



DRAFT

Approved: January 9, 2023

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
DECEMBER 19, 2022
5:00 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY HALL**

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, Fran Holmes, Steve Scott and David Radziej (arrived at 5:24 p.m.)

Absent: None

Also present: City Administrator Dave Perrault, Finance Director Gayle Bauman, Public Works Director/City Engineer David Swearingen, Community Development Director Jessica Jagoe, Assistant Public Works Director Lucas Miller, Recreation Supervisor Matthew Johnson, Deputy City Clerk Jolene Trauba, PTRC Committee Members Marie Hinton, Kristine Poelzer and Kerri Seemann

1. AGENDA ITEMS

A. PTRC Discussion

PTRC Chair Hinton introduced Kristine Poelzer to speak about a possible sledding hill at Hazelnut Park.

Ms. Poelzer stated that she wants to give kids more free opportunities in the winter. She had scouted locations at Hazelnut Park. She described the park and the potential locations for a sliding hill. The location she preferred was near the Elmer L Anderson trail but it would need brush cleared and a tree removed, also the lower end may be considered a wetland. She felt signage would be nice, but grooming the snow wouldn't be necessary.

Councilmember Holmes said she wasn't aware of any official city sliding hills. She felt kids would sled on any hill.

Ms. Hinton said they would like to be able to list sledding as an amenity for Hazelnut Park.

Councilmember Holden asked if they would have to worry about erosion.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said he had looked at the location. It is a small slope and he didn't think erosion would be a problem. The low spot at the bottom of the

hill isn't a designated wetland but drainage does funnel to it. He thought they could try it out for a year to see if kids gravitated to it for sledding, and it would probably be good for very young kids.

Councilmember Holden asked if there would be any additional liability for the City.

City Administrator Perrault said he wasn't aware of any, but he could ask the city attorney. He thought if there was a tree to be removed they wouldn't be able to open the sliding hill until 2024.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen noted that for the most part he thought there were tall grasses that would need to be mowed.

Mayor Grant asked for more description of the hill, and asked how long it would take to get it ready for sledding.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen thought 2 employees with the brush mower could tackle it, but he'd like to assess it again over the summer. He didn't think it would attract older kids, but it would be a safe hill for younger children. He'd also like to look at the distance between the hill and neighboring properties.

Councilmember Scott asked if it is designated as an official sledding hill and someone gets hurt, what would that do to the City's liability? Right now, any hill with snow on it becomes a sledding hill, but they're not marked.

Mayor Grant said they can look at it in the spring, have more discussion at a future work session and add it to the Council Tracker.

Ms. Hinton stated that Kerri Seemann was an expert on plants and native species and she could talk about adding native plants to Hazelnut Park.

Councilmember Holden noted that the City hopes to acquire half of the parking lot from the church and Hazelnut Park was eventually going to be made ADA accessible so there would be changes at the park.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said details haven't been worked out yet but there would be an upcoming improvement project at the park.

Ms. Seemann said there are at least 5 species of invasive plants they need to be concerned about, with the main ones being buckthorn and garlic mustard.

Councilmember Holden asked why they were choosing Hazelnut Park instead of some other park.

Ms. Seemann replied that she lives a few blocks away so it's an easy place for her to start.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen said Hazelnut is on a rotation for buckthorn removal, but they don't come back to plant native species.

Councilmember Scott asked if they replaced the buckthorn with native species, wouldn't the buckthorn outcompete the plants again?

Councilmember Holden said they may get rid of buckthorn, but there is a lot of private property with buckthorn that could spread back into the park.

Ms. Seeman replied that the areas would need to be weeded for a few years while the plants get established.

Mayor Grant wondered what would the total dollar amount be that would be asked for.

Ms. Seeman said she had that in her original proposal but had to make changes as she wanted to grow the plants herself and get reimbursed from the city but was told that wasn't an option. The original proposal included several trees, shrubs and other plants for about \$3,500.00.

Mayor Grant discussed the new Landscape fund that could be used for shrubs and plants. He asked what was the time frame they would like to get started at the park.

Ms. Seeman said she wanted to start this past fall and work on it next spring and summer.

Mayor Grant wondered if where they wanted to work would be impacted when the park was re-done.

