



Approved: March 13, 2023

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**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA  
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
FEBRUARY 21, 2023  
5:00 P.M. - ARDEN HILLS CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS**

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**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, Emily Rousseau, Tena Monson and Tom Fabel

**Absent:** None

**Also present:** City Administrator Dave Perrault, Community Development Director Jessica Jagoe, Public Works Director/City Engineer David Swearingen, Deputy Clerk Jolene Trauba, Trident Development Senior Vice-President Roger Fink (via Zoom), and Resident Kerri Seemann

**1. PUBLIC INQUIRIES/INFORMATIONAL**

None

**2. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC INQUIRIES**

None

**3. AGENDA ITEMS**

**A. Concept Plan Review – 1700 Highway 96 W – Senior Apartment Housing Proposal**

**Trident Development Senior Vice-President Roger Fink** stated they were proposing 124 units in a three story, wood framed building. He discussed the three areas that they would need to seek variances, based on being in the R-4 Zoning District. The current density allowed is 12 units per acre, they would be requesting 14.95 units per acre. They would be requesting an approximate 39-43 foot building height, and a slightly higher maximum floor area ratio.

**Community Development Director Jagoe** explained the density calculations.

**Councilmember Holden** felt they could get rid of some of the variances if they would drop the number of units.

**Councilmember Rousseau** asked why they wanted 14.95 units per acre instead of 12.

**Mr. Fink** stated that 124 units was the optimum size for the property that includes the wetland, and it optimizes the size for income from the property. They would need to drop 12 units to get down to 12 units per acre which wouldn't change the cost of construction much but it will change the amount of income from the property.

**Mayor Grant** said if there wasn't a wetland there wouldn't be an issue.

**Councilmember Rousseau** asked if it was fairly standard to go up to 14 in density.

**Community Development Director Jagoe** said she would get the numbers from the last two properties that were built.

Discussion ensued regarding height measurement.

**Mr. Fink** stated the building would be 32 feet at the eaves, 44 feet at the peak. The building height would be 38 feet, in part due to the nine-foot ceilings in modern buildings.

**Mayor Grant** noted that if developers stay within the 35 foot height then they are looking at flat roofs. He felt that aesthetically it would be better to have a pitched roof than a flat roof.

**Community Development Director Jagoe** stated the New Perspective project was under a commercial zoning district that allows higher density of up to 20 units per acre. The Round Lake Senior Living project is zoned R-4 and was approved at a density of 21 units per acre under the PUD.

**Councilmember Holden** asked how the City would benefit under a PUD.

**Mr. Fink** replied that they would be using an underutilized property and putting it on the tax rolls, and fulfill an unmet need for senior living. Initially they aren't planning to connect directly to the park with a trail because of neighborhood concerns about burdening the park, and requests that activities be held mainly on site.

**Councilmember Holden** said her concern would be people walking through parking lots to get to the park. She asked what amenities they were planning to have onsite.

**Mr. Fink** said there would most likely be a walking trail, patio, pickleball court and something for grandkids. They would have more exact plans when they come forward with the formal application.

**Councilmember Rousseau** wondered if people were able to safely walk from the property to the park. She felt people look for that when deciding where to live.

**Councilmember Monson** said it seemed like the original proposal was open market and there was concerns about families from there overrunning the playground, but now at 55+ there would be a different view on how to access the park.

**Mr. Fink** said there is a trail on the south side of Highway 96 and they plan to connect to it, he believed that would connect to a trail on Snelling Avenue to get to the park.

**Councilmember Monson** said there was no sidewalk on Snelling Avenue.

**Councilmember Holden** wondered if they could put a crosswalk through the parking lot from the park to the property, and asked about access for people wanting to go to church at North Heights.

**Mr. Fink** said when they get the site plan detail they will address pedestrian traffic, vehicle traffic, and recreational trails in and around the site.

**Mayor Grant** mentioned this was a concept review and an opportunity to give feedback to the developer so if he brings back a proposal it lines up with what they want.

**Councilmember Monson** said she would be looking at how much tree clearing would take place with preference of fewer trees cleared. She would also like to see energy efficiency measures beyond traditional buildings.

