

***Community Engagement Committee Members***

Tim Cheesebrow  
Leslie Duling McCollam  
Heather Gustafson  
Canace Yates  
Jessica Merchant  
Imran Merchant  
Brion Curran

The City of Vadnais Heights  
800 East County Road E  
Vadnais Heights, MN 55127  
*Phone: 651.204.6000*

***City Council Liaison***

Erik Goebel  
Mayor Heidi Gunderson (alternate)

***Staff Liaison***

Tim Sandvik

**MEETING OF THE  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
Wednesday March 10, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.  
MEETING VIA ZOOM: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/88393778715>**

**AGENDA**

1. Call to order
2. Review February 24, 2021 Minutes
3. CEC Member Presentations
4. Adjourn

***Community Engagement Committee Members***

Tim Cheesebrow  
Leslie Duling McCollam  
Heather Gustafson  
Canace Yates  
Jessica Merchant  
Imran Merchant  
Brion Curran - absent

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***City Council Liaison***

Erik Goebel  
Mayor Heidi Gunderson (alternate) - absent

***Staff Liaison***

Tim Sandvik, Assistant City Administrator  
Kevin Watson, City Administrator

**MEETING MINUTES  
COMMUNITY ENGAGEMENT COMMITTEE  
Wednesday February 24, 2021 - 6:30 p.m.  
MEETING VIA ZOOM: <https://us02web.zoom.us/j/86858695108>**

**MINUTES**

1. Call to order

In attendance were Leslie Duling McCollam, Heather Gustafson, Candace Yates, Jessica merchant, Imran Merchant, Council Member Goebel, Assistant City Administrator Tim Sandvik and City Administrator Keven Watson. Meeting was called to order at 6:32

2. Review January 21, 2021 Minutes

No updates

3. Cultural Competency for Existing Communications (Leslie Duling McCollam – introduction)

Mr. Sandvik introduce Leslie’s item.

Leslie explained that in her professional capacity, she has worked with groups to better understand effectiveness of current communications. Some demographics, whether defined by age, race, ethnicity, other cultural considerations, or even geography may be missed and professional feedback could be advantageous. Tim Sandvik noted that he has spoken with some firms who provide this service as well other local governments who pursue these efforts.

Candace Yates shared that it may be helpful to introduce this concept directly to the City Council, Commissions/Committees and staff. She added its important to be sure we properly survey our community to understand who is in our community – should this work (cultural commentary consideration(s)) be done before or after better knowing our community?

Imran Merchant agreed with Candace in that training is important, but cost needs to considered – and understanding in what order should this be done is important.

Jessica asked how do we do it, how do we make this proposal?

Tim Sandvik explained that this could be a part of CEC recommendations to Council, but the recommendation should be well defined. Tim also added that staff has looked into professional communications efforts in the past so there is some familiarity there – it is important to recognize these services are cost prohibitive.

Erik Goebel asked if we could partner with Ramsey County in these trainings?

Leslie noted there aren't many trainings currently occurring – RC efforts are focused on communications.

Tim Sandvik reminded folks to follow up on what priorities may be for communications.

Leslie asked about logistics for moving recommendations forward.

Jessica asked if New Publica offered information on their website – Leslie responded she would follow up.

Imran asked for general guidelines for 'how/what will be presented to Council?'

Tim Sandvik responded guidelines were left open to promote organic conversations, but the CEC can establish some recommendations as soon as March – this could be presented by CM Goebel informally and then brought to a Council Workshop.

CM Goebel encouraged moving this forward, but ensure the recommendations are refined to the point that healthy discussion can occur.

Tim Cheesebrow noted it would be helpful to send anything to Council to update for those who are not informed.

Heather Gustafson asked what dialogue between the CEC and Council could look like... in wanting to have efficient conversation, the CEC should provide detailed recommendations. This will avoid drawn out dialogue...

CM Goebel agreed that well defined action recommendations should be well defined.

The CEC had brief discussion on MN Open Meeting Laws – Tim Sandvik provided some clarity. The CEC agreed that having more frequent, short meetings in March 2021 to refine recommendations. CM Goebel added that proper noticing open meetings will help facilitate this.

Heather noted that she could connect with local school districts to bring in youth voices. CEC members support this effort. Tim Sandvik said he would connect Heather with some contacts.

4. 'Mutual Aid Groups' (Tim Cheesebrow)

This item was skipped

5. Outreach to Under-Represented Demographics (Sandvik - continued...)

CM Goebel appreciated the letter from the CEC packet looked good, but would like to consider to whom it should be updated and sent to going forward. Leslie asked what kind of list would be available. Jessica said she would be happy take this task on in working with Tim Sandvik.

