



Approved: November 13, 2023

**CITY OF ARDEN HILLS, MINNESOTA
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
OCTOBER 23, 2023
5:30 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 5:48 p.m.

Present: Mayor David Grant; Councilmembers Brenda Holden, Emily Rousseau, Tena Monson and Tom Fabel

Absent: None

Also present: City Administrator Dave Perrault, Public Works Director/City Engineer David Swearingen, Community Development Director Jessica Jagoe, Senior Communications Coordinator Luke Cardona, and Assistant to the City Administrator/City Clerk Julie Hanson

Informal discussion was held regarding the TCAAP item; if it will be a standing item, location on the agenda, what topics would be discussed etc. It was decided to put a time limit of 15 minutes on that item.

1. PUBLIC INQUIRIES/INFORMATIONAL

None.

2. RESPONSE TO PUBLIC INQUIRIES

None.

3. AGENDA ITEMS

A. Newsletter Policy Update

Senior Communications Coordinator Cardona said he put a policy together based on previous discussions, but had 2 additional questions and was looking for feedback.

Councilmember Rousseau said she would like to keep a Council liaison on the committee. She asked if it was necessary to have Ramsey County recycling six times a year or stormwater five times a year.

City Administrator Perrault said as a part of the SCORE grant, the majority of our newsletters have to include recycling information, stormwater is similar.

Councilmember Rousseau would like to have highlights from the accomplishments from the committees at least quarterly. She would like to have an introduction of new staff members.

Councilmember Holden wanted to make sure the policy statement includes current and future items. She didn't think they needed a liaison since staff was making all of the decisions but there are hot issues that Council could submit so it can be put in the newsletter. She asked if the email seven days in advance of the deadline could say which articles are mandatory such as items for Ramsey County, versus which items are optional. She asked for the definition of "development projects".

City Administrator Perrault said those would be business openings, project approvals and other Community Development news.

Councilmember Holden wondered if the PMP, budget, volunteers, or road updates would fall under development projects.

Senior Communications Coordinator Cardona said the list wasn't intended to be included in every edition but those type of items would be included when needed.

Councilmember Holden asked about the Impact section under Article Guidelines. She said sometimes there are things that impact only certain neighborhoods and should be in the newsletter, but they wouldn't be a large portion of the audience.

Senior Communications Coordinator Cardona responded that they would try to communicate something like that to the neighborhoods individually. A small project that doesn't impact the greater community would probably not be included in the newsletter. He said there are some exceptions, like the upcoming I&I project. That is only in a specific neighborhood. He would also ask staff Directors for their discretion on what would be important to the city.

Councilmember Holden thought they could look at the format. She liked New Brighton's newsletter, she felt it was easier to read.

Councilmember Monson agreed they could look at that.

Senior Communications Coordinator Cardona said he would be happy to look at format changes.

Councilmember Holden thought the committee members should go through their staff liaison to suggest articles, rather than submitting directly to the Senior Communications Coordinator.

Senior Communications Coordinator Cardona agreed. He didn't want all the committee members to reach out to him. He explained they added an additional step to the review process to have a proofreading by a Customer Service Specialist to look for errors.

Mayor Grant said he didn't know that they needed to have a Council liaison since they have a full-time communications person. He felt it should become a staff function. He felt any committee member that writes an article should go through the committee liaison. He didn't think the Council needed to go through him, they could go to the Senior Communications Coordinator or the City Administrator.

Councilmember Fabel said the idea of a Council liaison was discussed at the Communications Committee meeting and staff felt it would be helpful to have a Council liaison as a conduit and filter for suggestions, articles or comments coming in from other Councilmembers.

Councilmember Rousseau said she didn't want to put the City Administrator in the position that he has to make a decision to say no to Councilmembers' requests.

Councilmember Monson stated if they are going to have City Councilmembers submit topics they need to have a liaison. If they don't have a liaison the Council should be eliminated from the process as much as possible except for proofreading. She said not even for hot topics, and to her if it's a hot topic, it should go to a worksession, which she is not interested in doing. She'd like to continue with a Council liaison. She thought they should have a Lake Johanna Fire update annually, and a nature/environmental section.

Councilmember Holden said they do put information in about the fire department each year, and the Sheriff department. She noted that the Council Liaison would be the filter then if she submitted an article. She referenced hot topics and said many times the liaison doesn't know. She expressed concern about there being bias on the part of the Liaison.

Senior Communications Coordinator Cardona felt if there wasn't a Council liaison, the City Administrator should be the person topics are submitted to.

City Administrator Perrault felt a Council liaison was a good thing to have if Council was giving feedback, input and submitting topics. He thought those things should go through the Council liaison as a gateway between Council and staff. If they move away from a Council liaison then Council involvement should be limited to proofreading.

Staff was directed to update the policy per the discussion, and a Council liaison would stand for now.

Councilmember Holden stated that her problem with this is that they had requested multiple times to put some real information in the newsletter about TCAAP and nothing happened.

B. TCAAP Discussion

Councilmember Rousseau wondered if there was going to be a bike path on the spine road.

