



DRAFT

Approved: January 10, 2022

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
DECEMBER 20, 2021
5:00 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 5:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor David Grant, Councilmembers Brenda Holden (attending via Zoom), Fran Holmes, and Steve Scott

Absent: None

Also present: City Administrator Dave Perrault, Public Works Director/City Engineer David Swearingen, City Planner Jessica Jagoe, Deputy City Clerk Jolene Trauba, SRF Consulting Group Principal Patrick Corkle, and Ramsey County Project Manager Joey Lundquist

1. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Draft ICE Report – County Road E and Old Snelling Avenue Intersection

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated the study was to analyze three different possible improvements at the intersection; an all-stop as it is currently, a signalized improvement and a roundabout.

Ramsey County Project Manager Lundquist said one thing they found interesting from the report was that traffic conditions are almost back to pre-COVID numbers.

SRF Consulting Group Principal Corkle added that the A.M. numbers are at about 80% of what they were in 2018. Current counts were collected in late September, 2021. They did meet with Mounds View High School to get their input, as well as Bethel University and Lindey’s restaurant.

Ms. Lundquist said by moving the sidewalk over a few feet they could get Lindey’s additional room for snow storage. They do have smaller semi-trucks that deliver. With a roundabout they would close one of Lindey’s driveways but make the other one wider, and add a shoulder to the north to allow for trucks to park there.

Councilmember Scott asked if all three solutions would impact moving Lindey's entrance.

Mr. Corkle responded that the all-way stop wouldn't change it, but a signal or roundabout would. He also noted that it doesn't take much increase in volume to cause issues at an all-way. The roundabout is able to handle the adjustments.

Councilmember Holden felt a traffic signal would be safer for pedestrians than a roundabout.

Mr. Corkle said a nice thing about a roundabout is that you are only looking one direction to cross, you get to the median and look the other direction to cross; you only cross half the roadway at a time and traffic is moving in only one direction.

Councilmember Holmes asked what the City Engineer thought was the best option.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen replied that the warrants are met for a signal or roundabout, and so it becomes engineer preference. He likes roundabouts and sees the benefits of having one, but public participation and education is necessary. Ramsey County will have an online survey and open house. They are not far enough into the design process to discuss cost. When designing a roundabout they will need to look at what materials will be used, which will affect cost. The city will pay $\frac{1}{4}$ and the county will pay $\frac{3}{4}$.

Mr. Corkle added that it is a single lane roundabout and they are trying to size it appropriately for the intersection.

Mayor Grant noted that Xcel Energy has a large switch station and there were also other utilities in the area.

Councilmember Holden felt when people go through roundabout they go fast and continue to accelerate once they leave the roundabout.

Mr. Corkle said typically you are yielding for other cars in the roundabout. Speeds within roundabouts are generally 15-18 mph.

Ms. Lundquist noted that the type of accident in a roundabout is different from accidents at a signal light. Generally, accidents are fender benders and much less severe in a roundabout.

Ms. Lundquist said next steps would be a survey on the County website, and an open house will be scheduled for January. There would be social media blasts, and postcards sent within a half mile, along with flyers for the schools to post.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated that Ramsey County did a postcard mailing for the Lake Johanna Boulevard project open house and he reviewed the list, which should be similar to this project.

Councilmember Scott said according to the study, overall projected costs would favor the roundabout due to traffic signal maintenance. He wondered how it leveled out and favored the roundabout.

Mr. Corkle replied that the numbers were very preliminary, but maintenance like lighting, relamping, controller boxes etc. all factor into the cost for signal lights. Most roundabouts are concrete which adds to their long term cost, along with approaches to the intersection.

Ms. Lundquist added they will have to pay Lindey's to close their access.

Mayor Grant suggested if the roundabout is chosen that they don't plant trees in the middle of it, obstructing views.

Ms. Lundquist said there would be a short wall so motorists don't drive through the roundabout.

Councilmember Scott felt the roundabout was the most logical solution for the intersection.

Mr. Corkle added that after public input they can look more closely at costs.

