

Joint Development Authority Work Session  
Monday, February 2, 2026  
Arden Hills City Council Chambers

Minutes

5:30 pm

Roll Call

Joint Development Authority: Chair Jon Wicklund, Commissioner Tara Jebens-Singh, Commissioner Kurt Weber, Commissioner Kelly Miller, Commissioner Tena Monson

Also present: Jessica Jagoe (Arden Hills); Ella Mitchell (Ramsey County), Rachel Tierney (Kennedy & Graven), John Mazzitello (Ramsey County), Eric Fosmo (Kimley Horn)

Roll call taken.

Public Input

None.

New Business

a. Discuss Infrastructure Update

Eric Fosmo, Kimley Horn, stated at the October 2025 JDA work session, staff presented an infrastructure project update, outlining the overall scope, progress, and key design considerations. During that presentation and work session discussion, JDA members raised several questions and provided feedback that identified areas requiring additional analysis and follow-up by both staff and the project design team.

Mr. Fosmo reported since that time, staff and the design team have reviewed the comments received, evaluated potential options, and refined elements of the project in response to the JDA's discussion. Staff provided an updated presentation on the infrastructure project, beginning with a PowerPoint presentation summarizing project status, and outstanding considerations. As part of this update, staff returned to two specific topics that generated significant discussion in October: lighting and trail design. These items were brought back to the JDA for further discussion and direction to ensure alignment with project goals, the TRC, and the overall design intent.

Mr. Fosmo explained in addition to the presentation, a technical memorandum was provided for JDA review. The technical memorandum discusses both the lighting and trail design elements as outlined in the TCAAP Redevelopment Code (TRC) and provides supporting detail related to the proposed infrastructure improvements. He reviewed a typical roadway section with utilities and commented on where district energy could be located. He noted the City's

logo or name could be added to the Rice Creek Boulevard bridge railing. Coordination efforts with the US Army were discussed and it was noted coordination continues to be challenging. He commented on the potential 2026 site preparation work that would be done. The TRC Amendment Item #1 which addresses the multi-use trail width was reviewed. He provided further information on the site preparation and grading plans within Rice Creek Commons and asked for comments or questions from the JDA.

Chair Wicklund asked if the JDA had the flexibility to make some decisions when it came to the TRC. He questioned what the JDA was reviewing in this situation. Director Jagoe explained specific requirements, when it comes to trails and lighting would need an adjustment. She indicated the TRC would require an amendment if this was the direction from the JDA.

Commissioner Monson stated there were timing impacts and asked what the delay would be to go back to the watershed district. Ramsey County Public Works Director John Mazzitello anticipated this would take six months. He commented there would also be delays while the County continues to coordinate with the US Army. Mr. Fosmo reported he did not believe a change to the trail width would delay construction starting in 2027.

Commissioner Monson inquired how long it would take to complete the ordinance change with the City. Director Jagoe anticipated this would take three months.

Commissioner Weber thanked staff for coming back to the JDA with responses to the questions that were raised last October. He stated he could support moving to a 10-foot trail, especially because there would be trails on both sides of the road. He commented further on how the reduction in the trail width would improve the stormwater management situation for the entire project.

Commissioner Jebens-Singh asked what the rationale was for the 12-foot trail width in the TRC. Director Jagoe explained she has not located anything in the files as to why a 12-foot trail width was recommended, but noted she would be addressing this topic with the City Council. Mr. Fosmo reported standard trail width in Arden Hills, not within RCC, was 8 feet.

Commissioner Weber inquired if the TRC amendment for the trail width would be requested by the County or the City. He noted this change would apply to a County Road and perhaps the request should be coming from the County. Director Jagoe indicated she was looking for direction from the JDA to direct the City to consider an amendment to the TRC.

Commissioner Weber stated the reason he asked this question was because the Planning Commission may ask questions and a significant amount of work may go into the request. Public Works Director Mazzitello reported his design team would prepare the plans within the application package.

