



Approved: August 23, 2021

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
JULY 19, 2021
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.

Present: Mayor David Grant, Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Fran Holmes, Dave McClung (attending remotely) and Steve Scott

Absent: None

Also present: City Administrator Dave Perrault, Interim Public Works Director David Swearingen, Finance Director Gayle Bauman, Senior Planner Jessica Jagoe, Deputy City Clerk Jolene Trauba, TKDA Project Manager Larry Poppler, HR Green Regional Director John Morast and Project Manager Chris Herrington

Mayor Grant asked to add an item discussing park benches between items D and E.

1. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Review Draft Feasibility Report – Arden Oaks Improvement Project

TKDA Project Manager Larry Poppler introduced his presentation for the Arden Oaks neighborhood, which is near the intersection of Snelling and County Road E. He reviewed existing conditions, proposed improvements, public input, project funding, project schedule, recommendations and next steps. Options included pavement reclamation or mill and overlay. There was a 70% questionnaire return rate from 42 properties with identified topics of interest being localized drainage issues, pedestrian safety and truck access/cut through traffic. Estimated costs were \$583,000 for the Option 1 – full depth reclamation, with a per unit assessment of \$6,560 and \$396,000 for Option 2 – mill and overlay with an assessment of \$4,425 per unit. They would like to have Council accept the feasibility report at the next City Council meeting, and have the assessment hearing on August 23rd. Plans would be completed in January, followed by the bidding and assessment processes, with construction in the spring of 2022. He recommended Option 1.

Mayor Grant noted the mill and overlay is not really an option due to the deterioration of the roadways.

TKDA Project Manager Poppler said they will take the mill and overlay option out of the feasibility report.

Councilmember Holden asked to discuss the first cul-de-sac off of Snelling Avenue. The semi's that use it to turn around are breaking the street up. She felt they should plan to not allow semi's.

Councilmember Holmes suggested staff speak to Lindey's because it is delivery trucks to their business using the cul-de-sac to turn around.

Mayor Grant said they should plan for the semi's to not use any of the roads in that neighborhood to turn around.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen asked if TKDA could continue with the project design and prepare a proposal for Council to review. Council agreed.

B. Speed Limits Discussion

HR Green Regional Director John Morast presented information regarding neighboring communities' decisions, an update on Local Road Research Board (LRRB), provided a map and list of eligible streets, speed limit decision options, recommendations and next steps.

Mayor Grant said if the City puts up signs to change the speed limits the Council will want to know how many signs the City would need, how much the signs would cost and who would be responsible for installing the signs. He felt 30 miles per hour seemed too high due to people walking on streets and trails.

Mr. Morast said the Minneapolis and St Paul studies showed a large reduction in the severity of crashes with lowering speed limits. He also commented on the benefits of having flashing speed signs.

Councilmember McClung discussed the signs that were posted along Royal Hills Drive that were 25 miles per hour.

Councilmember Holden expressed concern with the fact new cars were very quiet and were difficult to tell how fast they were going.

Mayor Grant stated another concern of his was that the entire City did not have sidewalks, which meant pedestrians were walking in the streets in many neighborhoods throughout the community.

Councilmember Holmes indicated she was not in favor of changing the speed limit. She commented she didn't know what the expense would be to make this change and she feared if the speed limit were reduced there wouldn't be enough enforcement efforts.

Councilmember Holden explained she brought this item up and noted speeding traffic in residential neighborhoods was the number one complaint she received from residents. She stated she would not mind lowering the speed on residential streets to 25 miles per hour. She indicated she would like to know more about the cost of replacing/posting signs.

Mr. Morast reported the City could not set the speed limit to 25 miles per hour on MSA streets but could request a speed study from MNDOT.

Mayor Grant explained the City has received complaints regarding over the years. He discussed how the City was turning over and believed it would benefit the City to lower the residential speed limit to 25 miles per hour.

Councilmember Scott reported he supported the reduction to 25 miles per hour.

Councilmember McClung indicated there were a lot of cars in his neighborhood going more than 35 miles per hour. He stated he supported a reduction citywide to 25 miles per hour.

Councilmember Holden recommended the matter be reviewed by the Planning Commission and a public hearing be held.