**Councilmember Holden** asked who would own and be responsible for the storm water pond.

**Mr. Fink** assumed that the property owner would maintain the pond.

**Councilmember Fabel** expressed interest in making 15-20 units be affordable at 60% AMI.

**Mr. Fink** stated that would require some financial assistance from the City to cover the revenue gap.

**Mr. Fink** said the intention is to have a left turn only out of the development so traffic is directed to Highway 96.

**Councilmember Holden** said they would need to make significant changes to the intersection with Snelling Avenue so it would be a right hand only turn.

**Mr. Fink** agreed that would be their intention.

**Councilmember Rousseau** asked if they would be completing a noise study.

**Mr. Fink** said they would complete the study before the application goes to the Planning Commission.

**Mayor Grant** said the quality of exterior building materials would be important to him.

**Councilmember Holden** wondered how many people would be under 65 years old would live at the facility.

**Mr. Fink** said the law allows them to discriminate for ages 55+ and they use that age to comply, but in reality, the population tends to be older than age 65.

**Councilmember Fabel** said he would be much more impressed by the project if there was some effort to include some measure of affordability.

**Community Development Director Jagoe** noted the church facility had a height of 50 feet and she would verify that number and include it in a future staff memo.

### **B. Hazelnut Park Ecological Restoration Plan**

**Mayor Grant** thanked Ms. Seemann for the proposal. He recommended they go with Option 1 due to using more plugs with less risk and seeds.

Councilmembers Holden, Monson and Fabel agreed with Option 1.

**Councilmember Rousseau** asked if there was any liability if a PTRC member applies herbicides.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** said Public Works would have to approve the work and location, and volunteers would sign a waiver form.

**Councilmember Holden** asked if they would need a barrel for water.

**Ms. Seemann** said she has a barrel with a top that she would bring to the location.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** said he would coordinate filling the barrel with Ms. Seemann.

**Councilmember Rousseau** said she would also support Option 1.

### **C. 2024 PMP Street and Utility Improvements Project**

**Mayor Grant** said the project would be happening unless anyone had any objections.

**Councilmember Holden** asked if Dawn Circle could be done.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** asked if she was talking about the section between Norma and Dawn because they just did a mill and overlay on Dawn Circle in 2020. They will be crack sealing and seal coating it this year.

**Councilmember Holden** wondered how many manhole covers they still had to replace.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** said they would be replacing 56 on this project but he wasn't sure how many city-wide.

**Councilmember Holden** asked about adding a sidewalk or trail on the south side of Royal Lane.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** the segment between Floral Dr W up to Floral Park is being connected as part of the 2023 Floral Park Improvements Project. They are looking at adding some parking by the tennis courts at Floral Park.

**Councilmember Holden** asked if they could add a small trail or sidewalk on the south side of Royal Lane.

**Councilmember Holden** noted they were asking to use Bolten & Menk and wondered how big the difference was in the bids and how would we know we'll get a decent price.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** said in the past two RFPs that Bolten & Menk has been chosen they haven't been the lowest bid, but they've justified it with the quality of what they produce. Overall, he's been very impressed with how they work with staff and residents, and follow up during construction. They know they need to stay competitive with the RFP process still a possibility.

**Councilmember Monson** asked in what circumstances they are allowed to bypass an RFP.

**City Administrator Perrault** replied that when they are negotiating professional services they don't need to have an RFP. The construction project itself would trigger the RFP being over \$175,000.

#### **D. Parkshore Exercise Station Trail Loop – Official Name Discussion**

After discussion it was decided to approve the official name of the park as South Shore Fitness Park and Trail at the next regular Council meeting.

#### **E. 2023 Capital Equipment Replacement – 2014 Bobcat Toolcat**

**Mayor Grant** stated that Public Works would like to buy a Bobcat toolcat. Asked if anyone had concerns.

**Councilmember Holden** asked how long it would take to get.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** said it would be approximately six months.