Chair Wicklund encouraged staff to further consider who would be submitting the TRC amendment request. Public Works Director Mazzitello indicated it was the County's desire to have a collaborative application from the City, County and JDA.

Commissioner Monson inquired why the plans were designed with 10-foot trails when the TRC calls for 12-foot trails. Public Works Director Mazzitello explained there were only two outliers and noted the County's requirement was followed for this trail because the trail would be located on County right of way.

Commissioner Monson explained the TRC was completed through coordination between the City and County. She cautioned the County from designing plans that meet County requirements and not the TRC requirements.

The consensus of the JDA was to support a 10-foot trailway width within RCC.

Chair Wicklund asked that the discussion now focus on the lighting requirements.

Mr. Fosmo reviewed the TRC Amendment Item #2 which addressed street lighting spacing. He stated the 40-foot light spacing requirement was cost prohibitive. He noted typical spacing was 150 to 200 feet. He explained the typical lighting requirements from MNDOT were 210 to 240 feet. He discussed how lighting was spaced along Rice Creek Parkway and County Road E/Snelling Avenue noting the distance for lighting was 140 to 200 feet.

Commissioner Weber inquired if a photometric survey or modeling was completed. He indicated he was concerned with the fact the lights would be 40 feet apart and recommended the spacing be larger. He reported he would like to see different distances modeled to see if there were any dark spots prior to moving forward with a TRC amendment for street lighting.

Commissioner Miller asked what the County's typical light spacing standards were. She inquired if the trail would be owned by the City or County. Public Works Director Mazzitello stated as a general rule the County does not light County roads but rather lights intersections. He explained the trail would be owned by the County because the trail would be located within County right of way but the City would be responsible for the trail maintenance. He clarified the City would be the owner and operator of the lights.

Commissioner Miller inquired if the County would be receiving additional requests to have trails lit if the trail within RCC were lit by the County.

Commissioner Weber indicated the County may not typically light its trails, but the TRC was agreed upon by the City and County and he would like to see the proposed design standards followed. He requested the photometric survey be created for the spine road with the lighting at 40 feet and other distances in order for the JDA to better understand the proposed changes.

Public Works Director Mazzitello stated he was not seeking a specific distance at this time, but rather was seeking greater flexibility in order to pursue a context-appropriate lighting plan.

Commissioner Monson anticipated this was very important language to the City given how the County does not light any of its other streets. She understood the language could be made more reasonable, but the City was very specific with the lighting requirements for a reason.

The consensus of the JDA was to request the County to complete a photometric plan that includes trail lighting with context appropriate language that the JDA could react to at a future meeting.

Commissioner Jebens-Singh asked if this project could move forward without action from the US Army. Public Works Director Mazzitello reported the project could not move forward until coordination has been completed with the US Army.

Commissioner Miller questioned who would pay for the relocation of the TGRS system. Public Works Director Mazzitello explained this was included in the estimated costs for site preparation.

Commissioner Weber asked what information the County needs from the US Army. Mr. Fosmo stated he was seeking information on the design details of the TGRS system and he needed to know what the US Army wants out of this system going forward. He discussed how work and communication with the Army's consultant has been delayed since the government shutdown. Public Works Director Mazzitello indicated the Army was very aware of the information the County has requested.

Chair Wicklund stated it appears this project could be stalled without further action from the US Army. Public Works Director Mazzitello stated that per a clause in the property title the Army cannot impede development of the property.

Chair Wicklund recommended the strategy with the US Army be well thought thru to ensure no gaslighting occurred.

Commissioner Jebens-Singh suggested the Advisory Team discuss this topic.

Chair Wicklund supported this recommendation.

b. Discuss Hybrid Developer Approach

Director Mitchell stated at the December work session, the JDA reviewed a summary of responses to the Request for Information and asked staff for more information on a so-called "hybrid" developer approach. Staff and consultants have started to analyze the implications of this approach in comparison to the previous approach of working with a single lead developer

for the entire site. This memo builds on previous information provided and identifies next steps if the JDA would like to continue to explore this approach.

