



DRAFT

Approved: April 11, 2022

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
MARCH 21, 2022
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.

Note: On January 12, 2022 the Mayor signed a determination allowing Councilmembers to participate in City Council meetings via telephone pursuant to State Statute 13D.021

Present: Mayor David Grant, Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Fran Holmes, Steve Scott and David Radziej

Absent: None

Also present: City Administrator Dave Perrault, Public Works Director/City Engineer Dave Swearingen, Assistant Public Works Director Lucas Miller, Finance Director Gayle Bauman, and Deputy City Clerk Jolene Trauba, Baker Hostetler Consultant Greg Lee, Saltbox Representative Maxwell Bonnie, Architect Dave Sorenson, SRF Project Director Brian Johnson, Ramsey County Project Manager Joey Lundquist, Ramsey County Public Works Assistant Director John Mazzitello, SRF Senior Project Manager Stephanie Falkers and Ramsey County Traffic Engineer Pat Corkle

1. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Saltbox Concept Plan – 4440 Round Lake Road

City Administrator Perrault stated the applicant would provide a narrative on the company and what they intend to do at the location.

Baker Hostetler Consultant Greg Lee introduced himself to the Council noting he was a representative for Saltbox. He explained when Saltbox was looking at the subject property for a site in this market, they found this site to be very attractive. He recognized that the current use and the current facility was a legal non-conforming use. He indicated he discussed the proposed use with staff and after further dialogue with staff he decided to fill out an application for concept review to receive feedback from the Council. He stated the representatives from Saltbox had a presentation for the Council.

Saltbox Representative Maxwell Bonnie thanked the Council for their time. He discussed the intended use for the subject property in further detail with the Council. He reported he would like to provide a shared warehouse space with shared services that would assist small businesses with growth. He commented further on how Saltbox partners with small businesses and reviewed the proposed building elevations.

Architect David Sorenson introduced himself to the Council and commented further on how the proposed building would be used. He commented on the City's parking calculations and noted the site currently had 107 parking stalls. He was of the opinion the site was well parked and would only require 91 parking spaces.

Mr. Lee thanked the Council for hearing their presentation and requested feedback from the Council regarding the proposed use.

Councilmember Scott asked if the loading areas would be restriped for parking.

Mr. Bonnie stated this was the proposal for this space.

Councilmember Holden questioned how the applicant knew this model would work in Minnesota.

Mr. Lee discussed how the micro and macro data showed that the Minneapolis/St. Paul area has a large number of e-commerce start up companies that would benefit from the proposed use.

Councilmember Holden inquired how many docks would be open.

Mr. Lee reported the building would have four docks open for trucking and deliveries.

Councilmember Holden requested further information regarding the parking situation.

Mr. Lee discussed the complimentary services that would be provided on site which included a conference room and commented further on the parking that would be provided onsite. He noted team meetings could be held onsite.

Councilmember Holmes commented on the parking that was available at the Texas facility. She requested further information regarding the access passes.

Mr. Lee indicated access to the building was controlled through a security system and access passes. He explained access passes were provided to tenants in order to allow them to hold meetings with clients or team members onsite. Further discussion ensued regarding the unique characteristics of the proposed business and it was noted not all members would be onsite at the same time.

Councilmember Holmes requested the applicant provide greater clarity or metrics when it comes to the parking on the site.

City Administrator Perrault clarified the applicant is stating they would need 88 parking stalls at max or peak periods and the site had 107 stalls at this time.

Councilmember Holden said if the membership became 1,000, the parking would be impacted. She noted parking would not be allowed on the streets in this area. She questioned what would happen if a business were to grow too large for this site.

Mr. Lee stated only a certain number of access passes would be allowed and checks are made several times a day. He noted each business was only granted a certain number of parking passes, and not every team member was provided with an access pass.

Mayor Grant questioned if additional parking could be located along the front of the building.

Councilmember Holden reported there was a holding pond along the front of the building. She asked if Saltbox was proposing to rent or purchase the building.

Mr. Lee indicated Saltbox was proposing to purchase the building.