**Mayor Grant** directed staff to order the Bobcat.

#### **F. TCAAP Discussion**

**City Administrator Perrault** noted this was a carryover from the last Council meeting. The attachment was terms that were shared with Bob Lux.

**Councilmember Holden** said the reason she brought this up was because she wanted to know what the city process will be. She wondered if they would have some city-led open houses. She expressed the need to bring the residents along.

**Councilmember Rousseau** agreed and said she would be interested in having public feedback when key areas are discussed.

**Mayor Grant** said he would advocate for public comment and participation up front so the negotiators know what the public is thinking.

**Councilmember Fabel** said they are just getting started and they would certainly have public input.

**Mayor Grant** asked who he was referring to when he said we? Was it the City Council or JDA?

**Councilmember Fabel** said he was speaking of the JDA, and solicitation of public input would happen as the planning process resumes.

**Councilmember Holden** asked if they were planning on involving residents prior to making an agreement. They have to bring residents along, not just tell them what they owe and what the density is without bringing them along. She asked what they were planning to do for the residents so they could take the information gathered back to the JDA. They previously had townhome and multi-family developers talk to them about what kind of space was needed. She's hearing that office space will be needed in 8-10 years. She felt they need to talk to experts to decide what retail and office space to plan for.

**Mayor Grant** noted they had open house meetings in 2013, 2014, 2015 where residents left public comments, where they would typically have about 75 people show up.

**Councilmember Fabel** said they were able to use that information and integrate it into the master development agreement and code, that work was done before the current JDA and they would have to evaluate what has changed in the last four years.

**Councilmember Holden** asked if Councilmember Fabel was saying there would be no public process prior to an agreement.

**Councilmember Fabel** said he didn't have an answer to that, when there would be public input, who would be there or what it would look like.

**Councilmember Monson** said she supported having experts come to talk about the changes in the market, office space, and density. She thought bright line items would warrant public discussion, and she felt it was important to bring the Council along with the JDA and get public input. The JDA is currently deciding short and long-term goals. They don't have a roadmap developed yet. She is keeping her eye on when/how/if they need to have an environmental energy committee.

**Councilmember Rousseau** asked about the logistics of putting an open house together.

**Mayor Grant** said if it was a JDA open house the County would participate, if it was a City open house then City staff and Council would put it on.

**Councilmember Rousseau** asked if there had been previous talk of utilizing an ad-hoc committee to review financial documents.

**Mayor Grant** thought it had been talked about, and there is an external consultant that does financials for the JDA to review, but it would be good for residents to review those financials.

You have to make sure you cover costs and have benefits. It would be good to have residents weigh in early in the process so the final outcome is more likely to reflect their desires.

**Councilmember Holden** said right now the JDA is in the process of planning and she was asking they have transparency going into the agreement, and to have the residents become involved throughout the process while they are laying it out.

**Councilmember Fabel** said the important thing to remember is that it is a partnership between the City of Arden Hills and Ramsey County, representing the same people. They won't be breaking off with the City doing this and the County doing that, they'll be working together.

**Councilmember Monson** felt they could be partners and bring the public along.

**Councilmember Holden** stated the County will be responsible for one item once TCAAP is developed and that is the spine road, everything else will be the liability of the citizens of Arden Hills.

**Mayor Grant** wondered how they would know what the bright line items are without inviting the resident's input.

**Councilmember Monson** said the JDA will make a plan, be able to define specific things, define the appropriate time to have an open house, and there is time at the JDA meetings for public comment.

**Councilmember Rousseau** said she would appreciate it if they would work with the other JDA representative to let them know there is an appetite for some kind of roadmap to identify key areas and a possible joint public event.

**Mayor Grant** asked how many subcommittee meetings have already been held.

**City Administrator Perrault** said there haven't been any actual advisory committee meetings, but City staff had a phone call with County staff to talk about the upcoming agenda for the advisory committee meeting. The advisory committee is Councilmember Fabel, Commissioner Frethem and staff from the City and County.

