



Approved: September 27, 2021

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
AUGUST 16, 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 Fran Holmes, Dave McClung (attending remotely) and Steve Scott

Absent: Brenda Holden (excused)

Also present: City Administrator Dave Perrault, Interim Public Works Director David Swearingen, Finance Director Gayle Bauman, Senior Planner Jessica Jagoe, Communications Coordinator Gretchen Needham, Deputy City Clerk Jolene Trauba, and HR Green Lead Scientist Shawn Tracy

Mayor Grant wished to discuss Item 1E after 1A.

1. AGENDA ITEMS

A. MS4 Permit Discussion

HR Green Lead Scientist Tracy gave a presentation regarding the MS4 (Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System) General Permit. He reviewed Minimum Control Measures (MCM), and described the application status, workplan, new permit requirements and estimated staff time needed to fulfill permit requirements.

Mr. Tracy explained there are four lakes in the workplan; Little Johanna, Long, Pike and Valentine. Long and Pike lakes aren't in Arden Hills, but the city is connected to them via the Rice Creek Watershed. The permit describes all the things that can be done to make sure ordinances are being met, but it only requires to show that progress is being made. The permit is managed at the federal level but implemented at the local level by the MN Pollution Control Agency.

Councilmember Holmes asked what was the biggest issue in Arden Hills.

Mr. Tracy responded that in general the biggest issues are phosphorus, sediment, bacteria and salt. He felt the first year of the permit could require 1200-1500 hours of staff time.

Councilmember Scott asked if a smaller city had a different level of compliance as a larger one.

Mr. Tracy replied that some small cities that discharge into impaired or special bodies of water have to meet all the requirements of a city of 10,000 and greater.

B. State of the City Update

Communications Coordinator Needham stated the State of the City is scheduled for 7:30 a.m., Thursday, October 7, in the Marsden Room at the Ramsey County Public Works Facility. The event will be videotaped and broadcast by NineNorth and a link will be provided on the City website. She would like to review the list of topics.

City Administrator Perrault asked with the Delta variant on the rise, if the Council would like to go back to similar format as in 2020 with the Mayor making a video recording.

Mayor Grant said he would like Councilmember's participation with everyone taking a topic that could be edited together.

Communications Coordinator Needham said they could prerecord the segments.

Mayor Grant added they could ask for questions in advance.

Councilmember Holmes felt it was premature to consider not having the event be live.

Communications Coordinator Needham commented that the nice thing about prerecording is that if they decide they want to put it aside they can, but they would have it to use if they wanted.

Mayor Grant agreed and said they could prerecord but it could be delivered live. They could make a final determination in late September and if they will prerecord they can ask for questions from the public.

Councilmember Scott suggested they discuss the new pedestrian crossing on Hamline Avenue, and possibly new homes at the old fire station.

Councilmember McClung said they may also want to add information about the new fire station.

Councilmember Holmes mentioned discussing trails expense and TCAAP.

Councilmember Holmes thanked Communications Coordinator Needham for the good job she's done for the City and expressed good wishes for her next endeavor.

C. 2022 Preliminary General Fund Budget

Finance Director Bauman stated she would be reviewing information on the preliminary general fund numbers for 2022. The City is required to adopt a maximum tax levy by the end of September. For the purpose of discussion, there is a 3% tax levy increase reflected in the budget.

Finance Director Bauman reviewed the overall General Fund budget summary, revenues by source, expenditures by department and by type. She discussed the tax levy history, the implications of the proposed tax levy and General Fund tax levy assumptions. She discussed budgeted amounts versus actual activity by year and other funds relying on tax levy dollars.

Finance Director Bauman said the current assumption for wages and benefits is a 3% COLA, 8% health insurance increase and 3% dental increase. She asked if any of those assumptions should be changed.

City Administrator Perrault commented that the health insurance increase was a preliminary number from the provider.

Councilmember Holmes felt they shouldn't be budgeting for a hypothetical project when discussing building permit fee revenue.

Councilmember Scott said a placeholder would be beneficial.

Councilmember McClung agreed.

Finance Director Bauman said it is anticipated that \$200,000 of the \$240,000 set for 2021 sealcoating and resurfacing would be used. She wondered if the Council wanted to keep it at \$240,000 for 2022.