Mayor Grant inquired if there was a City trail on the back side of this property.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen commented there was not a trail along the rear property line at this time. He stated there was a trail along the west side of the property.

Mayor Grant commented he liked the concept and he appreciated the fact that the applicant had done their research in terms of being able to attract tenants. He indicated his only concern was with parking.

Mr. Sorenson explained because not all of the loading docks will be used, that area can be restriped for additional parking. He estimated this would add another 24 to 36 parking stalls.

Mr. Lee indicated he was hoping to make site plan application on April 1 and would have 140+ parking stalls. He asked if the Council would support a plan moving forward.

Councilmember Holden stated she would support this.

Mayor Grant concurred noting the additional parking would make the application stronger. He asked if the 10-foot walls within the building were high enough.

Mr. Lee explained this height would work well for the proposed use. He then commented on the security measures that would be in place to protect the space and the tenants.

Mayor Grant questioned how many years Saltbox has been in business.

Mr. Bonnie stated Saltbox has been in business since November of 2019.

Mayor Grant inquired what the occupancy rate was of Saltbox's current facilities.

Mr. Bonnie said the occupancy rates for the facilities Saltbox has in operation currently range from 60% to full.

Councilmember Radziej stated he supported the proposed use.

Councilmember Scott discussed how parking spaces can be impacted in the winter months due to snow, but noted he supported this project moving forward.

Councilmember Holmes thanked the applicant for their detailed presentation and for all of the information regarding parking and the access passes. She stated she did not have any problem with this project moving forward.

Councilmember Holden indicated she supported this project moving forward.

Mayor Grant commented he supported this concept and appreciated how this use would help incubate local small businesses in the community. He believed this concept had some exciting possibilities.

Mr. Bonnie thanked the Council for their feedback and noted he would be moving forward with a site plan request.

B. County Road E and Old Snelling Avenue Intersection Improvements

SRF Project Director Brian Johnson introduced himself to the Council and explained he was the project engineer for the County Road E and Old Snelling Avenue intersection improvement project. He provided the Council with a presentation with updates on the project, noting another traffic study was completed. He discussed the virtual/neighborhood meetings that were held to gain public feedback for the roundabout concept. He indicated the neighboring business does not perceive an issue at this intersection. He commented further on the traffic numbers and reported a change was warranted. He reviewed the three types of intersections that were considered for this intersection noting the roundabout was the optimum option. Further discussion ensued regarding the capacity and proper location for the roundabout. He commented on the safety benefits of roundabouts and described how pedestrians are to make their way through a roundabout. The cost for the roundabout was then reviewed with the Council.

Councilmember Holden asked if there would be any trail improvements with the roundabout.

Mr. Johnson discussed the trail connectivity that could be completed with the roundabout.

Councilmember Holden questioned how severe the crashes were at this intersection.

Ramsey County Traffic Engineer Pat Corkle commented on the severity of the five crashes that occurred at this intersection noting all five involved property damage without injury.

Councilmember Scott inquired if this would be a single lane roundabout.

Mr. Johnson reported this was the case.

Councilmember Radziej asked why the roundabout was pushed to the northwest when there was open space available to the southeast.

Mr. Johnson stated the County was trying to minimize the impact on the park to the southeast and the utilities that were underground.

Councilmember Holden reported a roundabout cost \$1.2 to \$1.4 million while a signalized intersection cost \$300,000 to \$400,000. She asked what share of this project the City would be responsible for.

Mr. Johnson anticipated the City would be responsible for one leg or 25% of the project.

Councilmember Holden questioned what other expenses would be included in this project.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen explained the City would be completing sanitary sewer and watermain improvements and these costs were included within the CIP.

Councilmember Holden inquired how Ramsey County advertised the open house.

SRF Senior Project Manager Stephanie Falkers discussed the social media posts and postcards that were sent to the surrounding area.

Councilmember Holden asked if Councilmember Holmes received a postcard from the County, noting she did not.

Councilmember Holmes stated she received a postcard from the County.

Councilmember Radziej discussed how it would take 41 years to break even between the cost for a traffic signal and a roundabout.

