



Approved: January 12, 2026

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
DECEMBER 8, 2025
5:30 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, Mayor Grant called to order the City Council Work Session at 5:30 p.m.

Present: Mayor David Grant; Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Tena Monson, Emily Rousseau and Kurt Weber

Absent: None

Also present: City Administrator Jessica Jagoe, Public Works Director/City Engineer David Swearingen, Finance Director Joua Yang, Parks and Recreation Manager Jess Skalicky and Assistant to the City Administrator/City Clerk Julie Hanson

1. PUBLIC INQUIRIES/INFORMATIONAL

Greg Larson – 3377 North Snelling Avenue, stated he wanted to talk about the Karth Lake Improvement PMP Project. He said he heard there is a need to replace the pump and control cabinet and repair an adjacent retaining wall on Karth Lake with an estimated cost of \$112,000. A watershed district grant will fund half of the cost but the remaining \$56,000 is unfunded. Many years ago, the initial \$99,000 cost of the pump installation was divided equally between the City and a Karth Lake Improvement District levy on lake shore owners. The Staff memo notes there is no prescribed allocation of cost between the City and the Improvement District. It further notes that the City Attorney characterized these projects as primarily benefiting properties that abut the lake. He does not believe the City financially supports any needs associated with other Arden Hills lakes or their lake shore associations. Karth Lake is a private lake. There is no park or a landing with a broader public benefit that might suggest City financial support for a capital improvement. Karth Lake shore landowners levy should fund the remaining \$56,000 balance. If there is an immediate need, the Arden Hills surface water management utility fund should only fund that amount if it is repaid with any interest due, by the Karth Lake Improvement District. The City should not be in the business of subsidizing lake improvements that benefit abutting properties on the lake and not exclusively on one lake, unless it wants to support capital for the other Arden Hills lakes as well.

Renee Marino – 1120 Apple Drive, said she has been involved in studying the lake level and the pump needs. The fact that the City has allowed the development around the lake, to the extent that it has, means that the lake provides an essential aspect of water management and flood mitigation. The studies show that if there were no pump, this lake could be expected to periodically raise above street level and work it's way towards 96 and Lexington. There is no natural outlet to this lake and it is prone to flooding. The data shows there would be regular overflow situations if the pumping didn't occur. This isn't just a lake owner issue. This is an essential part of the City's obligation to manage the surface water within the City. The lake has served the function of being a holding pond. It's an infrastructure of the City and the City is obligated to manage surface water. A good stretch of the lake is publicly owned and publicly used. Many people who don't live on the lake enjoy fishing, walking, snowshoeing and hiking in this area. She believes it is erroneous to say this is just a lake owner problem. If she had been aware of this issue when she purchased her home, she may have made a different decision. The City can manage this with an automated pump and it needs to be done.

2. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC INQUIRIES

None.

3. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Park System Plan Update

Anna Springer from Bolton and Menk presented an update on the Park System Master Plan. A Park System Master Plan is a policy document that will help guide decision making for the Arden Hills network of parks, trails and open spaces. It guides decisions in the Capital Plan for the next ten years. Having parks and green space increase physical activity and gives people a place to exercise. Contact with nature promotes physical and mental health. Parks can strengthen social connections by providing a place for people to gather. Parks provide environmental benefits such as providing cooling to surrounding neighborhoods, they act as stormwater sponges to reduce flooding and filter air pollutants with vegetation.

Ms. Springer said this process began in May of 2025 with an existing conditions inventory analysis. Public engagement is a large component of this project and has been a clear priority since the beginning. There is a steering committee who has been advising this process. They take what was learned during the inventory analysis and combine it with what they are hearing from the public to help inform the implementation planning process. The last step will be to pull the final plan together to create a document that can be used by everybody.

Ms. Springer said the project goals are to maximize opportunity to receive input from as many people as possible and develop a plan that is visionary yet obtainable. The plan will be driven by the community so it will reflect the desires of the residents. They will develop a plan that provides clear decision making for the future. The final document will be concise and will educate everyone that encounters the plan.

Ms. Springer outlined the community engagement opportunities and described how they, along with Staff provided several different ways for residents to participate. These included QR codes along the trails, visibility at community pop-up events and an open house.

