



Approved: March 14, 2022

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
FEBRUARY 22, 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; and City Planner Jessica Jagoe

1. AGENDA ITEMS

A. North Heights Lutheran Church Concept Plan

City Planner Jagoe stated Trident Development is proposing a 115 to 125 unit senior apartment development (apartments only, the proposed will not have an assisted living or memory care component) on the northwest side of the North Heights Lutheran Church property at 1700 Highway 96 West. Prior to this submission, the Applicant held a neighborhood meeting on July 29, 2021 in order to garner feedback from the adjacent landowners on the proposed site development. The Applicant has included a summary of the meeting comments as part of this submission. Public comments and questions were primarily regarding traffic, access, impacts on neighborhood (i.e. property values and Royal Hills Park), and noise.

City Planner Jagoe explained in 2017 and 2018, the City Council considered two Concept Plan Review applications for the development of senior living housing which would have comprised of independent, assisted, and memory care units on this same property. Both of those concept proposals had the placement of the building on the south side of the property with the primary access to the site from Snelling Avenue north of the intersection with Royal Hills Drive. At that time, the Council expressed concerns about building height, massing, traffic, and the required

property rezoning. Additionally, the Council provided direction that the northwest corner of the property should be considered for the development. The former Applicant evaluated this site and determined that development would not be feasible due to the presence of several large wetlands and additional construction costs. In the end, the former Developer made the decision not to move forward with a formal land use application. Staff commented further on the request and noted representatives from Trident Development were in attendance.

Roger Fink, Trident Development, provided the Council with further details on the proposed senior apartment project. He discussed how the parking would be restriped and added to in order to keep the church use in compliance. He noted a pedestrian trail would meander along the west side of the building and would connect to a fire lane at the rear portion of the building. He stated the building would have an underground parking structure and commented on how the apartment traffic would not conflict with church traffic. He described the amenities that would be included within the senior apartment complex and explained that tenants of their other buildings were thoroughly enjoying the rooftop patio. He detailed the exterior building materials that would be used on the structure which included vinyl windows, powder coated balconies, brick and LP siding. He then reviewed the elevations of the building, noted the overall building height and commented on the areas of flexibility that might be requested as part of a future land use application to the City.

Councilmember Holden thanked the applicant for discussing the unit height but noted the surrounding properties may be adversely impacted by the proposed building height. She asked how the proposed exterior building materials conform to the City's standards.

City Planner Jagoe explained residential housing districts do not have preferred or specific exterior building material requirements. She indicated residential standards evaluate the impact to the surrounding area, such as design scale and building height.

Councilmember Holden questioned how high the chapel was at North Heights.

City Planner Jagoe indicated she was uncertain and recommended an official from the church that was in attendance or the applicant might be able to speak to this.

Councilmember Holden inquired if the County had approved an access point onto Highway 96 for this project as proposed by the applicant.

Mr. Fink stated he would be using an existing access point that was already in place for North Heights Church. He explained he had reached an agreement with the church regarding the access point and placement of a new monument sign along Highway 96.

Councilmember Holden questioned if the residents within the senior apartment complex would be able to walk to North Heights to church.

Mr. Fink commented this was a great suggestion and stated he would look into a pedestrian path that connects to the church.

Councilmember Holden asked if some of the units could be at 80% AMI.

Mr. Fink stated he was proposing to construct market rate senior apartments.

Councilmember Holden encouraged the developer to investigate this possibility further. She indicated she had concerns about the building height.

Mayor Grant requested staff comment further on how the building height was determined.

City Planner Jagoe commented on how the city ordinance defines building height and how that is determined for multi-story buildings. She estimated the height would be between 38 and 42 feet.

Councilmember Scott questioned if Trident would maintain ownership of the building after it was constructed.

Mr. Fink reported Trident did intend to maintain ownership of this project.

Councilmember Scott requested further information regarding the heating units within each unit.

Mr. Fink discussed the magic pack heating units that would be installed in each apartment, noting they would be both gas and electric.

Councilmember Scott asked if the developer would be pursuing any LEED certifications with this building.