B. Feasibility Study – Proposed Trail from Lake Valentine Road to CR-96

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated the he was asked to look back at the previous feasibility study which he attached. That study was Highway 51 along Old Snelling and Old Highway 10 to County Road 96. The information will need to be updated along Old Highway 10 from Lake Valentine Road to County Road 96. The section of trail would be eligible for a 50/50 cost-share with Ramsey County. Their new policy states that the County will have ownership of trails along County roads; the City would maintain them but the County would take on responsibility of reconstruction and replacement at full cost. Crack filling, crack sealing, spot sealing, minor patching, etc. would be the City's responsibility. Geotechnical samples would be taken from where the trail is proposed. It appears the trail will be on the west side.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said HR Green has a grant specialist that is currently trying to get a Safe Routes to School grant for the City. He recommends using them to update the study. The goal would be to find grant money for when the road is reconstructed in 2023, or for a future trail.

Councilmember Holmes asked if the trail could be similar to what they are doing on Old Snelling with curb.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said a study will look at the right-of-way and topography to make a determination. If there is opportunity for a separated trail they could also do that.

After further discussion Mayor Grant directed staff to move forward with HR Green and to have the item on a future agenda for formal approval.

C. Pedestrian Crossing at County Road F and Hamline

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said there was correspondence between a resident, the City and Ramsey County. The resident is concerned about unsafe pedestrian conditions at the intersection of Hamline Avenue and County Road F. The resident felt the

intersection isn't signed appropriately. The County responded that it is signed appropriately according to their policies.

Councilmember Holden suggested they contact Nicole Frethem to see if she could help get a sign posted.

Councilmember Holmes disagreed. She felt they should follow the sign standards.

Councilmember Scott said there is a lot of traffic at that intersections and an awkward pedestrian crossing. He was in favor of improving crosswalk markings and a sign.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen noted that signs make a difference initially, but as they travel the route day after day they tend to get used to the sign and don't pay attention to it. A sign could create a false sense of security for the pedestrian. He recommended a sign to the County but they pushed back because of their standards.

Councilmember Holmes suggested striping could be make reflective to help people be more aware.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said they could ask to have the County look at the intersection again to potentially enhance signage, lighting and striping, or possibly the pedestrian signal.

Mayor Grant directed staff to draft a letter to Nicole Frethem requesting enhanced pedestrian safety measures at the intersection.

D. Planning Commission Onboarding Policy

City Planner Jagoe stated that the first resource that the Council looked at was the Zoning Approval and Plan Review Guide, created to assist with the onboarding process of Planning Commissioners. This document started out as a detailed checklist similar to what staff uses to review planning cases and transformed into an informational tool that contained questions Commissioners should ask themselves when reviewing submittal documents and plans. The general consensus of the Council was that the Zoning Approvals and Plan Review Guide would be beneficial as part of the onboarding and as a refresher resource for Commissioners. However, the Council still felt that a checklist document should be created that assists in review of land use applications for completeness. Staff met with the Council Liaison to discuss the checklist content, the idea was to have a one-page document that would supplement the staff report in reviewing whether or not an applicant had provided all of the plan sheets in a complete manner. The staff report would still serve as the primary document for evaluation of specific code provisions and continue to provide a summary evaluation table at the end of the report. This checklist would act as a summary for completeness of application materials.

Councilmember Scott said he liked the document and the background it gives to Commissioners.

City Planner Jagoe said it was her understanding they would use Attachments A and B when a new Commissioner comes on or for refresher training, and Attachment C would be a way to assist Commissioners in their review of planning cases.

Mayor Grant felt it was knowledge being passed to the Commissioners on how staff reviews cases and the materials they will get. He'd like direction for Commissioners to know what discretion they have as a Planning Commissioner to say, for example, there are too many variances. He didn't want Commissioners to feel that they had to approve variances.

Councilmember Holden said they should never accept a plan use application without all the documents, so she didn't know why they would need a checklist.

Councilmember Holmes once a case is accepted as complete then staff can't stop it because of 60-day time limitations.

City Administrator Perrault added that if a developer submits all of the documents, the Planner only has 15 days to make sure everything is complete, which isn't enough time to check for quality and code compliance of the documents, but the Planner will issue an acceptance letter because the required documents are there. However, if something changes or additional questions are raised, the clock is already ticking and the Planner is bound to bring the case forward.