Ms. Springer highlighted some key information from the survey results. Comments included dog parks, a desire for the Lake Johanna trail connection to Tony Schmidt and access to year-round shelters. The top three desired amenities are trails, nature playgrounds and water features. The survey was a success with 874 respondents and there were over 2,700 comments to the open ended survey questions.

Ms. Springer said the key takeaways are the strong demand for trail connectivity and safety, the desire for modern amenities and inclusive features, and a desire to maintain the natural character while improving maintenance across the system.

Ms. Springer said the public engagement events generated nuanced conversations regarding specific places in the City where residents would like to see improvements.

Discussion ensued regarding the survey results and Council was surprised how certain amenities that they thought would be important, barely showed up.

Ms. Springer said the steering committee has met three times, so far. She outlined the work the committee has done so far in regards to the community engagement and the findings. The committee will meet for their fourth meeting in early February and they will review the draft plan, including refined recommendations and findings from a prioritization activity that the steering committee will participate in.

Ms. Springer highlighted some of the recommendations that will be included in the plan. Specifically the plan will recommend improvements on things like updating the aging boards on the hockey rinks and Perry and Freeway Parks, improvements to the ball field at Perry, improvements to the basketball courts at Sampson and Cummings and replacing tennis/pickleball court at Hazelnut Park.

Councilmember Monson said that these specific improvements have not been mentioned or highlighted in the earlier slides.

Ms. Springer said they are taking all of the information they have gotten from the survey and from their analysis of the parks, including adding data from the GIS inventory. That will inform the plan outline.

Parks and Recreation Manager Skalicky said the presentation earlier outlined results from the community engagement piece, only. This specifically includes engagement plus the information collected during the inventory. This is a summary of everything combined.

Ms. Springer said some of the inventory is very detailed and you really have to spend time digging into it. There is a spreadsheet that show the elements that have just been replaced, as well as the elements that are coming to the end of their useful life. These recommendations include everything.

Councilmember Holden said the Rotary used to paint the boards on the hockey rinks. She wondered if the boards are rotting or do they just need a new coat of paint.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said they do spot replace some of the boards. The spot replacements are happening so frequently that it is to the point that we should do a full replacement of all of the boards, as well as, replacing rotting posts. The structure is not there anymore. It is plugged into the 2026-2030 CIP.

Ms. Springer said there were some conversations during the public engagement regarding how often that rink gets used. This plan doesn't include use studies. These recommendations are preliminary and will evolve as they get feedback from Staff and the steering committee.

Ms. Springer said they will break the recommendations up into categories: recreation, playgrounds, water access, trails and operation and maintenance. People called out that the playground equipment is geared toward a certain age group and the play equipment is repetitive between parks. Recommendations may be to install equipment geared toward teenagers or smaller kids. Another recommendation is all community parks should have permanent restrooms, drinking fountains and off-street parking. They will also call out park space for native species diversity and habitat.

Ms. Springer shared a map that showed the preliminary trail connectivity recommendations. They are identifying where certain connections and improvements make sense in the current trail system.

Discussion ensued regarding critical connections that the consultants should include in the plan.

Ms. Springer said they will continue to refine these recommendations and develop an implementation plan. The draft plan will be presented at the February steering committee meeting. The draft will get refined based on conversations and comments from that meeting. It will be sent to the PTRC for review and approval in March. The City Council will see the final draft in April for approval.

Councilmember Holden said the map shows Lake Valentine Road, she thought we already put that trail in.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said there are some edits that need to be done on the final map.

Councilmember Monson is surprised there is no recommendation to cross 694.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said Shoreview has a trail on their side of Lexington. In order to get a trail on the Arden Hills side, the bridge deck would need to be expanded. He said MnDOT is doing a study for a 6-year plan for 694. They are planning improvements in 2031. If the City is involved in those discussions, he will express that there is an interest. The cost would be a key component of those discussions.

B. 2026 PMP Discussion

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said there isn't a lot tonight that is very different than what Council has previously seen. He asked Councilmembers if they wanted him to present the entire thing or just stand for questions.