Director Mitchell explained the concept of a hybrid developer approach would be to divide the site into development areas and seek development partners through separate competitive solicitation processes for each area based on development expertise. For example, a solicitation for a neighborhood with residential land uses would seek a developer with residential expertise, and a neighborhood with commercial land uses would seek a developer with commercial expertise. It is possible that selected developers would bring on sub-developers to within development area to complement their expertise and add capacity.

Director Mitchell reported the JDA, City, and County may need to play a more active role in coordination amongst developers and other project partners to ensure infrastructure, amenities, and other sitewide items are covered. Ramsey County's scope and timeline for site preparation and construction of Rice Creek Boulevard would also be important to establish. Staff provided a summary of RFI responses on the development approach from the December JDA agenda packet. It is intended to serve as a starting point for discussion and is not necessarily an exhaustive accounting of all of the factors to consider.

Director Mitchell commented if the JDA would like to pursue to a hybrid developer approach, the next steps would be for the City and County staff to identify and analyze the items needed to be addressed in a cooperative agreement and offer options or solutions for each item to present to the respective parties. Staff estimate they may need 90-120 days to facilitate these conversations with their respective leadership and elected officials. The City and County would then report back to the JDA.

Commissioner Jebens-Singh stated she supported bringing on a real estate development consultant. She indicated if a phased project could bring about new funding sources, she supported looking into this option further.

Commissioner Monson asked what issue was being solved through the hybrid approach. Director Mitchell explained this approach may allow certain portions of the project to move forward faster. She indicated different developers and expertise could be brought in and the risk for this project would be diversified.

Commissioner Monson stated this did not fully answer her question noting the project would not be able to move forward with out coordination with the US Army. She commented the JDA has tried to approach this project with one lead developer. She indicated there were a lot of hurdles around the purchase agreement. Director Mitchell discussed how the purchase agreement had to be ironclad if the entire parcel was going to be sold to one developer. She indicated part of the risk diversification was to allow parcels to be sold off and this would create more simple purchase agreement negotiations.

Commissioner Monson summarized it appears the size of this project was really tough and it was hard to find a single developer to complete this project.

Commissioner Jebens-Singh stated after sitting in on negotiations last year, the expertise of any one developer was in question. She explained if the project were more broken up the County would be able to have money to reinvest back into the project.

Commissioner Weber anticipated the City would have a hard time with the site being sold in numerous parcels. While he understood this has benefits, he feared the final product could be compromised. He stated there may be parcels remaining within the project area that stay undeveloped because they are less desirable. He questioned if there would be coordination between the City and the County on the land sale negotiations. Director Jagoe indicated a cooperative agreement would have to be in place to address parks, infrastructure, phasing and the repayment of costs.

Chair Wicklund stated it would be his preference to have staff research the hybrid approach and consider how the California parcel could be split into five to ten sections. He indicated if the JDA were to proceed in this manner, parcels could begin to be sold off and if this wasn't working the JDA could move back to the lead developer scenario.

Commissioner Weber explained he generally agreed with this recommendation but he stated there were other factors to consider such as which parcels were the most developable.

Commissioner Miller supported the JDA pursuing a hybrid model for the development of Rice Creek Commons.

Commissioner Jebens-Singh encouraged staff to consider what the JDA was not thinking about if the hybrid model were to move forward. She indicated staff would have to consider what was the most logical manner in which to move forward with the development of this project and how it should be staged or phased.

Commissioner Monson stated she was not sold on the hybrid approach. She was of the opinion it was dangerous to ask the County to do development work given the fact that they were a governing body.

Chair Wicklund indicated this was why he would like to allow staff the time to research the options for a hybrid approach.

Commissioner Jebens-Singh recalled that the hybrid approach was brought up by a Commissioner for consideration. She supported the JDA learning more about this option and if there were any red flags with the hybrid approach.

The consensus of the JDA was to direct staff to pursue a hybrid approach and to report back to the JDA in 90 days.

Adjournment

Meeting adjourned at 7:07 pm.

Approved   
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Jon Wicklund, Chair

March 20, 2026  
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Date