On February 25, at its regular City Council meeting, the Arden Hills City Council declined a request from Ramsey County to engage in private mediation to finalize negotiations on the Rice Creek Commons development, which will be located on the former Twin Cities Army Ammunition Plant (TCAAP).

Ramsey County asked the city to respond to a request for mediation by February 26, following the February 4 Joint Development Authority (JDA) meeting, saying negotiations were at an impasse and the only way forward was to enter into mediation.

“Negotiations are not at an impasse, they are on hold by the county,” said Mayor David Grant. “We believe mediation is premature and would like the negotiations to resume.”

**County halts negotiations**

Negotiations came to a halt in November, when the county said it was pulling resources from the project, citing the lack of a shared vision, and county representatives did not attend the JDA meeting in January.

The county returned to the February 4 Joint Development Authority meeting asking for mediation. However, JDA Chair Brian Holmes asked the city and county to first bring forward written documents that outline their differences, as well as what they would like to see happen. The county has requested additional density and affordable housing on the site, as well as an increase in the city’s financial contribution, but has not offered any details.

The county declined to attend a February 20 JDA meeting, where the two sides were to review their differences. “We believe it would be a poor use of city resources to authorize funding for mediation when we have not seen this information,” Grant said. “In order to effectively evaluate requests for changes, the city needs specific details from the county and wishes to negotiate these in a fair and transparent manner.”

The county has also asked for additional affordable housing on the site. “The city wants to be clear: there is nothing stopping the county from pursuing additional affordable housing,” said City Administrator Dave Perrault. “The city does not regulate affordable housing.”

**Calls for mediation come as surprise to the city**

Both the halt in negotiations and the request for mediation came as surprises to the city, because the city agreed to certain requests from the county back in October and offered a proposal to the county on October 24, which the county has yet to respond to in a substantive manner.

Differences regarding sewer and water access (SAC/WAC) fees and other financing concerns were addressed in that proposal. The city agreed to waive certain SAC fees and agreed to other financing options requested by the county.

“The city has consistently worked to provide a fair and transparent process for its residents and the general public,” said Grant, adding that the city is committed to avoiding short or long-term costs to residents, or decisions that could put the city at risk.

**City opts for negotiation over mediation**

The City Council indicated that decisions regarding the development of the TCAAP site can continue to be made and negotiated through the JDA. TCAAP-related agreements regarding funding, density and zoning were publicly negotiated in 2012, 2016 and 2018.

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Mediation Continued from Front Page

“Those agreements took significant time to develop,” said Mayor Grant. “Requests to significantly increase density on the site would require the city to change its comprehensive plan, undertake additional studies and redo the master plan. This could put us back to square one.”

“This is a large and important project for the City of Arden Hills and for the region,” said Mayor Grant. “It is not an inconvenience, as the county has said the city views it. On the contrary, this project will bring more housing and more jobs, and those are very good things. We need to make sure the residents and businesses in the area are properly served and that the development is properly funded and sustainable for all.”

City sets planning fees

In other business related to the TCAAP redevelopment, the City Council, at its January 28 regular council meeting, set planning fees at $2,743 per acre to recoup planning costs in preparation for site development. The Council also changed its fee schedule in December to increase water and sewer utility connection fees for the site. “These fees will ensure the city recovers previous TCAAP expenses and that existing residents are not paying for TCAAP related costs,” said City Administrator Dave Perrault.

Council To Hold Public Hearing on Tobacco Ordinance

The Arden Hills City Council is considering changing the city’s ordinance regarding tobacco sales. Proposed changes could include raising the age of tobacco purchasing to 21 and regulating the sale of flavored products. A public hearing and a possible vote on the proposed changes will take place at the regular City Council meeting on Monday, March 25 at 7:00 p.m. at City Hall. Public input is welcome.

Annual Tree Sale on Now Through April 19

The Friends of the Parks and Trails of St. Paul and Ramsey County Annual Tree Sale is now open. You can purchase plants or trees for your yard or balcony as well as the opportunity to donate money for trees for Arden Hills. The order deadline is April 19 and plants and trees will be available for pick up on Saturday, May 4, 9:00 a.m. to 1:00 p.m. at 2015 Van Dyke in Maplewood. To order or donate, visit friendsoftheparks.org. For more information, call 612-703-9044, or send an email to info@friendsoftheparks.org.

Compost Bin Sale - Save $20

The Recycling Association of Minnesota is selling compost bins to Ramsey County residents for $44, plus tax this year. The bins normally sell for $64. Ramsey County residents can get the $20 discount by ordering online at RecycleMinnesota.org and entering promo code “Ramsey,” or by calling 651-641-4589 and mentioning that you are a Ramsey County resident.

Pick up your pre-ordered bin on April 27 in Maplewood. Find additional dates and locations at RecycleMinnesota.org.
City Council Sends Mediation Response Letter to Ramsey County Board of Commissioners

The following letter was sent by the Arden Hills City Council to the Ramsey County Board of Commissioners as a response to the Board’s call for mediation.