Councilmember Holden asked what was brought forward at the open house that might have changed anything.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said there were display boards at the open house that outlined where we are anticipating to have impacts, specifically if they will be working in residents' yards for curb replacement or catch basin repairs. There aren't a lot of impacts with this project. They will stay pretty much within the curbs. There was no feedback from the open house that changed the plan for this project.

Councilmember Weber and **Councilmember Monson** support an abbreviated presentation.

Councilmember Rousseau asked if there was any feedback at the open house about neighborhood communication regarding timelines and such.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said communication is good for residents who opened and read the mailers. The website is up to date. We will continue to send notices out and will add a notice in the newsletter when the assessment piece comes up.

Councilmember Holden said more communication is needed because she heard a lot of basic questions being asked at National Night Out.

Mayor Grant would like a brief presentation and spin into the Karth Lake discussion.

Brad Fisher from Bolton and Menk said he will hit each of his slides with a very brief overview and then he'll highlight the areas where they have developed a little more information since the last time Council saw it. He said in regards to specific questions related to construction, they just don't have those answers yet. Those timelines will be established once the project is bid and we have a contractor on board.

Mr. Fisher said there will be a pavement rehabilitation. One street will be a mill and overlay and the rest of the streets will get a reclamation and full depth resurfacing. The deciding factor for that was based on geotechnical investigation that was completed. There will be spot rehabilitations and casting replacements for the sanitary sewer improvements. They are doing trenchless improvements, where they can. Watermain improvements include spot valve and hydrant replacements that were identified through City inventory, as well as some curb stop adjustments. He noted the watermain will be relocated along the south side of Highway 96. The current watermain is under the curb of the county road. It will be relocated back under the trail so it will be easily accessible and maintenance wouldn't require coordination with the County for traffic management. Storm sewer includes some spot replacements and water quality improvements that include drainage structures with sumps and SAFL Baffles, if they don't have a pre-treatment device, prior to out letting into the lake to capture sediment and help maintain the quality of the lake water.

Mr. Fisher said there are two items that he has some additional information to share about. The stormwater BMP pond is phase 2 of an improvement to capture stormwater before it enters the lake. He shared a graphic that shows the proposed contours and how it ties into the existing grades. This will maximize the size of the pond to capture that water and slowly outlet it into the lake. The grades will need to be reworked in this entire area. That will include significant tree clearing.

Councilmember Rousseau asked if the City owns the land on the side of the lake by Cummings.

Mr. Fisher said this is all City property. There may be some easements in the vicinity but they aren't right down by the water.

Councilmember Rousseau asked if the runoff that comes down from the businesses is on City property.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen used the graphic to show the property line between the City and the private property. He said uphill from this area is all private property.

Mayor Grant asked what the plans for the retaining wall are.

Mr. Fisher said they identified an erosion risk associated with the existing retaining wall. They determined there was no need to replace the retaining wall. They will reestablish the initial grade and provide additional stabilization in the area. That will tie into the area really well and will likely cost less than installing a brand new retaining wall.

Councilmember Monson asked if Karth Lake is a stormwater pond or does it essentially function like one.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said the DNR considers it a lake.

Councilmember Monson asked why there is a district there. She wants to understand why the City would treat Karth Lake differently than other lakes, especially since it is its own district and can levy.

Councilmember Holden said half the lake gets high and people were complaining about erosion in their yards. The other half, on the low end said there was no erosion. They formed a lake association through the City in order to get the approval for us to tax them. The board came up with the idea of the first pump to prevent erosion.

Councilmember Monson asked why we would look at the installation of the second pump any differently.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said the City is contributing flows off our streets to this lake. Most lakes have a natural outlet, this one does not. Through development, the watershed for this lake has expanded. The lake was stable, via natural evaporation, prior to the development. More water goes into the lake which raises the water level. The contributing flows are City right of way, Ramsey County right of way and some Shoreview properties. The 50/50 agreement came about because of that.

Councilmember Monson asked why they still get to be a district, if the City is saying this is a City responsibility. Maybe it's not necessary anymore.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said that is something Council could consider for a deeper discussion. However, this is what exists today. He shared that the last time the City levied against Karth Lake was to replace the pump.

Councilmember Holden said development affects other lakes, too. This shouldn't be any different than what we do at other lakes.