### **G. Ordinance Review for Home Improvement Discussion**

**City Administrator Perrault** stated this item was requested by a councilmember to be put on the agenda. It was communicated to staff the renovations to homes can be difficult due to the "restrictive" ordinances in the city. Staff looked at some of the variances that have been approved and denied over the last three years. Four were approved, one was not. Staff had also heard that corner lot setbacks have proven difficult. Staff is happy to do a deeper dive into sections of the ordinance and bring it back to the Council if they find things that are cumbersome or restrictive as compared to other cities.

**Councilmember Holden** said that because Arden Hills isn't on a grid system, different ordinances have different effects on different neighborhoods.

**Councilmember Monson** said she was the one that requested this to be on the agenda. She felt they should make it easier for people to improve the value of their homes. She would like to see a public hearing or survey to hear what their concerns are. Some businesses are concerned about things like lighting, which would be a separate list. If there is support she'd like to see a plan made about the scope and cost.

**Councilmember Rousseau** said they didn't request a variance when remodeling the exterior of their home but she had interest in comparing our ordinances to other cities.

**Mayor Grant** said he brought up the corner lot issue. Code was changed in the 1980s and potentially not a good thing. Property owners have rights but it needs to be balanced with infringing on neighbors' rights. He felt they could look at areas of concern, businesses are different but that could be looked at as well, specifically lighting requirements.

**Councilmember Monson** noted that she'd like to have the Planning Commission be involved in this.

**Councilmember Holden** would like to see past projects, like infill, come before this.

**Mayor Grant** suggested they start with potential changes to residential code, look for issues of frequent variances.

**City Administrator Perrault** felt they could use a multi-phase approach, with setbacks potentially discussed next month, and floor area ratios. He proposed looking at some of the easy setbacks first and possibly plan for some kind of survey.

**Mayor Grant** requested the infill project be included.

**Councilmember Fabel** wondered if people who work with codes such as realtors, builders and home improvement contractors could be involved.

**Community Development Director Jagoe** said some of the other ordinances on her list are infill development, short term rentals, signage, amendments to the fence ordinance, accessory structures and evcharging stations.

**Councilmember Holden** asked if sight lines would be included.

**Community Development Director Jagoe** said that would be part of infill, which would also include land disturbance, inconsistency between ordinance language, height of buildings, tree clearing and character of the neighborhood.

Council directed staff to bring back what other cities have for setbacks as a starting point and also discuss priorities for future code revisions.

## **H. Climate Action Roadmap Discussion**

**Councilmember Monson** stated she was looking for enough consent for staff to look at what the City is doing on a sustainable nature and climate resiliency. The end goal would be a climate



action plan which is a massive undertaking. She was recommending to lay out what we have today and what we could do to start moving toward a climate action plan.

**Councilmember Rousseau** said Ramsey County is putting a climate action plan together and she was at a meeting where they were talking about transportation. She wondered if we didn't have a plan in place if that would impact future opportunities for financing or partnering on projects.

**Councilmember Holden** said it is possible that it could be a negative when applying for grants. Her concern is how a state like California has mountains of solar panels in the waste stream because there is nowhere for them to go, so swapping one problem for another.

**Mayor Grant** added as another example of not thinking ahead that the state of California built two very large desalination plants that aren't in operation because the salt negatively affected the marine life when they put it back into the ocean.

**Councilmember Holden** suggested we look at other cities and not re-invent the wheel.

**Councilmember Rousseau** would also be interested to know if the State, or MnDOT were doing them so they could find out what key areas they are looking at.

**Councilmember Monson** noted the State just came out with their plan.

**City Administrator Perrault** stated that it would be simple enough to get other plans but moving forward with staff may be an issue and may need to involve consultants.

Council directed staff to gather what nearby City's have for climate roadmaps and report back to Council.

### **I. Northeast Youth and Family Services (NYFS) Discussion**

**Mayor Grant** said they could possibly choose to rejoin and get a prorated fee for this year.

**Councilmember Holden** said there are several other companies and non-profit organizations with sliding scales or free help that do the same work.

**Mayor Grant** added that he gets requests for donations from similar organizations and some of them are in the area. He noted that according to information from NYFS, \$64,000 of care was provided at low or no cost to clients. The City's share is \$22,000 and if they added up the other cities contributions it would be around \$300,000 so he felt they were being funded well beyond the low or no cost care.

