

# ARDEN HILLS

## notes

The Official City Newsletter for Arden Hills Residents

April 2014

## City Council rejects franchise fee proposal to fund parks, trails, and road maintenance and improvements

by Kristine Goodrich

Arden Hills property owners won't see new City fees on their electric and gas bills. After several months of discussions and two public hearings, the Council unanimously opted in February not to move forward with exploring franchise fees. Council members said their decisions were influenced by the fact the public majority opposed the idea.

City leaders had considered franchise fees as a potential new, broader revenue source to support parks, trails, and road maintenance and improvements. The City looked at adding monthly fees on all property owners' electric and gas bills. For residents, the proposed fees totaled \$4.75. The fees would have varied for other properties. The fees would have generated approximately \$439,000 annually for the City.

### City's reasons for considering fee

The franchise fees proposal was prompted by Council members' concern the City doesn't have sufficient funds to accomplish priority street, park and trail projects in a timely manner. The City has used reserve funds to help pay for recent projects. The Park Dedication Fund has been depleted, and no significant park dedication revenues are expected in the near future. The Permanent Improvement Revolving Fund has a sizable reserve that allows the City not to have to take out loans for major road projects.

The City's road improvement plan, based on current expected funding levels,

includes reconstruction of West Round Lake Road this year, fixing streets in the Valentine Hills neighborhood next year and participation in state bridge projects in 2015, 2016, and 2017. There are no road projects planned between 2018 and 2022. News that reconstruction of Old Snelling Avenue isn't planned until 2025 drew concern from several public hearing speakers.

The City's Capital Improvement Plan proposes using money from the Permanent Improvement Revolving Fund for park improvement projects over the next five years, including a trial dog park area in the Hazelnut Park ice rink, and parking lot and drainage improvements at Free-way Park. No new trails are included in the City's five-year Capital Improvement Plan. The City has identified eight miles of new trails as high priority and has an additional 16 miles of new trails on its wish list.

### Pros and cons weighed

The advantages and disadvantages of assessing franchise fees instead of raising the property tax levy were considered. Franchise fees would have been assessed to all properties — including tax exempt properties, which account for 43 percent of the City's market value. For most homeowners, the franchise fees would have cost less than if the City increased property taxes by a comparable amount. The franchise fees would also have been a stable revenue source, not impacted by fluctuating property values. On the other hand, franchise fees are not tax deduct-

ible for their payers as are property taxes. Franchise fees also are considered "regressive" because every property type pays the same amount, regardless of property value.

### Public makes its voice heard

At two public hearings in February, community members heard presentations about the franchise fee proposal and were invited to share opinions. More than 30 people spoke and many more attended the public hearings. A few speakers, including several members of the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Committee, supported the franchise fees as a dedicated source for parks and trails improvements. Most of the speakers opposed the fees for a variety of reasons. Some speakers didn't believe additional capital project spending was essential. Other speakers preferred the City continue to utilize its tax levy authority rather than create a new fee. Council members noted they also received feedback via emails and other media, predominantly in opposition to the proposal.

Council members thanked community members for sharing their opinions. While some Council members acknowledged that the franchise fees have both benefits or drawbacks, all of the the Council members said they don't support further consideration of the fees at this time because public reaction to the proposal wasn't favorable.



Spring Cleanup Day is May 17. See page 5 for details.

## Arden Hills Service Directory

1245 West Highway 96  
Arden Hills, MN 55112-5734  
Office Hours  
Monday through Friday  
8:00 a.m.--4:30 p.m.

651-792-7800  
www.cityofardenhills.org

Sheriff and Fire Emergency  
911

Sheriff (non-emergency)  
651-767-0640

Fire (non-emergency)  
651-481-7024

Water and Sewer Problems  
(During non-business hours)  
651-767-9640

Mayor:

David Grant 651-538-0747  
dgrant@cityofardenhills.org

Councilmembers:

Brenda Holden 651-636-2987  
bholden@cityofardenhills.org

Fran Holmes 651-631-1866  
fholmes@cityofardenhills.org

Dave McClung 651-332-0352  
davemclung@comcast.net

Ed Werner 651-636-2547  
ewerner@cityofardenhills.org

City Administrator:

Patrick Klaers 651-792-7810  
pklaers@cityofardenhills.org

Communications Committee

Kristine Goodrich, editor; Susan  
Cathey

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Staff Liaison: Amy Diel

Desktop Publisher: Mary Nosek

Council meetings are held at City Hall on the second and last Monday of the month at 7 p.m. Meetings are televised live on Cable Channel 16. Meetings of the Planning Commission are televised live at 7 p.m. on the first Wednesday of the month.