Ramsey County Project Manager Joey Lundquist spoke to the benefits of having a roundabout in place versus a traffic signal which included lower emissions and time delays for users.

Mr. Johnson commented further on the difference between the upfront costs and overall costs for a project.

Mayor Grant stated the transportation issues at this intersection have to be addressed and noted the roundabout was the most efficient manner in which to address these concerns.

Councilmember Holden reported the County park near this intersection was heavily utilized. She expressed concern with the fact this project did not include budget from Ramsey County to provide a trail to this park or to slow traffic down in order to allow easier pedestrian access to this park. She feared that it would be more difficult for pedestrians to get to the park with a roundabout than if a traffic signal were installed.

Mr. Johnson indicated this was a difficult question to respond to. He explained an all way stop has traffic increasing their speed quickly after stopping, where roundabouts have a more calming effect on traffic.

Councilmember Scott stated he believed the roundabout was the best alternative at this intersection.

Councilmember Holmes commented she did not support any change at this intersection. She noted she spoke with the City Engineer and was made aware that MSA funds would be used for this project, which would help with the impact this project would have on the City's budget. She

explained she also reviewed the traffic engineering report and noted she would now be in support of the roundabout project.

Councilmember Holden explained her biggest concern with this project was how pedestrians would get to the County park. In addition, she was concerned with the fact that only 5% of the public provided comment on this project.

Mayor Grant stated he would want the center of the roundabout to be clear so people could see across it. He understood this intersection needed improvement. He reported in looking at the three proposed solutions, he believed the roundabout was the best solution.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen discussed the next steps for this project noting he would be working on a cooperative agreement with the County.

Ms. Lundquist indicated she would be posting more “how to” videos on the County’s site to inform the public how to properly navigate through a roundabout.

C. American Rescue Plan Act (ARPA) Funds Discussion

Finance Director Bauman stated Arden Hills is expected to receive just over \$1,100,00; 50% was received last year with the remaining funds coming this year. Eligible uses of the funds are to support public health expenditures, address negative economic impacts, replace lost public sector revenue and provide premium pay for essential workers. The cost must have been incurred after March 3, 2021 and before December 31, 2024, with the end of the performance period on December 31, 2026. These funds should be directed toward one-time priorities and not programs or policies that will continue to need funding into the future.

Finance Director Bauman explained that she met with Mayor Grant and Councilmember Holden in July 2021, to start developing a list of items that meet the eligibility requirements and bring the greatest benefit to the City. The discussion centered on utility projects like Sewer Lining, Storm Water and Water Meters and other capital projects in Streets and Parks, trying to focus on items not currently included in the CIP (i.e., dog park shelter). Based on an article published in the Star Tribune on 03/13/2022, an informal survey of four dozen Twin Cities suburbs shows that many are using ARPA funds on sewer and water infrastructure projects, fire department updates, community and sport center projects, and technology and software needs. One city noted that using ARPA funds on water and sewer projects means the city won’t have to bond for future improvements and can keep utility costs down – which affects all property owners. Another city noted that the council wanted to focus on projects that would not have been able to be done but for the ARPA funds. Staff is looking for preliminary direction on how Council would like to prioritize spending the funds. Following direction from the City Council, Staff will bring back a formalized plan for Council to consider and approve.

Mayor Grant asked if the City had a loss in its utility funds during the pandemic.

Finance Director Bauman reported this did occur. She reported ARP funds could not be placed directing into the utility funds but could be used on water or other utility improvements.

Councilmember Holden explained she had reached out to the mobile home community multiple times to see if they were in need of assistance, and noted many people have been referred to the County for assistance. She discussed how the new water treatment plant would increase the City’s

utility bills. She commented on how this expense would impact all residents in Arden Hills. She indicated she would like the ARP funds to focus on stormwater and sewer projects in order to assist with keeping utility bills in line.

Mayor Grant reported these types of projects would assist all Arden Hills residents. He indicated the City had a number of sewer lining and stormwater projects that could be completed with the help of ARP funds, along with the replacement of the City's water meters.

Councilmember Radziej asked if the Chatham Avenue project could be added back in.