Councilmember Rousseau said there is a big volume difference between Karth Lake and Lake Johanna. She said it's similar to a pond. The culvert by the businesses is a huge waterslide. She is pleased to see Karth Lake got a B rating from the DNR. The Karth Lake Foundation has done a lot of work.

Councilmember Weber asked if the businesses in that area are a part of the Karth Lake Improvement District and if they would be leviable.

Staff said they are not.

Councilmember Weber said they are putting water directly into the lake from their lots.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen confirmed. He said the stormwater pond we are proposing is Phase 2 of BMP 1. Phase 1 was fixing the erosion on the hillside. We cured the erosion issue in Phase 1 and Phase 2 will be treating that. A lot of these improvements are doing work for the commercial properties but the commercial properties didn't trigger it and it's grandfathered in. Those properties pay the same stormwater utility that every other property pays.

Councilmember Monson wants to know more about why they're still a district. What distinguishes their criteria for them to levy? She is interested to know why Staff is recommending the City cover this cost vs. levying the district. Why is this project distinguishable?

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen doesn't have an answer for why they are an improvement district. Historically there is a discussion the City Council can have if they want to apply costs to this improvement district. There is nothing in the bylaws that outlines what should be done. The City Attorney said any work done would benefit the properties on the lake. So there is a legal avenue for the City to apply a levy.

Councilmember Weber said the statement that this is a benefit to those lake properties is the same logic we use in assessing for streets.

Councilmember Rousseau asked how many residents there are in the district.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said there are 40.

Councilmember Rousseau asked what our percentage is, as a City.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said we are one property.

Councilmember Rousseau asked for confirmation that the contributing businesses don't pay any of it.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said they wouldn't be levied but they would be paying through the stormwater utility fund.

Councilmember Rousseau asked if the commercial businesses would pay for their share of this particular project through that fund.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said their contribution is their monthly stormwater utility bill. The amount they pay is based off of acreage. The City uses that fund to pay for stormwater improvements.

Councilmember Rousseau said they are heavily contributing to this fund but they aren't being assessed directly for this project.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen confirmed.

Councilmember Rousseau said she doesn't know if its fair to assess only the 40 properties because the potential for flooding doesn't exist only along the lake.

Councilmember Monson asked if the only amount we are talking about is the \$56,000.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said it's the pump improvements. He sent an email noting that the costs have increased since we got the electrical design back. The increase is \$70,000.

Mr. Fisher said they determined the existing control panel and electrical cabinet will need to be replaced in order to accommodate the features of the new structure.

Councilmember Monson asked what the levy amount will be for the portion that is not covered by a grant.

Mr. Fisher said \$136,000.

Councilmember Monson would like to see the math on what this will do for the 40 residents. She also wants to learn how they add people to the improvement district. It sounds like these commercial businesses should be part of that.

Councilmember Weber wants clarity on the City's authority. We can just levy the district and they have the option to levy themselves with City permission.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen confirmed.

Councilmember Monson said the City decides and then levies them.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen confirmed. If there are improvements they would like to see done, they can make a resolution to have the City go through the levy process.

Mayor Grant said this is an issue with the lake level. The residents came to the City and asked how we can solve this. The City came up with a solution. The residents voted to create a district that can be levied. The 40 residences decided to be a district.

Councilmember Rousseau said there has been substantial turn over of the residents on that lake in the last 12 or so years. If we did the levy, we would have to do it this year on top of the street improvement.

Discussion ensued that the payments would be spread out over time and it wouldn't be a one time payment. The City Council can specify the period of time.

Councilmember Weber said that \$136,000 between 40 homes would be \$3,400 each.

Councilmember Holden said the complicated part is the lake is only damaging half of the properties when the lake is high. There were a lot of people who were angry and didn't want the pump in the first place. It isn't as black and white as it seems.

Councilmember Monson asked what the timeline is.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said Council doesn't need to make a decision tonight. We can continue the discussions with the Karth Lake District. The last time we went through this process there was a Council Liaison who attended the Karth Lake Improvement District meetings to have that discussion with them.

Mayor Grant asked how long it will take if we go back to the watershed district to request additional funds.