Mr. Fink stated he would not be seeking LEED certification with this project.

Mayor Grant inquired how the applicant defined “seniors”.

Mr. Fink explained seniors were defined as active 55+ individuals.

Councilmember Radziej requested further information on how the stormwater would be managed.

Mr. Fink reported this has yet to be fully designed. He noted he has reached an agreement with the church and a stormwater pond would be created just off the property through an easement.

Mayor Grant questioned how the Council felt about the building height.

Councilmember Scott commented he supported the proposed building height, noting a flat roof would be unseemly.

Councilmember Holden indicated she could support the building height, so long as it did not exceed 44 feet.

Councilmember Holmes stated she would like to better understand what type of flexibility has been granted to other housing units in the community and those building heights compared to what is being requested from the applicant.

Councilmember Radziej explained he supported the building height as requested.

Mayor Grant requested the Council speak to the maximum floor area ratio.

Councilmember Scott stated he was willing to allow the project to move forward with the understanding the minor speed bumps would have to be worked out.

Mayor Grant questioned if the stormwater pond could be co-owned by the applicant in order to assist with the floor area ratio.

Mr. Fink stated the boundary line was still being reviewed and survey work had to be completed.

Councilmember Holden indicated she agreed with the comments made by Councilmember Scott. She suggested the property have external amenities such as a swing set because this property was nowhere near a park. She recommended the development stick to 12 units per acre, so the development does not require a Comprehensive Plan Amendment.

Mayor Grant agreed with this recommendation.

Mr. Fink commented he would be willing to consider more outdoor amenities. He thanked the Council for the feedback and for considering his request this evening.

B. Speed Limit Update

John Morast, HR Green, stated Minnesota Statute 169.14 Speed Limits, Zones; Radar regulates highway and roadway speeds in Minnesota. Subdivision 2 sets maximum speed limits on a variety of within a Municipality, such as 10 mph in alleys, 30 mph in urban districts, and 25 mph on residential roadways, if adopted by the road authority. In August 2019, the Minnesota Legislature changed the Statutes governing speed limits on city streets. The changes allow cities to establish speed on roads under the City's jurisdiction, other than the statutory limits, without conducting an engineering and traffic investigation. Any speed limit changes must be implemented in a consistent and understandable manner. "The city must erect appropriate signs to display the speed limit. A city that uses the authority under this subdivision must develop procedures to set speed limits based on the city's safety, engineering, and traffic analysis. At a minimum, the safety, engineering, and traffic analysis must consider national urban speed limit guidance and studies, local traffic crashes, and methods to effectively communicate the change to the public." City Council has discussed speed limit changes on various roads within the City decided to implement a speed limit reduction on certain City streets from 30 MPH to 25 MPH in the spring of 2022. He reported MSA roads were eligible for a speed limit change with a few caveats. He commented further on how a speed limit change would be advertised to the public. He anticipated the speed limit change could be implemented yet this spring.

Councilmember Holden asked if MSA roadways had to be posted at 35 MPH.

Mr. Morast reported the City currently can post these roadways at 30 MPH.

Councilmember Radziej questioned if Lake Johanna Boulevard could have a reduced speed limit.

City Administrator Perrault commented that Lake Johanna Boulevard is a County Road and outside of our jurisdiction, but Ramsey County is studying this road.

Councilmember Holmes anticipated residents would be disappointed if Lake Valentine Road and Snelling Avenue were not reduced to 25 MPH given the high level of traffic along these roadways.

Mr. Morast stated there may not be a process in place at this time, but it may be able to be done in the future. He indicated more engineering would have to be done before the speeds along these roadways could be adjusted.

Further discussion ensued regarding the speed limits along Lake Valentine Road and Snelling Avenue.

Councilmember Holmes recommended no speeds be adjusted until all the roads in the City can be included. She feared it would be confusing if some roads, but not all roads were lowered at this time.

Mr. Morast stated he can speak to several traffic engineers to see if it would be appropriate to adjust the speed limit along Snelling Avenue and Lake Valentine Road. He noted these were MSA roads and they would require further investigation.