Jessica asked if a list of considerations from the CEC over the past six months could be sent out – Tim Sandvik noted that he does not currently have a formal list, but can provide some notes to the CEC for consideration. He will provide this with updates to individual CEC members.

6. City Events/Rec Programs Review

The CEC agreed reviewing Events and Programs is important, but is not a priority at this time as there is uncertainty to 2021 offerings. CEC members were very complimentary of the Parks and Recreation Department.

7. Next Steps

A. Staff Updates

Kevin Watson introduced himself – provided some timelines on budgetary process and general logistical considerations when making recommendations to Council. He also reminded the group of updating existing efforts of communications and engagement.

B. Committee Updates

C. Set next meeting date – March 2021

The CEC will next meet on March 10<sup>th</sup> AND March 31<sup>st</sup> at 6:30pm

8. Adjourn – 7:43pm

## Tim Sandvik

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**From:** Tim Sandvik  
**Sent:** Friday, March 5, 2021 9:02 AM  
**To:** 'Leslie Duling McCollam'  
**Subject:** RE: Notes for next week

This is great!

Depending on what I receive from other folks today, I will package items together for next Wednesday.

From there, my thought is I will put together a 'draft' City Council workshop item that Council Member Goebel and myself could present in April(?) – this 'draft' could be reviewed at the March 31 CEC meeting.

Have a good weekend!

Tim Sandvik  
Assistant City Administrator  
City of Vadnais Heights  
651.204.6013 (direct)



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**From:** Leslie Duling McCollam <leslie.duling@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Thursday, March 4, 2021 4:42 PM  
**To:** Tim Sandvik <Tim.Sandvik@cityvadnaisheights.com>  
**Subject:** Notes for next week

**Caution:** This email originated outside our organization; please use caution.

Hi Tim,

Here are some notes for when the CEC meets next week. I know that we'll be discussing how to refine our recommendations for the committee, so these are just some notes that might be helpful as we discuss things. Feel free to supplement this information with any info you gathered from your conversation with New Publica.

Use of cultural consultants to enhance community engagement:

In accordance with the goals of ensuring that the City is effectively communicating and engaging with all residents, the CEC recommends the use of a cultural consultant to learn more about effective communication and engagement with different audiences. There are a wide array of consultants that advise public entities on these kinds of activities, and they offer many different options depending on organizational needs and budgets. Here are some examples of cultural consultants and how the services they offer:

- New Publica - New Publica has worked with Ramsey County to offer a wide array of services, including direct community engagement - having an multi-lingual staff member meet with communities in which public projects

are being planned; communication tailoring - examining planned communications and tailoring them to different audiences to ensure they are clear, understandable, and translated into relevant languages; and survey development - making sure that public surveys are sensitive to different language and cultural needs and planning outreach strategies for soliciting valuable input from residents.

[Candace can add additional examples here - if we have one that does more advising of City staff that would be great]

[We can discuss as a group what we want the specific recommendations to be here].

Feel free to provide some input on this too - thanks!  
Hope you're enjoying the beautiful weather this week!

**Leslie Duling McCollam, MPH, MSW**

Pronouns: She/her/hers

[leslie.duling@gmail.com](mailto:leslie.duling@gmail.com)

(503) 881-8690

## Tim Sandvik

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**From:** Tim Sandvik  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 6, 2021 11:45 AM  
**To:** 'Jessica Merchant'  
**Subject:** RE: CEC Homework

Thanks for sending over!

I think these are both good topics for Wednesdays meeting.

Best,

Tim Sandvik  
Assistant City Administrator  
City of Vadnais Heights  
651.204.6013 (direct)



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**From:** Jessica Merchant <jessica.a.merchant@gmail.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 5, 2021 1:02 PM  
**To:** Tim Sandvik <Tim.Sandvik@cityvadnaisheights.com>  
**Subject:** Re: CEC Homework

**Caution:** This email originated outside our organization; please use caution.

Hi Tim,

Just following up on this. I've reached out to NYFS (Lisa P) and am waiting for a callback from her.

I also ran across this from a friend at work - it might be something worth sending out to the Committee? It's free and could certainly be helpful with what we're attempting to do with this Committee.

<https://www.usf.edu/business/news/articles/210211-free-diversity-certificate.aspx>

Thanks!

On Fri, Feb 26, 2021 at 4:12 PM Tim Sandvik <[Tim.Sandvik@cityvadnaisheights.com](mailto:Tim.Sandvik@cityvadnaisheights.com)> wrote:

Good afternoon –

In going through formal and informal relationships the City maintains, its quite comprehensive. If you have a social media presence, a few minutes scrolling through our account will give an idea of some promotion we already do. While those efforts may not explicitly define a demographic(s), it does illustrate our comprehensive effort in that, for example, some want info on recycling, some want info on public safety, etc...