Finance Director Bauman reported this was an allowable use for the funds. She indicated PIR funds could also cover the expense for this project.

Councilmember Radziej stated he supported the use of ARP funds for sewer lining, water meters, street and stormwater improvements.

Councilmember Scott explained he supported the use of ARP funds for infrastructure improvements which included sewer, water, and stormwater projects. He suggested water conservation projects also be considered.

City Administrator Perrault commented further on the water conservation project that was being offered by Met Council noting the Council discussed this project in years past and recommended this not be pursued at this time.

Councilmember Holmes stated it was important that these monies be used for one-time big projects versus for routine maintenance items. She supported the City use the funds for the replacement of water meters, and other sanitary sewer improvement projects. She asked if improvements for the fire station could be covered by ARP funds.

Mayor Grant commented the timing could be a little off for this project.

Councilmember Holden explained the fire station improvements would be paid for by three cities and the project may be bonded by the other cities, which meant it may be difficult to time the use of ARP funds for this project.

Mayor Grant directed staff to put an outline together per the discussion for specifically spending of the funds, and bring that back to Council.

D. SLP Lions Donation Discussion

Mayor Grant stated the Spring Lake Park Lions Club donated \$10,000 to be used for Parks and Recreation. He asked the Council to discuss how they would like to use the funds donated by the Spring Lake Park Lions Club.

Councilmember Scott commented he recalled these dollars were to be used for a park and rec facility.

Councilmember Holden stated there may be roofs that need to be redone within the City's parks structures.

Councilmember Holmes commented improvements at the dog park could be considered and then recognition could be given to the Spring Lake Park Lions for the improvements.

Mayor Grant indicated the dog park at Perry Park was a repurposed baseball diamond that had no shade. He indicated it may be nice to have something out there. He agreed it would be nice to report back to the Spring Lake Park Lions Club on how the funding was used by the City.

Councilmember Radziej supported the City using the funding to reroof a park structure or that a shelter be considered at the dog park.

Councilmember Scott concurred stating he had received comments regarding improvements at the dog park.

Councilmember Holden asked if the City had money in the budget to replace the roofs on the park shelters.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen reported he did not believe there was funding set aside within the five-year CIP.

Councilmember Holden explained improvements at the dog park would be a nice project but noted the roofs of the park shelters also need to be completed.

Councilmember Scott suggested recommendations be solicited from the PTRC as well.

Mayor Grant recommended staff also put together a list of what can be done for \$10,000 to enhance the City's parks to assist the Council with making a final decision.

E. ICWC Work Plan

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen explained ICWC crews have been utilized to complete buckthorn removal in several Parks, performed debris/sediment removal, ditch maintenance, slope stabilization, rain garden maintenance, etc. Public Works had benefited from these activities, especially with staff shortages. The City Administrator, Public Works Director and the Public Works Superintendent met with the ICWC Supervisor to discuss the upcoming work plan and the crew's abilities on various types of projects. With our current contract, 1-day projects are ideal. If projects were to require several days of labor, they would essentially take several weeks to complete due to how the crews are scheduled. The draft work plan consists of work items they have used the crews for in the past.

Mayor Grant asked what work needed to be done to the Valentine Park rain garden.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen reported this rain garden needed to be maintained, with debris removed near the outlet.

Councilmember Holden asked what 20 hours per week was equivalent to.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen explained 20 hours per week was two 10-hour work days for the ICWC crews.

Councilmember Holden questioned if the ICWC crew would be able to reroof structures in the City's parks.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen indicated this would take more than a day to complete which would require coordination of crews over multiple days and weeks, along with the storage of the reroofing materials. He stated one day projects were better for this type of crew.

Further discussion ensued regarding the difference between the full time and overtime crews.

Mayor Grant requested staff report back to the Council with information on what it would cost to fund a four-day ICWC crew in 2023.

The Council supported staff moving forward with the plan as proposed by staff.

F. 2022 Street Maintenance Plan – Coon Rapids JPA

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated the original proposed plan went over budget and does not include the large area patching work that will need to be completed by our Public Works staff in these same areas, estimated at about \$20,000. A revised plan was provided for discussion.