City Planner Jagoe said in the initial review they look to the ordinance of what makes a complete application to be sure the documents are in order, but they don't do the drill-down code requirements or look at the intricacies of the application. Staff can't suspend the review if changes are submitted but the City Council can table or deny approval.

Councilmember Holmes said she wants the Commission to understand that they need to make conditions, not just make comments for the Council.

Mayor Grant noted that even if the Commission adds a condition the Council could take it back out, so they shouldn't be shy about adding them.

Councilmember Holmes felt the onboarding document was important as an educational piece, but that it had been hard to come up with a checklist for the Planning Commission.

Mayor Grant mentioned that if there is a PUD, the Commission is less boxed in.

City Planner Jagoe said she would be having a new Commissioner orientation in January and will incorporate some of the Council's comments. She will also send information regarding League of MN Cities training, and check on training from third parties.

E. Commissions and Committees Discussion

City Administrator Perrault requested Council provide direction on requested changes to future Committees and Commissions. The Financial Planning and Analysis Committee (FPAC) should have up to six members, and meet as needed. Following the term limit enforcement, there is only one member left on the committee, and Council may want to consider making a change in the ordinance regarding that committee. The Communications Committee is still structured in the ordinance as it used to be when there were community volunteers but that committee now consists of staff and a Council liaison. Also, the Economic Development Committee (EDC) has not had a major project to work on since 2015.

Councilmember Holden wondered if the EDC could be suspended until they could follow through with items for the committee to do with local businesses.

City Administrator Perrault said they could table the meetings until there are projects.

Councilmember Holmes felt they did start to have good relationships with businesses but there isn't enough staff to coordinate activities at this time.

Councilmember Scott wondered if they could tie in the Gateway Visitors Bureau into the EDC.

Mayor Grant thought they were two different things. He said the EDC should go on hiatus. In regard to FPAC, he would like to see them be an ad-hoc committee.

Councilmember Holmes felt FPAC should be called a task force.

Councilmember Scott said he contacted the two members who reached their term limits and explained that if the committee changed to a task force they would still welcome their expertise.

Councilmember Holmes said the current members should be on the task force.

Council was in agreement.

F. Councilmember Holmes added that the Communications Committee should no longer be a part of the ordinance as it no longer involves residents.**Council Tracker**

City Administrator Perrault provided the Council with an update on the Council Tracker. After discussion centering around traffic control at Mounds View High School, no changes were made to the tracker.

Council moved to a Closed Session for Item G.

G. Sale of City Owned Parcel at 3588 Ridgewood Road (Closed per M.S. 13D.05, Subd. 3(c)(1)(2))

City Planner Jagoe presented an appraisal for 3588 Ridgewood Road and asked for Council direction.

Council moved back to Open Session for Item 2.

2. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

Councilmember Scott said the Federal Reserve Bank is offering a virtual training session regarding regional housing affordability. He recommended all Councilmembers look into the training.

Councilmember Scott felt they may want to consider holding Committee and Commission meetings virtually.

Mayor Grant thought they would need to decide on Council meetings also. Ramsey County is having all meetings virtually. He asked if they would like to wait until after the new year to decide.

Councilmember Holden felt they should go back to Zoom meetings.

Councilmember Holmes wondered what staff thought.

City Administrator Perrault said he has not polled staff recently, it is his opinion that they are generally comfortable with current operations. However, he will gauge staff’s opinion over the next week or so.

Councilmember Holden was also concerned about Public Works staff.

Councilmember Scott said he’d like Council to consider going back to virtual meetings, including Committees and Commissions and get a recommendation from the City Administrator as to how that would impact staff.

Mayor Grant said he would work with the City Administrator to make a plan.

Mayor Grant said he received a letter from Ramsey County in response to the State Fair/Sheriff memo that was put out by the group of contract cities. They seem to be open to a dialogue.

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the City Council Work Session at 7:24 p.m.

Jolene Trauba
Deputy City Clerk

David Grant
Mayor