Visit [www.cityofardenhills.org](http://www.cityofardenhills.org) for information about taped meeting playbacks.

Arden Hills Notes is the official newsletter of the City of Arden Hills, an equal-opportunity employer.

## News from Around the Town:

### PTRC assesses results of parks and trails survey

By Susan Cathey and Nancy O'Malley

The Arden Hills Park, Trails, and Recreation Committee (PTRC) consists of ten volunteer residents, a City Council liaison, and a staff liaison. Its mission statement includes the phrase: "represents the interests of Arden Hills citizens in leading the continuing development, expansion, and improvement of (natural) resources."



Rather than guess at what Arden Hills citizens want, the PTRC asked them. Last summer the committee did a community parks and trails survey. A notice regarding the survey was sent to all residents in their water bills, directing them to an online survey or to call for a hard copy which could be returned by mail. Eighty-six people responded and wrote 281 comments.

The survey consisted of 15 questions. When asked to rate importance of possible initiatives, the two highest ranked out of the eight listed were: 1) connect existing trails to trails in surrounding communities and 2) develop more trails. Most respondents rated our parks and trails as good or excellent. A majority of respondents felt that our facilities and amenities are utilized regularly. There were many and varied suggestions written in, such as amenities that could be added to parks and a desire for more and/or newer playground equipment.

Two repeating themes in the responses were safety and connectivity. There were forty-five comments on increasing connections and twenty-four comments regarding the need for safety for pedestrians and bicyclists. The comments regarding safety spoke of needing safer routes for kids to get to schools, parks, the YMCA, and other neighborhoods.

The PTRC has compiled and reviews annually a list of wanted trail segments. The survey results support the PTRC's recommendations to the City Council regarding which trail segments should be a high priority for safety reasons. Citizens also listed the same spots over and over again as being unsafe. Cited multiple times were Old Highway 10 between Lake Valentine Road and Lindey's, the County Road E bridge across Snelling Avenue, Lake Valentine Road between New Brighton and Old Highway 10, and New Brighton Road, especially under the railroad overpass.

There were some suggestions in the survey that were quick fixes, such as places that needed a trash can, a better-fitting type of basketball net, and a spot on a trail where there was trash dumped. The Parks and Recreation Department acted on these things quickly. Residents wrote of wanting better handicapped access into the parks. The Department had already begun that process by removing the gates or chains across paths leading into Floral, Hazelnut, Cummings, and Sampson Parks and creating handicapped accessible entries.

The PTRC plans to continue to use these results as a guide in deciding priorities. The Committee feels it is important for the citizens of Arden Hills, who support and use the parks and trails, to have input on what they would like to see.

Read the survey results on the City website. Most comments were positive and showed the passion citizens have for nature, parks, trails and how to best use them. If you have ideas or opinions, contact a City Council member or a PTRC member.



## Benchmarks: a review of recent City Council action

### February 24, 2014

- Approved Payment #5 (final) of the 2013 Pavement Management Program (5-0)
- Approved purchase of a used snow plow truck from Ramsey County (5-0)
- Approved a one -day gambling permit for Merrick, Inc. (5-0)
- Denied Planning Case 14-004, — a zoning code amendment needed to establish an ambulance dispatch facility at 1209 County Road E (near Carols Furniture) (3-2 McClung, Werner opposed to denial)
- Denied Planning Case 14-005 — a conditional use permit for Allina Health to establish an ambulance dispatch facility at 1209 County Road E (3-2 McClung, Werner opposed to denial)
- Approved Planning Case 14-006 — a sign standard adjustment for properties in the Red Fox/Grey Fox Business District that are managed by Transwestern (5-0)
- Denied Planning Case 14-008 — a conditional use permit to establish an organics (food waste and non-recyclable paper) recycling site at the Ramsey County Arden Hills compost site (5-0 denial)
- Approved findings of fact for the denial of the application of St. Paul - Ramsey County Public Health Department for a conditional use permit to establish an organics recycling (food waste) facility at the Ramsey County compost site (5-0)
- Approved Planning Case 14-010 — a planned unit development amendment for Lexington Station regarding exterior glass transparency requirements (5-0)
- Approved Planning Case 13-019 — an accessory building site plan review for Gradient Financial (5-0)