Discussion ensued regarding what parts of the park wouldn't be impacted by reconstruction and where would be best to start planting native species. It was decided to start in the area of the small wetland pond.

Mayor Grant felt the City could fund the plantings for the first year and after that they may have funds in the Landscape Fund that could be used.

City Administrator Perrault wondered if there were plants that required less maintenance than others in case in a few years they weren't being maintained by volunteers or staff that the area would turn back the way it was.

Ms. Hinton suggested they look for drought resistant plants.

Mayor Grant said that PTRC should come back with how many plants they'd like to put in along the trail by the little pond and approximate cost.

Ms. Hinton explained their request for name badges for park volunteers and volunteer appreciation/recognition.

Councilmember Holden wondered why they weren't also thinking of other types of volunteers such as coaches.

Ms. Hinton said they've had requests to highlight some of the long term volunteers that work in the parks and gardens.

Councilmember Radziej like the idea of getting thank you letters or recognition in the newsletter.

Councilmember Holmes felt they should include people like coaches and Planning Commission members.

Ms. Hinton agreed. She discussed getting reflective vests for volunteers that are working in the parks, with “Arden Hills Volunteer” on them for regular volunteers.

Ms. Hinton noted the PTRC had come up with a list of possible names for the new Parkshore Trail with Fitness Park and Trail, and Round Lake Fitness Park and Trail getting the most votes from the committee. They would also like to officially name Triangle Park as a park to be able to put it on the list of parks with chess/checkerboard as an amenity.

Councilmembers Holden and Holmes agreed with the idea of making it an official park.

Mayor Grant requested the PTRC bring the planting plan back to the Council in February.

Council recessed at 5:56 p.m. and returned at 6:10 p.m.

B. Winter Averaging Discussion

Finance Director Bauman stated that winter averaging is a practice by which water use during the winter months is used to determine maximum sewer charges for the remaining months so as not to include outdoor use such as irrigation. The city looks at the at the customer’s water consumption during the months of January, February and March in determining the winter average. In Minnesota, many residents may be away from their home for extended periods of time during the first quarter of the year, which will distort the sewer consumption that will occur over the remaining quarters of the year. This is one of the reasons we have a 9,000 gallon minimum winter average amount per quarter. When Ehlers completed our rate study back in 2018, they had anticipated the City using a 15,000 gallon minimum for winter averaging. After reviewing available information and usage throughout the City, it was determined that 9,000 gallons was a better fit for our community.

Finance Director Bauman gave a several examples of how the averaging works, as explained in the staff memo. She noted that in Little Canada residents are always billed a minimum of 7,000 per quarter, even during the winter quarter. The winter quarter sewer usage is the ceiling for the year (minimum of 7,000 gallons). Shoreview residents are always billed a minimum of 5,000 per quarter, even during the winter quarter. The winter quarter usage is used for the rest of the year (minimum of 5,000 gallons). For properties with no information (new or sold), winter average is set at 10,000 gallons. New Brighton’s winter average minimum is set at 8,000 per quarter. For properties with no information (new or sold), the winter average could be set at 15,000 or 25,000 gallons depending on the situation. Vadnais Heights residents are always billed a minimum of 6,000 gallons, even during the winter quarter. Winter average is only applied during the 3rd quarter. For properties with no information (new or sold), winter average is set at 18,000 gallons.

Finance Director Bauman said they can’t do something special for one or two people in the city, and it wasn’t fair to townhomes to set a minimum usage as they could always be paying for more than they use. An option would be to install an irrigation meter, but council was not receptive to

this idea. She explained that snowbirds with little or no consumption during the winter months will have their winter average set at 9,000 gallons. So they will never pay for more than 9,000 gallons of sewer consumption during the remainder of the year.

Councilmember Holden thought they should leave the averaging as is.

Mayor Grant mentioned that if they lowered the winter average it would impact the money the city receives, which would then cause a rate increase to compensate.

All Councilmembers agreed they should leave the minimum winter average at 9,000 gallons.

C. Council Tracker

City Administrator Perrault provided the Council with an update of the Council Tracker. After discussion, the Minor Code Changes and Tree Plan items were removed.

2. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

None

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the City Council Work Session at 6:33 p.m.

Jolene Trauba
Deputy City Clerk

David Grant
Mayor