



Approved: May 26, 2020

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**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA  
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION  
APRIL 30, 2020  
5:30 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 Special City Council Work Session at 5:30 p.m.

*Note: On March 20<sup>th</sup>, the Mayor signed a determination allowing Councilmembers to participate in City Council meetings via telephone pursuant to State Statute 13D.021*

**Present via Telephone:** Mayor David Grant; Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Fran Holmes, Dave McClung and Steve Scott

**Absent:** None

**Also present:** City Administrator Dave Perrault; Public Works Director/City Engineer Todd Blomstrom; Finance Director Gayle Bauman; and City Clerk Julie Hanson; **via telephone:** Community Development Manager/City Planner Mike Mroska and Recreation Coordinator Sara Grant

**1. AGENDA ITEMS**

**A. COVID-19 and City Operations**

**City Administrator Perrault** stated that the Governor's most recent guidance extended the stay at home order through May 18 with slight modifications for retail businesses and that staff was encouraged to continue to work from home. He indicated that City Hall had been closed to the public since March 17 and there have been some modifications at City Hall to accommodate social distancing that include the installation of plexiglass on the public facing portion of the front desk area as well as a section behind the front desk due to it being a high traffic area. He stated that a COVID-19 preparedness plan had been drafted that follows the League of Minnesota's template.

**Mayor Grant** asked the Council if City Hall's doors should remain closed. The Councilmembers agreed.

**Mayor Grant** asked the Council if it wanted to continue to conduct Council meetings remotely. The Councilmembers agreed.

**Mayor Grant** asked the Council about whether or not the City should observe summer hours.

A discussion ensued about whether or not to have summer hours, as well as the Public Works staff schedules and duties clarification.

The Council agreed that a discussion regarding summer hours would be deferred pending further guidance from the Governor.

**Mayor Grant** asked the Council to discuss utility bills and liquor licenses.

**Councilmember Scott** stated that he would like to suspend the utility bill fees.

**Councilmember Holden** stated she was not convinced to suspend or waive the fees as there generally are not a significant number of delinquent utility bills. She asked if waiving the fees could be applicable to just one group, such as the small businesses.

**City Administrator Perrault** stated that it would be difficult to separate one entity from another.

The discussion turned to refunding a portion of the 2020 liquor license fees.

**Mayor Grant** clarified that a refund of fees would pertain to restaurants that have been affected by the stay at home order and not Cub Liquor as they had been open and operating per usual.

**Councilmember Holmes** stated that some restaurants were selling liquor with takeout orders.

**Councilmember Holden** said that since some restaurants were selling liquor with takeout orders during the eight week time period, if the Council refunded a portion of their license fees then technically that business did not hold a license during that same time period.

Discussion ensued about whether or not to refund a portion of on-sale liquor license fees and for what time period should any refund apply.

The Council agreed to refund a portion of on-sale liquor license fees for a period of time that occurred during the stay at home order.

The Council resumed its discussion regarding waiving utility fees.

**Councilmember Holden** stated that those hit the hardest such as restaurants and businesses were not the ones using water. She asked when the current quarterly bill was due.

**Councilmember Holmes** said it is not just businesses that have been affected and the Council needs to consider residents that could be unemployed.

**City Administrator Perrault** clarified that the consideration was to waive just the late charge, which is a fee that is 8% of the total amount due. He stated the bills were due on May 1 and a more accurate projected dollar figure could be calculated after the due date.

**Mayor Grant** asked if the dollar figure in question is \$5,000.

**Finance Director Bauman** stated the \$5,000 estimate was based on the same period in a normal year and that it was unknown what the total would be this year. She suggested the option of postponing billing of the late fees until the end of May, prior to starting the assessment process for delinquents. She said this would give customers another three to four weeks to pay the bill.

**Councilmember Scott** stated he would like to proceed with waiving the late fee.

**Councilmembers Holden, McClung and Holmes** indicated they agreed with **Finance Director Bauman's** approach of waiting until the end of the month before making a decision.

**Mayor Grant** stated he too was in favor of deferring a decision until the end of May.

**City Administrator Perrault** apologized, noting the Zoom meeting experienced a 20 second technical difficulty.

**Mayor Grant** asked if **City Administrator Perrault** had received clear direction.

**City Administrator Perrault** confirmed the Council's direction to revisit waiving utility bill late fees until the end of May.

The discussion turned to Parks and Recreation programs.

**Mayor Grant** asked what could be done to accommodate social distancing and what other cities were considering.

**City Administrator Perrault** said that offering activities such as playground activities, basketball, softball and baseball were difficult. He stated there were programs that better allow social distancing such as tennis, pickle ball and golf, but these activities had been placed on hold per previous Council direction. He said the City could consider hosting art camps in the parks if adequate social distancing could be achieved. He stated that most cities have not made a decision regarding cancelling or postponing summer programming yet, so there was not sufficient background for a comparison.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom** stated that staff polled the cities of Roseville, Shoreview, Vadnais Heights, Little Canada, Mounds View and New Brighton, and that these cities have not yet made a clear long-term decision in terms of what they can and cannot do.