Councilmember Holden agreed the speed along Lake Valentine Road should be reduced to 25 MPH, especially because this roadway was mostly residential and went past a school.

Councilmember Holmes recommended staff further investigate lowering the speed along Lake Valentine Road and Snelling Avenue and report back to the Council.

Mayor Grant asked whose approval was needed to change the speed limit along these two roadways.

Mr. Morast reported the speed limit for these two roadways could be changed by the City Council. He stated he could further analyze these roadways and noted the City Council could make a determination regarding these two roadways.

Councilmember Scott indicated he was in favor of changing the speed limit on residential streets. He explained he was less concerned with the MSA roads, including Snelling Avenue North.

Councilmember Radziej commented he was new to this discussion. He asked how long it would take **Mr. Morast** to investigate Lake Valentine Road and Snelling Avenue.

Mr. Morast indicated he would like to speak with the City Attorney and see if enforcement would be a concern for these two roadways. He stated once that was coordinated he could get information back to City staff and the Councilmembers.

Further discussion ensued regarding speed limit signs and if there would be confusion in the City if “unless otherwise posted” signs were erected. The Council also discussed GPS systems and how they would need to be updated if the City were to lower the residential speed limit.

Councilmember Holden questioned what the next step would be in this process. She asked if residents were asking for a change in the residential speed limit.

Councilmember Radziej stated he has not heard residents make this request.

Councilmember Holmes believed residents were not aware that the Council was considering a change. She supported this issue going to the City Council for a public hearing.

Mayor Grant agreed a public hearing should be held at a future City Council meeting.

City Administrator Perrault explained staff was waiting to receive feedback from the Council at this meeting before moving this item forward. He noted staff would be putting this item in the next newsletter and would be posting information on the City’s website prior to scheduling a public hearing.

Mayor Grant recommended **Mr. Morast** take two weeks to investigate these roadways further and report back to the Council in March. The Council supported staff putting a blurb in the upcoming newsletter in order to gain feedback from the public on this topic.

C. Food Truck Discussion

City Administrator Perrault stated following discussion at Council work sessions, the City Council considered updates to its Food Truck Ordinance at its June 14, 2021 City Council meeting. At the meeting, Council decided to table the item to a future work session for further discussion. The proposed updates would have imposed the following:

- Requiring the property owner/event host to obtain permit to host a food truck (similar to garage sales)
- Limiting the number of times a residential property could host a food truck to two events per calendar year
- Set an administrative penalty for violations of the ordinance (\$100)

City Administrator Perrault explained as the ordinance stands today, a residential property can host a food truck, but the sales are limited to those attending a private/catered event, such as, a wedding or graduation party. From an enforcement perspective, it is difficult for the City to define what is considered a “private” event versus what constitutes sales to the general public. Non-residential properties are allowed to host food trucks and make sales to the general public, for example, Mounds View High School could host a food truck and make sales to the general public. In 2021, the City issued 24 food truck licenses. Of those licenses, approximately 10 were for non-residential properties, such as, the University of Northwestern, Mounds View High School or Valentine Hills Elementary hosting a food truck. The remaining 14 licenses were residential properties hosting food trucks.

City Administrator Perrault reported of those residential properties, 3 reported to be a private or catered event, and 11 were for ongoing neighborhood gatherings. These numbers represent information reported to the City at the time of license application and may not represent the full extent of where licensed trucks operated in the City thereafter. For example, a previously licensed truck may have been subsequently hired at a different residential or non-residential property later in the summer which did not report the event to the City, or an event could have been later cancelled by the vendor or resident, making this difficult to track. For reference, the Minnesota Department of Health licenses food trucks to ensure safe operation and food preparation standards are met. The City also licenses food trucks that operate in the City to ensure they meet City Ordinance requirements; the City also has the fire department inspect food trucks to ensure they meet minimum fire safety standards. There is no standard on regulating food trucks for Cities, some cities have little to no regulation while others have regulations similar to ours. Staff is seeking direction on what, if any, changes should be made to the existing ordinance, or if Council is comfortable with it as written.

