



Approved: February 12, 2024

---

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA  
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
JANUARY 3, 2024  
5:30 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

---

**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

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

**Present:** Mayor David Grant, Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Emily Rousseau, Tena Monson and Tom Fabel

**Absent:** None

**Also present:** City Administrator Dave Perrault and League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust (LMCIT) Collaboration Services Manager Aimee Gourlay

**1. AGENDA ITEMS**

**A. Council Discussion with LMCIT Collaboration Services**

**Ms. Gourlay** said the goal is to give them the opportunity to discuss what they might like to do or change about the Norms of Behavior/Code of Conduct, and what the process would be for moving forward. She reviewed the items they hope to achieve; productive and efficient Council meetings, improved teamwork and agreement on process. She asked if anyone wanted to add anything else.

Council also requested to talk about respect and decency.

**Ms. Gourlay** said she would add that under meeting management. She explained the agenda and said she had brought a short Code of Conduct summary from the League of Minnesota Cities. She said the League doesn't have a standard code as they are specific to each community. Some cities have very detailed codes and Duluth has one paragraph. She expanded on the items they would be discussing. The idea was to share and hear others ideas and incorporate as many considerations as they could. The goal of a Code of Conduct is to increase their ability to have positive conflict that helps get good outcomes, and decrease the likelihood of interpersonal negative conflicts that can detract from making good decisions.

**Ms. Gourlay** explained the Norms of Behavior 2016 could be a starting point because it already exists. Discussion was probably more important than the paper at this point.

Council discussed issues in the past related to processes and how they have or have not come to agreement on items.

**Ms. Gourlay** said it was about perceptions and how you're feeling about the discussion. What they seem to agree on the need to balance the meeting efficiency with making sure everyone's voice is heard and making sure the conversation is appropriate to the topic. They could talk about how to move on when all opinions have been voiced. If they feel like they're hearing the same thing and want to move on for efficiency sake, how does the Mayor know?

Council discussed how side comments or underhanded remarks affect decorum.

**Ms. Gourlay** said you're probably not listening well if there are side comments, and people will shut down if they're hearing things as attacks. That is a part of meeting decorum. It can be difficult if Councilmembers are speaking for long periods of time. So how do they balance making sure everyone has a voice? Maybe everyone says their initial thoughts and has longer to speak after that.

**Ms. Gourlay** thought there was already a divide about how they were feeling about respect. She wondered if only some people were experiencing that or if it was a council-wide consideration.

Council discussed past issues or events that they have felt contributed to feelings of disrespect or mistrust.

**Ms. Gourlay** thought getting to a point of understanding that could be another piece of the code. And whatever code they come up with everyone has to be willing to go along with. She watched a video of a meeting but she didn't see much of this dynamic.

**Ms. Gourlay** said there may be a need to address some of the past hurt in some way however, something that can be helpful is to look at places they've been more successful and see how they can take what is working and build on that.

Council discussed teamwork and their perspectives on information sharing.

**Ms. Gourlay** stated they're talking about Code of Conduct, but it really keeps coming back to this one issue. She asked what they needed to move forward.

Council discussed better communication moving forward and past issues, also discussed looking forward not at the past when making decisions.

Council discussed adding agenda items to formally report back to Council, such as, Committee/Commission updates.

**Ms. Gourlay** said one thing they were talking about was committee reports and separating that from Council Comments. They also talked about agreeing to disagree about the past and not bring it up going forward. They talked about annual committee updates and sharing City goals.

**Ms. Gourlay** commented that one of the things she's observing is that it's hard to get to consensus because what they're talking about keeps shifting.

**Ms. Gourlay** reiterated they wanted efficient meetings, to stay on appropriate topics, everyone's voice be heard, and to avoid personal comments. Some of the items they are considering would address some of that list.

**Ms. Gourlay** said sometimes councils have struggles with how to get things on the agenda, what's the complaint process, or the process for taking something off the consent agenda. Oftentimes it has to do with how things get heard. She wondered what's the process for assigning committees, is there an assumption that everyone gets a committee and similar types of things.

Council discussed adding committee/commission reports to future agendas, and about tying it into committee/commission liaison responsibilities.

**Ms. Gourlay** recommended they have a work session item for discussion of committee updates before it be brought for a vote at a regular meeting so there is no misunderstanding of what the policy will be. She asked if this session was a useful conversation.

Council discussed not bring up past issues when making decisions affecting the present and future.

**Ms. Gourlay** said they should move forward with discussing the issues they talked about at work sessions and if they would like her to come back she could. She could also arrange for not full group discussions.

**Ms. Gourlay** said they remind her of good people with knowledge coming together from different places but the team can't come together.

Council thanked Ms. Gourlay for her time.

## 2. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS

**City Administrator Perrault** said he had emailed two questions to the Council. The 2024 PMP was at 80% plan and was scheduled to be an item on the upcoming work session, did they prefer to leave it on that meeting. Also, did they want to schedule a retreat, if so he will find a date.

**Councilmember Rousseau** would rather do a special work session on January 22 for the PMP, and she would love to have a retreat in March or April.

**Councilmember Monson** was comfortable with having the PMP discussion on either date but she could make January 22 work.

**Mayor Grant** explained there's what they go in at and then there's the bid. So, 80% was probably close enough.

**Councilmember Monson** said then she was fine with it being on January 8 at 80%. She would like to have city goals at a retreat but didn't think they needed the personality piece.

**Mayor Grant** felt a retreat was the wrong way to approach it. He thought it would be better for the group to look at some strategic topics and discuss them. He didn't know if they needed

someone else to help them do that. He thought a facilitator would make it more touchy-feely and they would probably waste time with ice breaker type stuff.

**Councilmember Fabel** agreed.

**Councilmember Monson** said she found Ms. Gourlay to be valuable in these discussions.

**Councilmember Rousseau** asked if they were going to go through the list of work session topics at the next work session and prioritize them.

**Mayor Grant** was thinking more strategic than chickens or food trucks; he was worried more about bigger things like trails and the fire station.

**City Administrator Perrault** said he was planning to include the list of work session priorities on the next work session so Council can let staff know what they want to bring forward in what order.

**Councilmember Rousseau** explained that things they see on the list as a priority could be what they base a strategic plan on.

**Councilmember Holden** asked if they were going to update the Council Tracker.

**City Administrator Perrault** said past practice was they only removed things at Council direction.

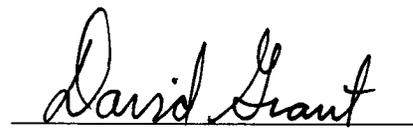
**Councilmember Rousseau** asked how they were moving forward with a Code of Conduct for committees.

**Ms. Gourlay** said she had examples from other cities to send to the Mayor and Councilmember Rousseau.

**ADJOURN**

Mayor Grant adjourned the Special City Council Work Session at 7:09 p.m.

  
Jolene Trauba  
Deputy City Clerk

  
David Grant  
Mayor