### March 10, 2014

- Approved Resolution 2014-015 appointing Jennifer Stephens to the Parks, Trails, and Recreation Commission (5-0)
- Approved Planning Case 14-011 — final plat for Lexington Station (5-0)
- Approved findings of fact for the denial of the application of Allina Health EMS for a zoning code

### City Council denies request to allow food compost at Arden Hills yard waste collection site

Citing odor, litter, and other concerns, the City Council denied a request to allow food compost collection at the Ramsey County yard waste collection site in Arden Hills. The St. Paul-Ramsey County Public Health Department applied for a conditional use permit to add collection of “source separated organics” (all types of food as well as non-recyclable paper) on its 1.5-acre site on the west side Tony Schmidt Regional Park, at the end of Hudson Avenue off of New Brighton Road.



removed from the Arden Hills site at least weekly and taken to an organics processing facility.

While the bags and bin are designed to prevent odor and wildlife access, Council members and some neighbors worried about spills and about illegal dumping

when the site is closed. An increase in traffic also was a concern.

For more information about organics recycling at the other County sites, go to [www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph/rt/organics\\_recycling.htm](http://www.co.ramsey.mn.us/ph/rt/organics_recycling.htm).

The County has a goal to add sourced separated organics collection at all its yard waste sites. Residents must bring the organics in a compostable bag (available for free at waste sites) and place it in a metal bin. Collection sites with organics composting will be open year-round, with weekends-only hours in the winter. The organic material would have been

### Here's a chance for you to volunteer!

The City currently needs an alternate to serve on the Planning Commission as well as writers to serve on the Communications Committee. Find applications and more on the City website, or call City Hall.



## Making energy improvements? Financial help may be available

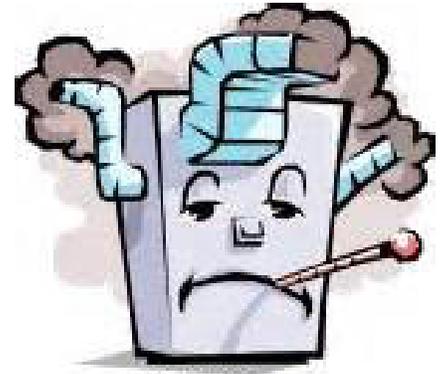
**T**he Energy Conservation Deferred Loan provides up to \$6,500 in forgivable financing for residential energy improvements, including new furnaces, boilers, and insulation. The interest-free loans are forgiven if you remain in your home for at least 10 years. They are available to residents in suburban Ramsey County who meet the following criteria:

- Your home was built before 1993.
- The market value of your home is less than \$251,750.
- Your household assets are under \$50,000, excluding the value of your home, autos, and retirement fund.

- Maximum household income is: \$45,100 for one person, \$51,500 for two people, \$58,000 for three people, \$64,400 for four people, \$69,600 for five people or \$69,600 for six people.

For more information go to [www.thenec.org](http://www.thenec.org) or contact LeAnne at 651-789-5706 or [leannek@thenec.org](mailto:leannek@thenec.org).

This program is supported by Ramsey County in partnership with the Neighborhood Energy Connection, a 29-year nonprofit organization that provides energy conservation information, services and programs.



## Pam Sweeney is Employee of the Year

by Lois Rem

**P**am Sweeney, Customer Service Representative, is the 2014 City of Arden Hills Employee of the Year. The award is for exceptional performance and significant accomplishment.

It should be no surprise to anyone who has ever contacted City Hall that Pam was chosen. She is usually the first person residents encounter, in person or by phone. She is always cheerful and professional—and can help you get an answer for just about everything.

Pam has been employed by the City since 1999. Her job title has changed over the years, and her duties have shifted and expanded, but she has always been the City's first contact person.

She handles quite a few daily responsibilities for the Finance Department (receiving cash receipts, permit and license fees of all kinds, utility bills) and works closely with the Park and Recreation programs handling registrations and proofing the class guides. She helps coordinate Public Works' on-call needs with those of other cities. She is in charge of supplies and equipment maintenance at City Hall, and she is a Notary Public. As she says, "If something comes up, I deal with it and find an answer or a solution to the problem." Not surprising for anyone who has met her, Pam's favorite part of the job is working with people. She loves getting to know people, watching kids grow up



through the years, and finds most of her interactions "energizing."