Councilmember Holmes suggested a public forum be held versus a public hearing at a Planning Commission meeting. She questioned how the city of St. Anthony addressed this topic.

Mr. Morast explained St. Anthony held a public hearing at a City Council meeting and then took action on the matter.

Councilmember Holmes recommended the City Council learn more about the cost of making this change prior to moving this matter forward.

The Council supported holding a public hearing for the change in speed limit at the Planning Commission and City Council. The Council requested staff report back on pricing for the project via the Admin Update.

C. CIP Budget

Finance Director Bauman stated annually, the City prepares a five year Capital Improvement Plan for budgeting and forecasting. The focus of the CIP is on the maintenance and protection of the City's existing assets, redevelopment, and investment in new initiatives. The CIP is part of the budget process, but it is not a budget, it is a plan, and one that changes often. The CIP does not commit the council to the proposed projects, nor implement the assumptions made during the preparation; however, this is the basis for the 2022 Budget as we continue with its preparation.

Finance Director Bauman reported the City has a finite number of resources, so prioritizing and then being able to finance projects is crucial for ensuring the city's long-term sustainability and being responsible stewards of the city's investments. Staff has been working on completing a comprehensive study of the City's current and future needs for infrastructure projects to better estimate project costs and ensure more accurate forecasting of available fund balances.

Finance Director Bauman reported a preliminary plan has been prepared and includes a summary of projects, detailed project sheets, sources of funds, and estimated fund balances (since the operating budgets have not yet been completed, these fund balances are estimated operating costs). Information is included on street and park projects going out ten (10) years even though

our CIP is only for five years. The 2021-2025 CIP was an \$18.8 Million plan, while the proposed 2022-2026 CIP is listed for \$15.3 Million in expenditures. This is an 18.7% decrease from the previous year's program or \$3,526,490. The biggest change is found in street projects. Staff commented further on the CIP and requested feedback from the Council.

Mayor Grant asked if the estimate for the court replacement was correct.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen stated the estimates may be slightly inflated. He indicated he would have more information for the Council once soil borings were completed.

Councilmember Holden requested staff check on the condition of the courts that have been replaced to ensure they were holding up.

Councilmember Holmes stated she would like to see the City continuing to lease a warming house for Hazelnut Park.

Mayor Grant commented another option for the City would be to build a warming house with the assistance of the ICWC workers. He noted this would provide the City with labor and the only expense would be materials, so long as the City provides the crew with plans.

Further discussion ensued regarding the Old Snelling Avenue street and trail project.

Councilmember Holmes asked what the budget was for the Old Snelling Avenue project for both the road and trail.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen explained Bolton & Menk has the project coming in at \$1.25 million.

Finance Director Bauman reported this expense would be slightly lower because 24 properties would be assessed for the project.

Councilmember Holmes recommended the assessment amount be similar to the assessments charged for Arden Oaks.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen indicated he would look through the assessment amounts and the Council could discuss this further at a future worksession meeting.

Councilmember Holmes stated she would like an update from staff on how the City was doing with lining, the progress being made on the lift stations, manhole covers, etc.

Mayor Grant expressed concern with how often the City was replacing its trailers.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen indicated he would provide the Council with further information on the trailer that was being replaced.

Mayor Grant recommended the Code Enforcement vehicle not be replaced because it only had 60,000 miles on it. He suggested this vehicle be pushed out three or four years.

City Administrator Perrault stated this was simply a placeholder item. He explained this item was not used much in the last year. He commented further on how the used vehicle market was at this time.

Finance Director Bauman discussed the expense of replacing all of the City's water meters and noted staff would have to work on how to fund this project.

Councilmember Holden suggested some of the federal government money be used to assist with covering the expense of replacing water meters. She asked if Federal funds can be used for stormwater expenditures in 2022.

Finance Director Bauman stated she would have to research this further to ensure that this type of project could be covered by Federal ARPA funds.

Mayor Grant questioned if the City has received the Federal ARPA funds.

Finance Director Bauman explained she expected the City would receive the funds next week.

Councilmember Holden asked if the City applied for an I&I grant from the Met Council.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen stated he had applied for a grant in the amount of \$250,000. He reported the City would be receiving a grant, but he would not know the grant amount until later this fall.