February 25, 2019

Ramsey County Board of Commissioners
220 Courthouse, 15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, Minnesota 55102

Dear Chair and Ramsey County Board Members,

By letters dated February 8 (from Board Chair McDonough) and February 11 (from Assistant County Attorney Schmidt), Ramsey County has requested the City consent to mediation as “the only way to a development agreement.” It is clear from these letters that the County believes direct communication in a public forum by designated representatives of the two public bodies cannot be productive (“the County Board decided that it was not in the best interests of the organization to negotiate in a special meeting” and “it is not in the County’s business or financial interests to negotiate the terms of a complex real estate transaction in a public forum”).

These statements seem disingenuous given that the parties have made substantial progress in drafting and discussing terms of the Master Development Agreement, Cooperative Agreement, and related subordinate agreements over the past year. Further, when it served the County’s purpose, the County had no problem with having the Joint Development Authority review and adopt a preliminary Master Development Agreement (on September 24). That preliminary document, which outlines the County’s proposed real estate transaction, as sole owner of the development property, with the Master Developer, pointedly does not include the City as a party to the land transactions.

From the outset, and as clearly outlined in the Joint Powers Agreement, the City’s role in the development has been limited to providing the regulatory framework for the development, with the participation and consent of the County (provided in 2016), and to assist in the construction of necessary infrastructure to serve the development without burdening existing Arden Hills residents either for the initial development or once the development is completed.

The City does not believe the parties are at an impasse that warrants mediation, and if an impasse does exist, it is caused solely by the County’s choice to not substantively respond to the City’s most recent offer of compromise (presented following the City’s October 24 work session). That offer by the City included acceding to developer and County requests for relief from possible SAC fees, the City generally accepting the County offer for internal financing of the water tower and related infrastructure costs, and the use of tax increment financing by the City to assist in meeting the mutual goals of the County, City, and Developer.

Instead of a substantive response, the County provided the November 6 letter from County Manager O’Connor indicating that the County was walking away or taking a pause or break from the project, and reassigning County resources toward other projects, perhaps for a period of six months. Now, half-way into that break the County seeks to reverse course, declare an impasse, and proceed to private mediation, or if the City rejects that proposal, to pursue other options.

The City respectfully declines the request for mediation as premature, and suggests that the County again commit to fully participating in the Joint Development Authority meetings, and authorize its staff and consultants to resume meeting with City and Developer representatives to fashion a Master Development Agreement, Cooperative Agreement and related documents that all parties can publicly review and sign.

The City of Arden Hills will continue to abide by the principles that have guided our efforts on this project from the beginning, which include a transparent and participatory process to adopt plans and land use regulations for the development, public financing and long-term service commitments. Those principles include avoiding or minimizing the short and long terms costs of the development to current residents, and the City remains committed to these goals.

The City believes is has been reasonable. The current master plan contemplates 1460 units. That number is itself a compromise, and has previously been approved by the County. Though the project is contemplated to provide a full mixture of uses, including corporate office, other commercial, and retail, the housing density goal of approximately 9.0 units per acre in areas zoned residential is approximately three times that of the existing City density. That is consistent with past, current and projected city goals. If the County’s goals have changed, and additional density is now required or desired due to changed County circumstance, we respectfully request that the County specify, or have your designated representatives, staff or consultants indicate, what additional density is being proposed. The JPA contemplates evolutionary changes to the development, and provides a mechanism for revisions during the build out of the development. But it is impossible for the City or the public to evaluate the traffic, environmental and service delivery impacts of “more.”

The City disputes the County’s interpretation that the City views TCAAP as an inconvenience. It is just the opposite. The City views this project as a valuable asset to the City and region.

The City is committed to meeting its obligations under the JPA to use good faith to attempt to resolve any dispute but we do not agree with the County that negotiations are at an impasse and that mediation is the only means of resolving our differences, and we certainly don’t agree with the County’s contention that a decision regarding the development of the TCAAP site cannot be made in a public forum.

Sincerely,

David Grant, Mayor
Brenda Holden, Councilmember
Dave McClung, Councilmember
Fran Holmes, Councilmember
Steve Scott, Councilmember
Arden Hills long-time resident Paul Beggin is this year’s recipient of the Paul Harris Award presented by the Arden Hills/Shoreview Rotary Club.

Every year the Arden Hills/Shoreview Rotary elects an individual to receive the Paul Harris Award. By way of background, Paul Harris started the Rotary in 1905 and the award is given to an individual for outstanding accomplishments and contributions to the community.

Paul’s accomplishments are widespread and he has made a difference to many people, as a teacher, counselor and social worker at Mahtomedi Middle School, and as a coach, during which he helped establish the first girls’ soccer leagues.

Paul attributes his positive attitude towards helping young people to his parents who encouraged him to seek out opportunities to get involved.