Councilmember Holden stated she would like to have a public hearing or some type of public forum at a future work session to hear from residents on both sides of the issue.

Mayor Grant recommended this input be taken at a City Council meeting.

Councilmember Holmes agreed this needed to be done to allow voices to be heard before the Ordinance is amended.

Councilmember Scott questioned if a public hearing was the best way to work through this issue. He suggested an online survey could be considered to gather public input.

Mayor Grant proposed the Council holding a separate meeting, or public forum to discuss this topic. The Council supported this recommendation and requested staff put a blurb in the upcoming newsletter regarding a future public meeting.

D. Emerald Ash Borer

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated in 2016 and 2018, the City of Arden Hills treated a list of 37 trees with injected insecticide. The insecticide is 99% effective when injected into healthy Ash trees and will protect for 2 growing seasons. In 2021 the City treated 46 ash trees within public property for a total of \$3,895 and will continue to treat these trees every other year as needed. On August 16, 2021 at the Council Work Session, staff brought this topic up for discussion to review the City's current adopted Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan (2012) and receive feedback from Council if revisions to the plan were desired to better correlate with actions the City is taking on ash trees. Staff took the feedback from that Work Session and updated the plan. Revisions included updates to more current information about EAB but mainly updates to the action the City is taking to respond to EAB.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen reported the intention of this discussion is to review the updated EAB Management Plan and provide an opportunity for Council feedback. Once staff has direction from Council on the plan, it will be brought forward at a regular meeting to formally adopt. Currently, the City does not directly provide assistance or programs to residents

related to diseased tree control. The City promotes Friends of the Parks and Trails Annual Tree Sale but, in 2020 and 2021, that program was suspended due to challenges from Covid and after review of their website there is no information shown for 2022. In 2021, the City contracted with Rainbow Tree Care to treat the City owned ash trees, staff inquired if they provide services at a discount to residents to which they replied they offer approximately 30% off their standard rate when partnered with a City. Staff is requesting direction from Council if there is interest in this program.

Mayor Grant requested further information regarding the contractors.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen explained staff reached out to three contractors in 2021 and Rainbow Tree provided the best rate per caliper inch for the treatment of trees.

Councilmember Holden questioned if the City wanted to open up this contractor to the public.

Mayor Grant reported the City has always done this for Emerald Ash Borer treatments. He stated the City could have an agreement with Rainbow Tree that would allow residents to receive a 30% discount.

Councilmember Scott discussed the cost the City paid to treat 46 trees in 2021.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen indicated he was not interested in offering the City's rate to residents because the City was receiving a bid rate and not a standard single tree rate that would be charged to residents.

Mayor Grant suggested this item be tabled this evening and staff can bring it back at a future meeting when they can provide more information on the three vendors that were contacted in 2021 and what rates would they be willing to bring forward.

E. Council Tracker

City Administrator Perrault provided the Council with an update on the Council Tracker.

Councilmember Holden requested the water meter situation be added to the Council Tracker.

2. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

Councilmember Radziej stated he would be attending a meeting with Representative Moller this week. He commented he would be attending a tour of the fire department tomorrow.

Councilmember Scott asked when the Council would be making a determination to return to in-person meetings. He reported the COVID numbers have fallen dramatically at this point.

Mayor Grant commented on the numbers and noted another variant was out there that was now more catchy than Omicron and also more deadly.

Councilmember Holden suggested the Council address this topic at the first Council meeting in April.

Mayor Grant supported this suggestion. He recommended the Council hold the first meeting in March virtually and that the second meeting in March be canceled.

Councilmember Holden requested further information regarding the City’s snow emergency policy and when public works responds to snow events.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen discussed the City’s snow emergency policy in further detail with the Council. He stated 2” with continuous snow or drifting triggers a snow event.

Mayor Grant asked if the City had adequate funds in the tree replacement fund. He commented he would like trees replaced along Highway 96. He requested staff put together some sort of plan for this.

Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen stated this was the case and noted he could put together a plan.

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the City Council Work Session at 7:31 p.m.

Julie Hanson
City Clerk

David Grant
Mayor