With that, some memberships the City maintains include NYFS, VHEDC, Ramsey County League of Local Governments, League of MN Cities, White Bear Chamber, St Paul Chamber, Metro Cities, New Trax...

If demographics might help your search, you can check out:

<https://www.census.gov/quickfacts/fact/table/vadnaisheightscityminnesota/PST045219>

Finally, we do host a variety of connections under the tab "Our Community" on the webpage via:

<https://www.cityvadnaisheights.com/31/Our-Community>

Please let me know what else I can get you. Thanks!

*The following the bulleted list the entire CEC requested:*

*Unofficial running list...*

- *Use data to drive communications efforts (host of data has been provided to the CEC for feedback)*
- *Explore City survey that provides statistically significant results*
- *Gain feedback on residents (including CEC) on current communication/engagement efforts*
- *Create understanding on what an advisory committee does*
- *Update Community Events*
- *Connect/promote organizations that serve VH, especially those who offer services outside the scope of the City*
- *Diversify input of CEC, City in general (all demographics)*
- *Promote cultural competency in communications*
- *Include other staff in Communication/Engagement efforts*

- *Promote Council/Commission/Committee Trainings*

Tim Sandvik

Assistant City Administrator

City of Vadnais Heights

651.204.6013 (direct)



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Jessica A. Merchant

## Tim Sandvik

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**From:** Tim Sandvik  
**Sent:** Saturday, March 6, 2021 11:32 AM  
**To:** 'Heather HG'  
**Subject:** RE: CEC Homework

That's a great thought! Maybe bounce it around on Wednesday to have the rest of the CEC help you refine the idea. I know Shoreview does a similar exercise to engage youth – I can contact my counterpart on Monday for some insight as well.

One other consideration – there has been the idea of bringing in a high school aged person to participate in Commissions/Committees. They would be a non-voting member, but a good place for the City to start would potentially be a member on the CEC and on the Parks Commission...? I know a few other cities include this, so if the group wants to further pursue, I could do some research for our end of March meeting.

Thanks much!

Tim Sandvik  
Assistant City Administrator  
City of Vadnais Heights  
651.204.6013 (direct)



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**From:** Heather HG <heather2977@outlook.com>  
**Sent:** Friday, March 5, 2021 2:46 PM  
**To:** Tim Sandvik <Tim.Sandvik@cityvadnaisheights.com>  
**Subject:** RE: CEC Homework

**Caution:** This email originated outside our organization; please use caution.

Hi Tim!

I'm reaching out to these contacts for the school and was thinking it would be easier to come to them with a CEC goal in mind. Here's my thought, what if we launch a logo contest for Vadnais Heights students to create a logo for the CEC. That way, it will draw attention to what we're doing and can be featured on the city's social media and newsletter. We could give the guidelines that the logo must include CEC goal representation – community, inclusivity, and action.

Would you be ok with me approaching these contacts with this idea?

Heather Gustafson  
Kraabel/Gustafson Family  
(763) 232-4973

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**From:** [Tim Sandvik](#)

**Sent:** Friday, February 26, 2021 4:04 PM

**To:** [heather2977@outlook.com](mailto:heather2977@outlook.com)

**Subject:** CEC Homework

Good afternoon –

I appreciate you taking on the role of connecting with our local school districts!

It wasn't clear to me if you said you are in the Mounds View School District professionally or as in where you live... Let me know if you'd like a contact there.

If you look at the CEC packet from this week, you can find the letters I sent to both WBS and AFSA – that may or may not be helpful.

For WBS – I do a lot of work with Tim Maurer [tim.maurer@isd624.org](mailto:tim.maurer@isd624.org) We get a number of their NHS kids for events (back when that was a thing in the summer, ugh...) and some even come work with us in our summer rec department. He will be a great contact for you to start.

For AFSA – I work with Stephanie Forliti, [stephanieforliti@afsahighschool.com](mailto:stephanieforliti@afsahighschool.com) She is great at connecting the community with their school. They also work with us on a number of things throughout the year including a mentor program. The past couple years (prior to covid) myself and a couple other City staff participated in a 6-8 week program connecting with a student on various topics and ends with an in person interview. A rewarding process for me! For them, im not so sure... ha!

Please let me know what else you need from me going forward. Thanks!

*The following the bulleted list the entire CEC requested:*

*Unofficial running list...*

- *Use data to drive communications efforts (host of data has been provided to the CEC for feedback)*
- *Explore City survey that provides statistically significant results*
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