Paul is a member of The National Sports Commission, as well as multiple other boards. In Arden Hills, he is a member of the Arden Hills Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee and a Member of the Arden Hills Civic Center Task Force. Arden Hills/Shoreview Rotarian Brenda Holden, who is also an Arden Hills City Councilmember and the 2013 Recipient of the Paul Harris Award, stated she nominated Paul because of the community impact of his work.

“Through his work at the National Sports Center Paul has been instrumental in helping provide high-quality amateur sport opportunities to Minnesota families, which, in turn, generates economic impact through the Center’s hosting of regional, national and international sporting events,” Holden stated.

More than four million people participate in activities each year that result in nearly $50 million in tourism-related economic impact for the Twin Cities metropolitan area, Holden said.

Paul has endless energy to help his community and has spent countless hours fundraising for the boards he is associated with that provide significant economic impact. The giving of himself selflessly to so many is amazing. He comes forward when needed to share his time and information with anyone who asks or needs help. Arden Hills congratulates Paul for this award and we are proud to have him as a member of our community.

**Organics Recycling Available**

Recycling your food scraps and other organic waste returns essential nutrients to the soil and improves soil health.

Organics recycling includes things like food scraps and non-recyclable paper (tissues, paper towels, etc.)

Ramsey County offers a free caddy/bucket for residents who want to participate in the organics recycling program. Visit the Arden Hills Yard Waste site at 3530 Hudson Avenue to pick one up. The site is open weekends only through March, Saturdays 9:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.; and Sundays, 11:00 a.m. to 5:00 p.m.

NEW! The Saint Anthony Yard Waste Collection Site at 3301 Silver Lake Road NE is open year-round, 24/7.

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**Spring Egg Hunt Set for April 20**

Come hunt for candy-filled, colored eggs at the Spring Egg Hunt. Join the Spring Bunny for a hopping good time! All participants must pre-register and indicate age category. The event will be held snow, rain or shine.

Who: Ages 1-12
Cost: $8 per child
When: Saturday, April 20, 10:30 a.m. to 11:30 a.m.
Ages 1-4 start at 10:30 a.m.
Ages 5-8 start at 10:40 a.m.
Ages 9-12 start at 10:50 a.m.

Where: Cummings Park - 1219 Cummings Park Drive, Arden Hills
Registration Deadline: Wednesday, April 17. To register, visit cityofardenhills.org/recregistration, or check your mail for the Spring/Summer Recreation Guide.
The following work is scheduled this spring in Arden Hills:

Final paving will be completed as soon as weather allows on the Old Snelling Avenue Bridge, followed by striping and restoration. Traffic will remain open.

MnDOT will begin construction of a third lane on Highway 10 between I-35W and County Road 96. This project includes noise walls, watermain replacement, access revisions and repaving of the frontage road.

MnDOT will construct an I-35W MnPASS lane in each direction between Roseville and Lino Lakes to relieve congestion, provide a transportation advantage for transit and to add capacity for all motorists. The project is scheduled to begin in March and take about four years to complete. NB I-35W will be reduced to two lanes in each direction when construction begins. Traffic management solutions will be put in place, and some local roads may experience an increase in traffic as a result.

Ramsey County will construct pedestrian ramps and resurface Lexington Avenue from County Rd E to County Rd C2 beginning in May or June.

For road construction updates, visit cityofardenhills.org/constructionprojects.

Did you know . . .

Arden Hills had 10,969 employees in 2018. The diagram above breaks down the percentage of employees by sector.

Source: MN DEED Quarterly Census of Employment and Wages; 2018-Q2
Orchid Bar & Grill Opens at Lexington Station; Offers Vietnamese Cuisine and Korean Barbecue

The Orchid Bar & Grill is the newest restaurant to open at Lexington Station Phase 11, off of Red Fox Road and Lexington Avenue, at 3845 Lexington Avenue North.

Owner Ninh Nguyen shares some information about his new restaurant.

Three things to know

1. Our focus is on service and cleanliness.

2. We have quality food, including fresh foods and better quality meats.

3. This is our second location. The first location is in White Bear Township near the theater. We’ve added Korean barbecue to this location. This is a popular concept in other areas of the country, and we are bringing it to one half of the restaurant. The other half will be Vietnamese foods.

Why Arden Hills?

The area is busy and good for business. Boston Scientific and Land O’Lakes are located nearby, and we offer catering services.

Three things to try

1. Korean Barbecue provides an experience for diners to grill foods at their table. Servers will be there to help out. This is fun for family-style or small group gatherings. We have marinated or non-marinated meats and sides.

2. Vietnamese Pho, lemongrass chicken or cashew chicken (owner’s favorite)!

3. Egg rolls. We are well known for our egg rolls.

Hours of operation

- Monday to Thursday, 11:00 a.m. to 9:00 p.m.
- Friday and Saturday, 11:00 a.m. to 10:00 p.m.
- Sunday, 11:00 a.m. to 8:00 p.m.

Dine-in and take out available.