development Director Wall said that staff have met with the buyers that are interested in the Garceau property. He said that they want to be on the next Council agenda to formally request approval of a purchase agreement. Wall said that the buyer will be working on a press release. Wall noted that staff are expecting something from the County Attorney's office about the mobile gas station on Rice Street and the possible purchase by the City. He noted that once they receive something from the County, they will bring to the Council at a closed session, perhaps sometime in September.

The meeting adjourned at 6:51 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kevin Watson, City Administrator

Approved