Councilmember Holden recommended \$250,000 in sewer lining be added to the CIP for 2023.

Finance Director Bauman questioned where the fund balance from the end of 2020 (\$548,000) should be placed. She indicated the Council typically puts this surplus into the PIR Fund. The Council supported the surplus being placed in the PIR Fund.

D. Water Meters Discussion

Finance Director Bauman stated sometime around December 31, 2020, when staff was working on the 4th quarter utility billing for 2020, it became apparent that we weren't receiving reads on about 300 of our 2600+ meters, mostly in the southern portion of the City. Staff needed to complete the billing cycle per City Code and went about estimating the 4th quarter reads for properties based on usage amounts from the past three years. Staff met with employees from Metering & Technology Solutions who deal with the meters, transmitters and collectors in conjunction with Badger Meter. It was determined that the collectors and meters were operating properly and that the likely cause was signal interference.

Finance Director Bauman commented Metering & Technology Solutions suggested that the City have Ancom conduct an RF Study in an attempt to locate the source of any potential interference to the automated water meter reporting system. Ancom had recently worked with another City on identifying interference issues. As staff was preparing the 1st quarter utility billing for 2021, it became apparent that we were still not getting reads on about 150 properties. A note was included in the 03/26/21 Admin Update indicating that letters were being sent out to these properties in an attempt to get accurate meter reads for the billing cycle. The City received about 95 responses to

their inquiry so only about 55 accounts needed to be estimated. The Ancom Study has since been completed and it was determined that the only likely source of interference was an elevated noise floor, as there were no other discernable sources of interference present during the testing.

Finance Director Bauman explained for this 2nd quarter billing, the City ended up not getting reads on about 140 properties. In looking back, the meter readings seemed to drop off about a week before Thanksgiving, which is also the same time the State went into lockdown again because of COVID 19. It also appears as if some of the reads came back on line, at least intermittently, in mid-January. This would correspond to the time the lockdown started to be lifted. There is a possibility that some of this interference had to do with an increased use of electronic devices and companies working to increase their signal strength for their customers.

Finance Director Bauman stated the three solutions presented to the City by Ancom were to replace our antennas, upgrade our antennas, or install a 4th collector in the City. Metering & Technology Solutions also strongly suggested that we upgrade our Read Center software as they no longer support the transmitters we currently use. As we need additional transmitters or as the old ones start to fail, they will be replaced with ones that use a cellular signal to transmit data and the Read Center software does not work with them. Staff is moving forward with upgrading our Read Center software to Beacon software. This should be completed by the end of July. This upgrade won't help with the interference issues we are having but we were told it will take care of the power issues we are experiencing at the North Tower. Also, it will enable us to obtain additional transmitters as old ones wear out and new services are added.

Finance Director Bauman commented a benefit of the new Beacon software is a Customer Portal that will be made available to all customers, regardless of the type of transmitter they have in their home/business. Once customers sign up for this portal, they will be notified of abnormal water usage (potential leaks) in real time, and the City will no longer need to prepare the courtesy leak letters. Staff is currently working with Metering & Technology Solutions and Badger Meter to overcome the interference issues we are experiencing.

Councilmember Holmes stated she was having a problem with the explanation being "signal interference". She expressed concern with the fact the City was proposing to spend more money when it does not know what the actual problem was.

Mayor Grant reported there were more and more people and companies using radio frequency which meant it was getting harder for the City to listen or hear the meters. He questioned what improvements staff was proposing at this time.

Finance Director Bauman reviewed the improvements she was proposing to complete at this time, which included software updates and a 4th collector for the south end of the City.

Mayor Grant indicated staff was requesting to spend \$13,000 to get the existing system properly reading the City's meters.

Finance Director Bauman stated this was the case. She reported the water meter replacement throughout the City would be an entirely different project.

Mayor Grant asked if the Council could support the \$13,000 expenditure. The Council supported this expense.

Mayor Grant commented staff brought up another project the Council will have to consider, which will be the replacement of all of the City's water meters. He noted the batteries were reaching the end of their useful life. He reported the cost to replace the batteries was around \$1 to \$1.2 million. He explained this was a project the City would have to begin planning for.

Councilmember Holmes asked if the water meters were replaced 20 years ago.