When asked for advice about contacting City Hall staff, she notes that people "will get much better results for their questions or concerns" if they can be as specific as possible about details. Many calls need to be routed to other departments, and this happens more quickly if she can identify the particular issue. However, she says, "Please remember that I can give you someone's voice mail, but I cannot make them return your call." There are limits to even Pam's capabilities.

In her free time, Pam spends time with more people — her family and friends. Her two children and eight grandchildren live nearby, and with all their activities she is never without entertainment. She also enjoys frequent travel. Whether at home, out and about, or at work, "I thrive on my people contact," she says.

## Enjoy your City parks!

**W**ith the long winter behind us, it's time to get out and enjoy the great parks in Arden Hills. Before you go, here are a few reminders:

- Parks open 30 minutes before sunrise and close 30 minutes after sunset.
- The following is prohibited: tobacco, alcoholic beverages, glass containers, golf playing and motorized vehicles on turf or trails.
- Dogs must be on a leash, and owners must clean up after pets.
- You may bring your own grill (no grills provided). Hot charcoal must be properly disposed of.

### Want to know where to find all the City parks?

Arden Hills has 14 City Parks. They are:

- Arden Manor Park
- Arden Oaks Park
- Crepeau Nature Preserve
- Cummings Park
- Floral Park
- Freeway Park
- Hazelnut Park
- Ingerson Park
- Johanna Marsh Park
- Lindsey's
- Perry Park
- Royal Hills Park
- Sampson Park
- Valentine Park

To find locations and details visit: [www.cityofardenhills.org/](http://www.cityofardenhills.org/)

## City to assist residents in paying for emerald ash borer treatment

**E**merald ash borer (EAB) has been found in Arden Hills. Residents with ash trees are highly recommended to consider treatment and/or removal and replacement.

The City will work with the Department of Agriculture to identify EAB. It is the only agency that can confirm an EAB infestation.

In November 2013, the City contracted with Precision Landscape and Tree to perform tree removal services for the City in 2014. As part of the agreement, Precision will also provide emerald ash borer treatment. The City Council and staff then negotiated the contract so that the contractor will offer a reduced rate to do treatments for residents during 2014.

The City has negotiated the price for EAB chemical treatment on private trees, exclusively for Arden Hills residents: \$7 for trees between 12"-24" in diameter and \$9 for trees greater than 24" in diameter. Contact Precision at 651-484-2726 to set up a consultation.

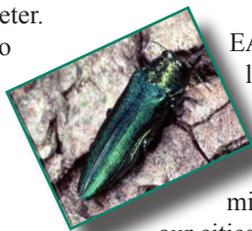
There are other contractors in the market as well. The City cannot recommend any one tree vendor, for liability reasons.

### Everything you wanted to know about emerald ash borer...

#### What is the emerald ash borer (and why should I care)?

According to the Department of Natural Resources website, emerald ash borer (EAB) is a non-native invasive insect that destroys ash trees in large numbers. A quarantine has been placed on several counties, including Ramsey County, to help slow the spread of EAB. This means it is against the law to move the following items out of EAB-quarantined counties:

- Firewood from hardwood trees (it is considered best practice not to transport firewood, even in Minnesota)
- Entire ash trees
- Ash limbs and branches
- Ash logs or untreated ash lumber with bark attached
- Uncomposted ash chips and uncomposted ash bark chips greater than one inch in two dimensions.



EAB has already "killed millions of ash trees in North America. It will have a huge effect on Minnesota's landscape and the 998 million ash trees that grow in our cities and forests," according to the DNR website. Minnesota forests have more ash trees (black, green, and white) than any other state, and urban areas contain up to 15 percent ash trees in their neighborhoods and parks.

Everyone should learn to identify ash trees and the symptoms of EAB so that any infestation on public or private land can promptly be reported to the proper authorities. Although this extremely cold winter may have dealt the invader a setback, it is too early to tell how much it may be affected. So as spring sets in, be prepared to look for signs of EAB.

#### What you can do

Visit the DNR website at [www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialanimals/eab/index.html](http://www.dnr.state.mn.us/invasives/terrestrialanimals/eab/index.html) for more information and links to the following resources:

- Identifying true ash trees (mountain ash and prickly ash are not true ash trees and are not affected by EAB).
- Recognizing the signs of an EAB-infested tree: heavy woodpecker activity on tree, dying branches in the top canopy, sprouts around the tree base, vertical cracks in the bark, S-shaped tunnels under the bark, and 1/8-inch D-shaped exit holes in the bark.