Mayor Grant said there was, but the design is only 60% done.

Councilmember Rousseau showed examples of what a bike lane could look like. She felt they should make it equitable for people in cars along with other types of transportation. She loved the

idea of a curb separating the bike lane. She also wondered how they would attract mom and pop businesses instead of chain businesses. Could they do some economic development levies?

Mayor Grant said the developer would be getting the tenants. The City could try to incentivize, but it would have to be specified in the development agreement that was what the City wanted.

Discussion ensued regarding the life cycle of new businesses.

Councilmember Rousseau thought it would be a really desirable community to live in and they should insure the homes being purchased were primary homes and not purchased to be used as Airbnb's.

Councilmember Holden stated they could do that for all of Arden Hills as she felt they had too many rental properties.

Councilmember Holden said going along with net zero and wanting to make it all electric would cost about \$30,000 more per house. She wondered what the cost of heating through the winter would be with electricity versus natural gas. Without ductwork, how do you air condition in the summer?

Mayor Grant said the industry has made gains in cold climate air source heat pumps. They can be efficient to -15° and are getting better. They are gaining popularity in areas that don't have our temperature extremes.

Councilmember Holden wondered if all homes were set up to be owned.

Councilmember Monson said there are very intentional rental spaces. There was some discussion on rental for ownership, and some of the affordable homes are rental for ownership, but they are not all 100% ownership only. She stated they hadn't gotten into that level of detail but she has identified that ownership is an important topic for the Council. She indicated she knows the prior Council had a certain percentage in the development agreement, so they would make sure that was incorporated in some capacity.

Councilmember Holden asked if what they were doing about bird migration and glass windows on buildings.

City Administrator Perrault said there is already recommendations in the City Code for bird safety.

Councilmember Holden stated that Councilmember Monson was in the energy business, and she was hearing that people think Councilmember Monson would get kickbacks or a bonus for selling solar panels. She felt that should be addressed.

Councilmember Monson stated there was no kickback, and her company deals in huge solar complexes that are thousands of acres.

C. Council Retreat Discussion

Councilmember Holden said she would like to have a meeting with the League of Minnesota Cities before they have a retreat.

Councilmember Monson was fine with that but would also like to have strategic direction and felt the retreat was important. If they can't schedule this in the next few weeks she will start pushing for an agenda policy they set here without other parties involved.

Councilmember Rousseau would like to have a retreat in the first quarter of next year, but if they can't do the League of Minnesota Cities by the end of this year, she would still like to move forward with the retreat.

Mayor Grant felt they should meet with the League first. He thought they needed to come together as a Council in order to make the retreat successful.

Councilmember Rousseau would like two surveys to go out; one for their availability until the end of the year to meet with the League of Minnesota Cities, and one for the first quarter for availability for the retreat. She stated that if they can't figure out a time to meet with the League before the end of the year she thought they should still move forward with the retreat.

Councilmember Monson was fine with that plan.

Councilmember Holden was against the plan. She wondered why she would want to go to a retreat before meeting with the League.

Discussion ensued regarding everyone getting on the same page.

Mayor Grant said they will try to meet with the League by the end of the year. He directed staff to send an email for scheduling and to check with the League.

D. Solar Land Use Application Refund Discussion

Mayor Grant said maybe they should have an ordinance for ground solar, but this resident ended up with a \$1,500 bill and he thought they should refund him when they come up with an ordinance.

Councilmember Monson said she thought they had already given staff direction to go through the process.

Councilmember Fabel asked for clarification on the fees.

Community Development Director Jagoe explained there could be staff time, city attorney time, and publication for hearing notices that would be deducted from the escrow. Typically, they don't close out planning cases and do anything with the escrow until six months after because there can still be bills coming in that need to be charged to it. The fee to bring an application to the Planning Commission for a zoning code amendment is \$400.

Mayor Grant said if the zoning was in place he would only be paying the \$400.

Community Development Director Jagoe responded that if there was an ordinance in place he wouldn't pay anything because he wouldn't have had to apply.

After discussion, Mayor Grant directed staff to refund the \$1,500 to the homeowner.

4. OPTIONAL ITEMS

A. Food Truck Discussion

Not discussed.

B. Council Tracker

Not discussed.

5. COUNCIL/STAFF COMMENTS

Councilmember Holden wondered if they could purchase a fireproof container for people to drop off button batteries.

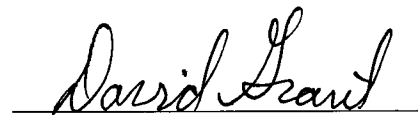
City Administrator Perrault said he was waiting for the County's response on how to collect those.

Councilmember Holden thought the I&I grant was an opportunity for the City to fix the leaky clay pipes that are going into people's yards. She thought because we don't currently have a Finance Director we could possibly talk to another city that is implementing a program and pay them to manage our financing instead of just saying no.

ADJOURN

Mayor Grant adjourned the Special City Council Work Session at 6:50 p.m.


Jolene Trauba
Deputy City Clerk


David Grant
Mayor