After a brief discussion, direction from Council was to set it at \$220,000.

Finance Director Bauman said the placeholder for the TCAAP budget (legal and financial consultants) is \$89,400 for 2022. Should this amount be reduced?

After discussion, direction from Council was to leave it as is.

Finance Director Bauman said if they would like to talk about the maximum levy at another work session they could but she needed to know the range where they were comfortable.

Councilmember Scott felt they shouldn't underbudget and should move up a bit from 3%, to between 3 and 5%.

Councilmember Holmes said 3-5%.

Councilmember McClung was comfortable with 3%.

Mayor Grant said he was probably on the lower side but staff should come back with a 3-5% range.

D. City Diseased Tree Control Program

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen stated they are specifically talking about the Emerald Ash Borer Management Plan. He reviewed the action steps in the current plan.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said the last treatments of City owned trees was in 2016 and 2018. Public Works recently completed a citywide tree inspection to determine all diseased trees on public and private property. All public trees were located, privately owned trees were located only if they were diseased. There was a total of 75 ash trees located on public land and each tree was rated from very good to very poor. He asked for Council to discuss the current plan and propose modifications if necessary.

Mayor Grant felt they should treat our trees, and that the cost was a small amount versus taking them down.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said the lowest treatment quote they received was \$85.50 per tree, but that could go down now that they know the actual number of trees is double what was previously treated.

Councilmember Holmes felt treating the trees was well worth the expense.

Mayor Grant suggested they combing treating the trees with planting a few new trees that will grow nearby the ash trees.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said Roseville is planting “buddy” trees near ash trees that are declining.

Councilmember Scott added that he has two large ash trees that he started treating every other year in 2014, and he agreed with treating City trees.

Mayor Grant suggested that he’d like to see residents be able to get the same price as the City per tree.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen asked if the Council would like to modify the current plan.

Discussion ensued regarding types of treatment.

City Administrator Perrault suggested that staff could create a new shorter policy and bring it for Council approval.

Mayor Grant felt the policy was out of date and an updated policy could be brought back to another work session or brought for approval at a regular meeting.

E. City Owned Parcel at 3588 Ridgewood Road (discussed after item 1A)

Senior Planner Jagoe stated that earlier this year, the City was contacted by an interested party regarding purchasing the City owned parcel at 3588 Ridgewood Road. About a month ago there was a second inquiry from another interested party. The City Attorney was directed to begin the process of a title search, and on August 6th, the City received the completed title report which confirmed that the property came from State through County as part of turnback of the old Snelling Avenue corridor ROW. There are no deed restrictions prohibiting the City from selling

this parcel. The lot is considered nonconforming, and the City Attorney confirmed that a variance for the building of a structure on the lot would be required.

Senior Planner Jagoe said the Council is being asked if there is interest in selling the parcel. If so, staff will need direction on handling the variance. The City could process a variance ahead of the listing, or disclose that as part of the listing that a potential buyer would need to have a variance applied for and approved prior to closing on the property. Interim Public Works Director Swearingen verified that water and sewer stubs do not exist for the property, so the extension of services to the property must be connected at the City mainline located within the street which is more costly as a result. This is additional information that would be beneficial to include in the listing and would be at the expense of the future buyer to install. Also, Ramsey County has the property value listed at \$68,400.00. If the Council is interested in moving forward, Staff would begin the process of listing the property and allow a defined period of time for offers to be submitted.

Councilmember Holmes asked if the required setbacks would allow a home to be built.

Senior Planner Jagoe indicated they had run some hypothetical scenarios on GIS and felt they could, but that a Future Buyer would need to demonstrate setback compliance as part of the variance request.

Councilmember Holmes didn't like the idea of having more variances on the property, other than the variance for a nonconforming smaller lot. She would want the buyer to know that other variances wouldn't be granted.

City Administrator Perrault commented that the lot has a fairly steep slope.

Councilmember McClung said his concern is selling a nonconforming lot and he is hard pressed to support it.

Discussion ensued regarding the driveway of the adjoining lot.

Councilmember Scott said the property doesn't seem to have much value to the City so he was leaning toward selling it.