**Councilmember Holden** said she was also surprised the NYFS hasn't asked the Ramsey County Sheriff Department to be on the board as the official police force of Arden Hills.

**Councilmember Rousseau** was interested in having the CEO come to talk to the Council so they could ask about the numbers, including the senior program.

**Councilmember Fabel** said he said something like 30% of adolescent girls are considering suicide or having destructive thoughts. He looks at the list of municipalities involved and it is

noticeable that Arden Hills is missing from the list of partners. He felt the City should participate with the organization.

**Mayor Grant** noted that Arden Hills was a founding member of the organization. He agreed they could invite the CEO to speak at one of the next work sessions.

#### **J. No Mow May Discussion**

**Mayor Grant** said there have been some issues in other cities with some residents not coming into compliance and asked whether or not the City should participate.

**Councilmember Holden** thought she had heard that a city was changing their end date to May 20. She thought it was a great idea last year but then it rained a lot the last week of May and everyone's grass sprung up.

**Councilmember Monson** asked if the City would maintain parks, fields, boulevards etc.?

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** said they would have to set parameters of what would be expected of Public Works staff.

**Councilmember Monson** supported No Mow May, but thought the City could find areas that they could forgo mowing.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** said staff would also need to figure out how to dispose of the excess grass material that would be cut after the month was over.

**Mayor Grant** said they could implement No Mow May for residents and businesses but the city would still do as normal for ball fields, parks etc. so the city doesn't look unkept.

**Councilmember Holden** said it is also during tick season and the taller grass could make that more of an issue.

**Councilmember Rousseau** supported No Mow May and thought staff would have to use their best judgement.

**Mayor Grant** noted the City went silent on it last year, he didn't think they wanted to provide signs, it could get promoted in the newsletter.

**City Administrator Perrault** said it wasn't a public requested event, but that other cities were doing it.

After further discussion it was decided a resolution would be brought forth to the Council to allow No Mow May for residents and businesses, no signs would be issued, no enforcement would happen between May 1 and June 10, and the City will mow its properties.

### **K. Gathering Place Parking Lot Discussion**

**City Administrator Perrault** gave a brief history of the parking lot and the agreement with the church. The parking lot is privately owned. In previous discussions the city would be willing to split the cost and give the church a payment plan, in return they would turn over about 30% of the property into green space. The church would like to retain ownership of the greenspace for the life of the agreement. The City would pay the church for plowing each year and provide maintenance to the lot. The church would also like a low interest rate, possibly 2% over 20 years.

**Councilmember Holden** noted the church had defaulted on their contract and hadn't maintained it, and now they want the City to pay for a private entities parking lot. She felt the City should get the property or not pave the parking lot.

**Mayor Grant** asked what the City got out of the negotiations.

**City Administrator Perrault** said the two changes were the church would maintain ownership of the green space and get a lower interest rate. The benefit to the City would be to have a functional parking lot for the park for \$140,000.

**Mayor Grant** wondered how much of the parking lot gets used by people going to the park.

**Councilmember Monson** said she has seen it half full on weekends when there are soccer games. She didn't know how you could functionally arrive at the park if the parking lot wasn't available. She thought it would be nice if the city could own the piece and turn it to green space or make it into our own parking lot. She didn't feel comfortable getting into another long-term contract with a partner that didn't maintain the lot.

**Councilmember Rousseau** asked if the construction costs may increase.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Swearingen** said he was fairly confident in the current estimate but would know more once the bidding process gets underway.

**Councilmember Rousseau** wondered what would happen if the Gathering Place sold the property.

**Mayor Grant** thought the cost of reconstructing the parking lot could be potentially more than \$280,000.

**Councilmember Monson** asked if the City had ever offered to purchase part of the property.

**City Administrator Perrault** said they hadn't offered to purchase a portion, only for the 28% to be given to the City.

**Councilmember Monson** asked if they could have a new proposal saying the City would buy a portion of the lot and not repave the rest of the lot.