If you think a tree is infested with EAB, complete the steps outlined in the *Step Through Guide* and refer to the *Signs and Symptoms of EAB in Ash Trees* slide show for more examples, including recognizing insect galleries in ash trees in Minnesota.

If your ash tree is showing other signs, visit the *What's wrong with my ash tree?* online diagnostic tool to help identify problems caused by insects, diseases, and nonliving factors.

To report a possible EAB infestation, contact the Arrest the Pest Hotline at [arrest.the.pest@state.mn.us](mailto:arrest.the.pest@state.mn.us) or 888-545-6684. You should also contact City Hall at 651-792-7848.

Consider insecticide treatments only when your property is within 15 miles of an EAB infestation— which is true in Arden Hills, since EAB has been found in Sampson Park and the University of Northwestern campus.

Do not transport firewood, even within Minnesota.

### Cleanup Day! May 17

**T**he annual Arden Hills spring cleanup day is Saturday, May 17, from 8 a.m. to 3 p.m. at the Ramsey County Public Works Facility at 1425 Paul Kirkwood Drive (off of Highway 96 and Hamline Avenue).

Residents can bring unwanted household items for disposal or to donate to the Salvation Army.

Check the City website for more information. The fall cleanup day is scheduled for October 4.





Arden Hills, MN • 55112-5734

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*Franchise fee proposal rejected*  
*PTRC park survey outlined*  
*Pam Sweeney is Employee of the Year*  
*About those emerald ash borers*

## Postal Customer

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### Notes from the City Council

#### A bit of Arden Hills found in the UK

**T**he time was 1939-1945 and England was in the process of developing what would be 119 airfields of various sizes to support fighters and heavy bombers used in World War II. Having so many airfields was a way to disperse the planes so they could not be attacked in mass. Only a handful of these fields remain in use today. The remains of these abandoned fields in most cases can only be identified by air.

On October 14, 1943, out of fuel and badly damaged during the second bombing attack over Schweinfurt, Germany, the Boeing B17 3351Z of the 407th Squadron of American 92nd Bomb Group limped back to England. Seeing the tiny Winkfield RAF (Royal Air Force) field, the B17 came in to land, pancaked and burned up. The crew of 10 escaped safely before the blaze.

The next day the USAF (United States Air Force) quickly salvaged the main parts of the B17 and leveled off the ground on the field where it landed. Over the next 70 years, the event became buried with the passage of time. Until October 20, 2013, almost 70 years to the day later, when four used shell casings were discovered.

The shells were clearly marked as being “TCAAP produced”, and the finder began an Internet search to learn more. When the researcher looked up Arden Hills,

much to his surprise, he found copious numbers of documents on TCAAP’s history and the City/County redevelopment efforts.

The land where the B17 came to rest is being made into a war memorial called “Thanksgiving Field”, dedicated to commemorating individuals, units, actions, service and sacrifice. A dedication is planned June 6, 2014, the anniversary of D Day. The memorial will seek to honor those who helped hope to grow when the war was over. One of the dedications reads, “To those, like the citizens who have worked to see the former Twin Cities cartridge factory in Minnesota restored and reclaimed for the 21st Century benefit of local communities.” Another dedication reads to: “Those forgiving people – like the citizens of Schweinfurt and the US troops garrisoned there – who together built reconciliation and harmony.”

TCAAP produced over eight billion rounds of ammunition over several decades. The memorial will feature a time capsule and in the capsule will be one of the four TCAAP used shell casings. Perhaps other artifacts from TCAAP can be included in the time capsule too.

The City of Arden Hills is interested in preserving the long history of the TCAAP site. If you have items or stories about TCAAP, please call the City. Perhaps we

should have a time capsule as part of the TCAAP redevelopment?

The final TCAAP building located along Highway 96 will be taken down in a few months. A gathering is being planned to celebrate the removal of the last building. Regards,

David Grant  
Mayor of Arden Hills

#### Arden Hills Foundation presents two seminars

**T**he Arden Hills Foundation is offering two free seminars this spring:



**Balance for life**— Tuesday, April 29, from 7-8:30 p.m. at 377 Lexington Avenue, across from Target. Julie Gronquist will inspire with exercise and suggestions for healthier living.

**The Basics of Estate Planning**—Tuesday, May 13, from 7-8:30 p.m. at City Hall featuring Randy Sayers.

Learn more about the Arden Hills Foundation. Contact President Fran Holmes at [franh1116@aol.com](mailto:franh1116@aol.com) or find the Foundation on Facebook or LinkedIn.