Councilmember Holden supported the City finding the money to complete the work in 2022 because the maintenance would always be required and the expense would just continue to rise.

Councilmember Scott agreed stating the longer these projects were delayed the more expense the projects would become.

Councilmember Holmes asked if the overage could be covered by the balance transfer from 2021.

Finance Director Bauman reported this would be possible.

Councilmember Holmes supported the City moving forward with the additional work because there was money to cover the expense.

City Administrator Perrault noted the Council would be approving this item at a Special City Council meeting following this work session meeting.

G. Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan Discussion

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated at the February work session Council directed staff to retrieve the quotes from the treatment work performed in 2021, and the previous contract that included a resident discount. Staff is asking for final comments on the Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan, and if the Council is interested in partnering with Rainbow Tree Care to provide a discounted service for residents. Once staff has direction from Council on the plan, it will be brought forward at a regular meeting to formally adopt.

Councilmember Radziej stated he supported this plan moving forward.

Councilmember Holden and **Councilmember Scott** agreed.

Councilmember Holmes asked if the City supported Rainbow providing a discount to Arden Hills residents.

Mayor Grant indicated it was his understanding this was part of the contract.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen reported this was correct.

The Council supported staff moving forward with the contract per staff's recommendation.

H. COVID-19 and City Operations

Mayor Grant commented the City was starting to get planning cases and for this reason the Council should go back to holding two meetings a month. He questioned if the Council should be holding these meetings in person.

Councilmember Holden asked if the County board meetings were being held in person.

Mayor Grant reported the worksession meetings were held virtually and the County board meetings were back in person.

Councilmember Scott explained he was ready to go back to in person meetings in April so long as there was no unnecessary risk to staff.

Councilmember Holden agreed stating she was ready to go back to in person meetings.

Councilmember Radziej indicated he would also support going back to in person meetings.

Councilmember Holmes stated she would support in person meetings and asked if masks would be required.

City Administrator Perrault commented he would like the mask requirement to be rolled back at City Hall, and that staff and Councilmembers be allowed to make their own decision regarding masks.

Councilmember Holmes supported masks being optional. The Council agreed.

Mayor Grant supported the Council, Committees and Commissions holding meetings in person beginning in April with masks optional, and the mask mandate could be rolled back at City Hall.

I. Council Tracker

City Administrator Perrault stated there were no changes to the tracker.

2. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

Mayor Grant reported he received phone calls from an individual regarding the garage on Valentine with the large setback. He explained he was reconsidering how he voted on this matter and thought perhaps that the matter should be reconsidered.

Councilmember Holden commented she thought the plans had changed. She indicated she could not support the original plans, but would be able to reconsider the plans if they were amended.

Councilmember Radziej stated he walked the property with the individual and noted he believed the 12 foot would be fine.

Councilmember Scott indicated he supported the variance request last time and he would be willing to support it again. He reported the neighbors supported the request and encouraged the individual to come forward with the variance request again.

Councilmember Holmes stated she believed this discussion was completely inappropriate and she would not be participating.

Mayor Grant said there was a substantial amount of money in the tree fund and asked where they were in identifying areas for trees to be planted.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen replied they will be developing a tree planting plan over the year. They have identified trees along Highway 96 that need to be taken down but they will wait to plant until fall.

Councilmember Holden asked if there was anything the City could do to have the manufactured home community roads replaced.

City Administrator Perrault commented he could speak with the City Attorney to see if there was any action the City could take to encourage the manufactured home park to replace the roads.

Councilmember Holden stated she liked getting the reports from the Ramsey County Sheriff's office but would like some of the acronyms explained. She asked if anything done at the Paul Kirkwood facility would be counted against the City.

City Administrator Perrault explained that walk-ins at the Sheriff's station in Arden Hills do not count against the City calls for service.

City Administrator Perrault said staff would be meeting with a no cost solar solutions company to see if any of their products could be an option for the City of Arden Hills.

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the City Council Work Session at 7:46 p.m.

Jolene Trauba
Deputy City Clerk

David Grant
Mayor