Mayor Grant said he would be willing to grant the 500-foot variance but didn't want to see other variances to make it work. He wondered if Council would be all right selling the lot if the City stipulated that no other variances would be granted.

Councilmember McClung stated he'd still have problems with that.

Mayor Grant asked what if the City were to take offers and the bidders had to submit drawings in advance of the sale?

Councilmember McClung replied that would be asking them to put a lot of money into the property when they may not get the lot.

City Administrator Perrault reminded Council that they could have the Council issue a variance before the listing, or they could list it for sale but clearly note on the disclosure documents that the variance needs to be approved before the closing of the property.

Councilmember Holmes said she had no problem selling the lot but she was not inclined to give additional variances.

City Administrator Perrault said there wasn't a way to stop someone from applying for variances.

Mayor Grant noted that a buyer should beware, they would grant the 500-foot variance but reserve the right to not sell. Staff should work with the City Attorney to determine the best way to list the property.

F. Mask Discussion

Mayor Grant reported that he had received emails and phone calls suggesting parents not wanting their children to go back to school without mask mandates at the school, and wanting to know what the City can do about requiring masks in public buildings.

City Administrator Perrault stated the City Attorney said that because we are still under an emergency declaration so legally we can do a city-wide mask mandate, but logistically it would be difficult and suggested we wait until a broader mandate comes from Ramsey County or the State. Enforcement would be the most difficult issue. No adjoining cities have a city-wide mask mandate at this time. Masks are currently required for staff at City Hall, visitors are encouraged to wear them. There is also a jurisdictional issue between the City and the School Districts.

Councilmember Scott felt they should keep the mandate at City Hall but leave it up to individual businesses and schools.

Councilmember Holmes thought the mandate also should extend to visitors at City Hall.

Councilmember McClung agreed with City Hall only, for everyone.

Mayor Grant said it was within their purview to regulate City Hall, but he was unsure of the shared maintenance facility.

It was agreed that signs would be posted and a news flash sent to notify City Hall visitors that masks must be worn inside.

G. Public Comment Discussion

City Administrator Perrault stated the issue is whether or not items on the agenda can be addressed during the Public Comment section of a meeting. Currently, if an item is on the agenda it cannot be addressed during the Public Comment period, with the exception of a Public Hearing. Portions of the language have been on the agenda since 1996.

Mayor Grant said he thought they didn't take public comments on everything on the agenda because not every item should be a public hearing. But they should encourage residents to call or email Council members, and perhaps they could add that to the verbiage.

Councilmember Holmes felt residents should be able to comment on all agenda items.

Councilmember Scott agreed that people should be able to come forward in public and address the Council about items on that night's agenda.

City Administrator Perrault noted that Councilmember Holden had brought this item up in Council Comments at a previous meeting.

Councilmember McClung said he was open to hear whatever a resident had to say as long as it was within a time limit, whether it was on the agenda or not, apart from a Public Hearing.

Mayor Grant suggested they wait to hear from the City Attorney and Councilmember Holden and bring the item back at another work session.

H. Council Tracker

After discussion, no items were deleted from the Tracker.

TCAAP communications were discussed. Council directed staff to move forward with messaging but not add it to the Tracker.

2. COUNCIL COMMENTS AND STAFF UPDATES

Councilmember Holmes discussed the growth in a catch basin that were cut back, a resident expressed concern they were cut down but they are willing to help weed the area.

City Administrator Perrault said they would need to sign a volunteer waiver form.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen said he should be able to locate a planting plan.

Mayor Grant asked if PCI ratings had come in.

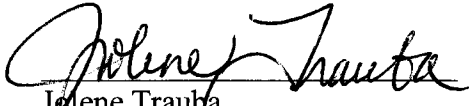
Interim Public Works Director Swearingen replied they have been received. Staff will be reviewing them, create visuals and analyze the data.

Mayor Grant noted that Boston Scientific has excavated a large area.

Interim Public Works Director Swearingen thought they were creating underground storm water storage in conjunction with their building addition.

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the City Council Work Session at 7:56 p.m.



Jolene Trauba
Deputy City Clerk



David Grant
Mayor