Mr. Fisher said we are seeking assistance from the watershed from three different sources. There is a stormwater management grant that would be applied to the shoreline stabilization and the sump and SAFL Baffles. There is a separate one for the pond. Those are grant applications. Typically we learn the outcomes around March. The \$56,000 that was allocated was direct appropriation funding through their budget, not a grant.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said we have already begun the preliminary application.

Councilmember Rousseau asked if the district is seeking a Council Liaison. If yes, she would like to nominate Councilmember Weber.

Councilmember Weber asked if this would be just for this discussion.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said he is the Staff Liaison and they are seeking a City Council Liaison. The meetings are held on an as needed basis.

Mayor Grant said the district decided they didn't want a liaison. Now they have this project and maybe they do.

Councilmember Weber asked why there is a 62.5% increase in the cost.

Mr. Fisher said the original intent was to reuse as much of the existing equipment as possible. The electrical cabinet and control panel were evaluated and it is recommended that we not reuse that existing panel. The new panel will facilitate the operation of the new components we're incorporating.

Councilmember Weber asked if Staff agreed with that determination.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said in 2019 when the pump was replaced, it was suggested the panel should be replaced. So we knew it was a potential need but we were trying to use the old panel. Ultimately we can't.

Councilmember Holden said this new pump is a much higher grade compared to the old one. The old one floats, this new one will not be visible.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said the actual pump is being reused. It is the control cabinet and the structure that will be replaced.

Mr. Fisher said we are taking the existing, floatable pump and putting it in a new structure with a whole new system and set up.

Councilmember Holden said this plan is more costly than the old way. She thinks in the best interest of all residents, it makes sense to take the cheaper route. If we choose to go the more expensive route, maybe the Karth Lake residents have to pay for some of it.

C. 2026 Committee/Commissions Liaisons and mayor Pro Tem Discussion

Mayor Grant asked Council their preference. He would like to remain on Personnel and the Gateway Visitor Bureau.

Councilmember Weber said he interested in Planning Commission, Cable Commission and Fire Board.

Councilmember Rousseau is interested in Economic Development Commission (EDC), Northeast Youth and Family Services (NYFS) and Personnel.

Councilmember Monson is interested in Joint Development Authority (JDA), Fire Relief Board, if Council wants to keep that separate from the Fire Board and Mayor Pro Tem.

Mayor Grant asked if Councilmember Rousseau has interest in returning to the Parks Trails Recreation Committee (PTRC).

Councilmember Rousseau said she left that open since Councilmember Holden showed an interest last year.

Councilmember Holden said Fire Board.

Mayor Grant asked if Councilmember Holden is interested in PTRC.

Councilmember Holden said no.

Councilmember Rousseau said she will take PTRC.

Mayor Grant said the Fire Board currently split between Councilmember Holden on the Fire Board and Councilmember Monson on the Fire Relief Board.

Councilmember Weber asked if Councilmember Holden would be interested in Planning Commission.

Councilmember Holden said she would rather take the Fire Board because she knows she can make those meetings. She can't be certain she can commit to the Planning Commission, due to the time they meet.

Councilmember Weber said that has been a recurring issue for him, as well.

Councilmember Holden asked if Councilmember Weber is interested in being an alternate for the Planning Commission and the Fire Board between the two of them.

Councilmember Weber agreed.

Councilmember Holden will be primary on the Fire Board and Councilmember Weber will be alternate. Councilmember Weber will be primary on the Planning Commission and Councilmember Holden will be the alternate.

Councilmember Weber said he will take Karth Lake District.

Discussion ensued regarding the meeting dates and times for the Shoreview Arden Hills Lions Collaborative Ambassador's Program. There is a membership fee.

Councilmember Rousseau said the first year is free. She suggested reaching out to PTRC or a member of the EDC to see if anyone is interested.

Council agreed.

D. Affordable Housing Policy Discussion

Not Discussed.

E. Committee/Commission Liaison Role Policy

Not Discussed.

F. Rice Creek Commons/TCAAP Discussion

Not Discussed.

G. Agenda Planning

Not Discussed.

4. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS

Councilmember Weber said the North Suburban Cable Commission passed a recommendation that each member city should direct any applicant for fiber construction to them for franchising discussions. He would like to have a discussion about this topic at a future work session.

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the City Council Work Session at 6:58 p.m.

Jen Estling
Deputy Clerk

David Grant
Mayor