**Mayor Grant** stated that due to the pandemic, the City Council shut down the parks and recreation programs, and he was interested in learning what potential programs could be offered. He said that if there are no programs that can be offered, then there may be other decisions that Council must make.

**Councilmember Holden** asked how kids programming would operate and keep socially distanced as it is hard to keep kids away from one another.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom** stated this certainly would be difficult, and that he and **Recreation Coordinator Knoll** have discussed this challenge.

**Recreation Coordinator Knoll** said one option would be tennis lessons as social distancing can be achieved with between two and four participants at a time on the tennis court. She stated that another option would be an art camp outdoors in the parks with eight children maximum. She explained that each child would have their own table and own art supplies that they would bring home at the end of camp.

**Councilmember Holmes** asked if it would be cost effective to have one instructor for such a small number of kids.

**Recreation Coordinator Knoll** agreed that some activities would not be as cost effective as others.

**Mayor Grant** pointed out that generally the City does not make money on recreation programs but more so breaks even.

**Councilmember Holmes** asked for more information about the cost effectiveness of offering these types of programs.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom** stated that staff would put together information pertaining to costs and anticipated revenues for tennis and arts and crafts camps.

**Councilmember Holden** asked what would happen if it rains and whether or not holding the class using a video would be an option. She stated that she provided information to **Recreation Coordinator Knoll** about offering classes or sing-a-longs via video conferencing.

**Recreation Coordinator Knoll** indicated that she received information about an online theater camp that is being offered by other cities. She stated she could provide more information regarding this opportunity.

**Mayor Grant** asked for a written report of the recreation information. He stated that there would be no decision made at this meeting as additional information was necessary in order to make a decision in the future.

**Councilmember Holmes** stated she would like staff to present a social distancing plan.

**Councilmember McClung** noted there were many specifics and concerns to work through. He commented that when the Governor was asked about summer camps, he said that “we are not there yet”. He said it is premature in terms of what the City might actually be able to accomplish.

The Council agreed to continue discussions regarding recreation programming at an upcoming meeting upon further review of the details and costs.

**Councilmember Holmes** asked how many Public Works seasonal workers would be hired.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom** stated that the City has budgeted for eight seasonals but this year there would be four hired that would focus on mowing.

A short discussion ensued regarding the Public Works full time and seasonal workers.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom** stated that he would prepare an outline of tasks generally performed by Public Works during the summer. He said that staff would cover all services that are normally covered with the exception of recreation tasks, and he noted it was challenging with staff being split into two shifts.

**Public Works Director/City Engineer Blomstrom** also stated that it generally has been a challenge in previous years to establish turf on the athletic fields, but that there is the unique opportunity this year to get the fields in good repair and establish the turf.

#### **B. COVID-19 and Business Outreach Follow Up**

**Mayor Grant** stated that he would need to leave the meeting. He asked if the Councilmembers would be willing to call five to ten, small to medium-sized Arden Hills businesses to ask how they are doing and to provide a list of resources.

The Council agreed to contact the local businesses and **Mayor Grant** stated he would work with staff to put something together and that staff would coordinate this task with Council.

**Mayor Grant** was excused from the meeting at 6:04 p.m.

**Mayor Pro Tem Holden** continued the meeting, asking if there were any additional questions or items to be discussed.

**City Administrator Perrault** asked the Council if it would be comfortable accessing the electronic agenda packet versus receiving a PDF via email in order to avoid inadvertent errors in the PDF compilation process. He explained there are three choices for accessing the agenda packets in the Agenda Center: HTML, PDF and Packet.

The Council agreed to continue to access the agenda packets digitally on the City's website and asked that they be notified via email when the packet has been published.

**Councilmember McClung** stated that when there are planning case items, he would like a paper copy of those items provided to him.

**City Administrator Perrault** asked if the Council would like to continue to receive a copy of the PowerPoint presentation in advance of the Council meetings. He noted that slides pertaining to planning cases are to be included in the packet as attachments to the corresponding item.

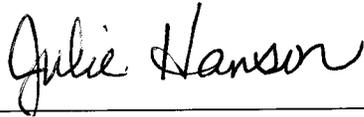
**Councilmember Holmes** stated she found the PowerPoint to be helpful because it highlight certain aspects of the planning cases.

**2. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS**

None.

**ADJOURN**

Mayor Pro Tem Holden adjourned the City Council Special Work Session at 6:50 p.m.



Julie Hanson  
City Clerk



David Grant  
Mayor



Brenda Holden  
Mayor Pro Tem