Finance Director Bauman explained the transmitters were replaced in 2012 or 2013 and the meters were more than 15 years old.

Mayor Grant reported he has been on the City Council for 20 years and he does not recall doing the meters under Dennis Probst. He anticipated the meters were 16+ years old.

Councilmember Holden suggested staff speak with Badger Meters.

Councilmember Holmes supported the City putting aside a portion of the Federal dollars for this project.

Mayor Grant requested staff investigate the age of the existing meters and report back to the Council at a future meeting.

D1. Park Benches

Mayor Grant discussed a park bench situation at Crepeau Park that involved Rich Straumann and the insurance agent at State Farm. He explained he received an email from the PTRC Chair John Van Valkenburg stating the bench should be installed at Crepeau Park and it had to mention Dan Messerli.

Councilmember Holmes commented further on the park bench application. She reported the application states City staff should be contacting the applicant on where the bench should be located.

Mayor Grant discussed the proposed park bench location and asked if this new bench would be replacing a deteriorated bench. He was of the opinion the proposed park bench location was not a good spot. He commented further on how upset the PTRC Chair and Rich Straumann were about this situation.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen stated the bench for Dan Reichert had been assembled but not installed. He noted another bench would have to be ordered for Dan Messerli.

Councilmember Holden indicated a request has been made for an additional park bench for Crepeau Park in memory of Dan Messerli. She believed that whoever paid for the bench should have the right to select a placement for the bench.

Mayor Grant agreed this should be the case. He recommended the existing composite bench in Crepeau Park be power washed.

Councilmember Holden supported Dan Reichert's bench be installed by staff in a location that would be frequently used. She commented she did not support the bench in Crepeau Park being removed unless it was damaged beyond the point of repair.

Mayor Grant concurred. He noted he would speak with the PTRC Chair regarding this matter. He supported the PTRC bench being located where the PTRC would like it.

E. Community Development Staffing

City Administrator Perrault reported the City Council discussed Community Development Staffing at its June work session and Staff was asked to bring back a draft job description for a Community Development Director position that had a focus on planning duties. The City currently has a Senior Planner on staff. Prior the departure of the previous Community Development Manager/City Planner, Council intended to hire two positions to facilitate the City's planning functions. One option proposed would be to have a Community Development Director who has a focus on planning, but also oversees the Building Department and is the overall head for the Community Development Department. Another option would be to re-post for a City Planner position and see what the pool of applicants looks like; however, this approach would still leave a gap in the Community Development Department Head function.

Councilmember Holden discussed how Mike Mroska managed the position. She indicated she supported the City having a Community Development Director that also worked on planning cases.

City Administrator Perrault stated this was his intention for the Community Development Director position.

Councilmember Holmes suggested language be added to the job description to make it clear the position involves responsibility for developing and working on planning cases.

Councilmember McClung agreed the City should be pursuing a Community Development Director that also worked as a City Planner. He noted this position would have significant oversight in the Planning Department.

Councilmember Holden indicated she would like the job description amended to include more planning duties.

The Council directed staff to move forward with the Community Development Director position and requested staff bring the job description back to Council for approval at its next meeting.

Point of order was noted and Council agreed to extend the meeting until 8:30 p.m.

F. Council Tracker

City Administrator Perrault reviewed the Council Tracker with the Council.

Councilmember Holden requested staff investigate the new sidewalk Chick-Fil-A would be installing to ensure that it connects with the County sidewalk. She questioned when the Hamline Avenue retaining wall would be fixed.

Councilmember Scott explained the County contractor would not be fixing the retaining wall this year, but would be addressing the concern in 2022.

Councilmember Holden encouraged staff to look into the numerous grants that were available from the State and other agencies for elections, EAB, and other initiatives.

2. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

Councilmember Holden explained she spoke with staff about why Stowe Avenue was striped. She asked staff look into it.

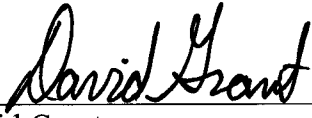
Councilmember Scott requested further information regarding the City's water level situation.

City Administrator Perrault reported the City received its water from St. Paul and the City had no concerns at this time.

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the City Council Work Session at 8:31 p.m.


Jolene Trauba
Deputy City Clerk


David Grant
Mayor