**Councilmember Holden** felt we were technically buying it by fixing the lot, and by doing so we're spending that amount for less than an acre of land.

**Councilmember Fabel** said we know we need a parking lot for the park, he thought we should pay for half with the church and get it done.

**Councilmember Holden** was surprised the church wanted a loan from the City because she felt they were amply funded.

**Mayor Grant** agreed that for the money the City is spending we should own part of the parking lot.

**City Administrator Perrault** asked for clarification on what the Council would like staff to present to the church.

**Councilmember Monson** thought it would be interesting to get a tax value of the part of the lot the City would like to own.

Further discussion ensued regarding the interest rate of the loan.  
Staff was directed to renegotiate with the Gathering Place.

#### **L. JDA Chair Interview and Selection Process**

**City Administrator Perrault** noted that applications close on February 24.

**Mayor Grant** said the last process involved the Council interviewing the applicants, he proposed they do it again.

After further discussion it was decided to schedule the interviews prior to the March 13 regular meeting, or to have a special meeting immediately after the interviews to approve the candidate. Staff would coordinate the interviews with the candidates and Council.

#### **M. Future Council Meeting Processes**

**City Administrator Perrault** stated this item was brought forth by a Councilmember to discuss the time of future work sessions and the process for agenda setting.

**Councilmember Fabel** felt the Mayor had failed to do what he said he would do, which was put an item on the agenda if a councilmember requested it. He felt any one of them should be able to bring anything forward to the agenda if they wanted to and there should be a process. At the last meeting two items were removed from the agenda because they hadn't been given advance notice of what those items were. He'd also like to have work sessions start at 4:00 to get everyone home earlier at night, save the City money being spent on food, and they could be done at 7:00 p.m.

**Mayor Grant** noted that he always asks if anyone has corrections or additions to the agenda, at which point anyone could request an addition. He asks to have items funneled through him so he can coordinate items with the City Administrator. The only time he won't ask for corrections or additions is if it is a special meeting because by statute you can't change those agendas.

**Councilmember Monson** was fine with the 4:00 pm start. She did feel it was odd to funnel agenda items through another councilmember. She thought adding an agenda item last minute

poses challenges in case the public wanted to hear something on the topic but it wasn't on the agenda, and can also leave the other councilmembers without information for preparation. She felt best practice was to have the agenda set along with the pertinent information included prior to the meeting.

**Mayor Grant** said it is very common for other cities' mayors to work with their city administrators to set agendas.

**Councilmember Holden** said she has never known a mayor to not put something on the agenda that was requested. She's not able to attend a work session at 4:00, and felt it wouldn't be convenient for the public to attend.

**Mayor Grant** said it's not impossible for him to be at a 4:00 meeting, but he'd prefer not.

**Councilmember Monson** was fine with leaving the meeting at 5:00. She felt the roundabout item that Councilmember Holden put on the last regular agenda would have been more appropriate to have on a work session agenda.

**Councilmember Holden** said she felt it was appropriate on the regular agenda. She wanted to bring her knowledge forward and share, but it was clear that it wasn't welcome, so she pulled it from this agenda. She felt she was being rational by putting it on the agenda but wasn't allowed a chance to speak to it.

**Mayor Grant** said it would appear work session meetings would remain at 5:00.

Council directed not to change the meeting time and leave the agenda process as is.

#### **N. Council Tracker**

Not discussed.

#### **4. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS**

**Councilmember Rousseau** said she hopes to talk about the agenda for the council retreat at the next meeting.

**Councilmember Holden** noted that it was hard to hear at the end of the last meeting due to paper being crinkled.

**Councilmember Fabel** apologized, he wasn't aware he was making so much noise with his papers.

**City Administrator Perrault** stated for voting starting at the next regular meeting he will start with a random person and then rotate down the dais; the first person to vote will be random each meeting.

**Mayor Grant** thanked Councilmember Rousseau for running the last council meeting.

**ADJOURN**

Mayor Grant adjourned the City Council Work Session at 7:49 p.m.

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Jolene Trauba  
Deputy City Clerk

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David Grant  
Mayor