



CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION MINUTES

Monday, June 23, 2025

4:30 PM

Mayor Connelly called the meeting to order at 4:33 PM.

PRESENT: Mayor Tasha Connelly, Councilor Molly MacGregor, Councilor Tom Sutherland, Councilor Rick Blake, Councilor Dan Mertes

STAFF: Tom Pagel, Chad Sterle, Kimberly Gibeau, Natalee Bushman, Dale Anderson

DEPARTMENT HEAD REPORT:

1. Dale Anderson, Yanmar Arena, Parks & Recreation

Dale Anderson, Director of Parks & Recreation and Yanmar Arena, provided an update on operations at the Yanmar Arena and broader parks and recreation efforts. The remodeled upper lobby space at the arena has become increasingly popular, hosting a variety of events such as team banquets, trainings, public meetings, blood drives, voting, and private celebrations.

Planning is also underway for a potential cannabis convention next April at the arena. The concept includes a vendor expo in the McDonald venue, concerts in the Kauppi venue, food trucks and sampling in the pavilion, and meetings in the upper lobby. The event would showcase products from growers across Minnesota and bring visitors to Grand Rapids during a slower tourism season.

The refrigerated outdoor ice rink at the pavilion saw tremendous success. From mid-November through March, it hosted over 400 hours of GRAHA usage and was the last outdoor rink operating in the state, even running on 60+ degree days. The added ice capacity allowed tournament expansion, increasing the 10U-B tournament from 8 to 12 teams, contributing to local economic activity. This coming season, teams registered for November and December tournaments will each have one game outdoors.

GRAHA has scheduled tournaments nearly every weekend from mid-November through early March, with only Christmas weekend open. Meanwhile, summer ice returns to the West Rink starting July 7. Weekdays will be filled with local hockey camps and figure skating, while weekends will host Minnesota Hockey HP events, girls' summer tournaments, and a goalie camp.

The arena also recently hosted a Hairball concert, drawing an estimated 2,000–2,500 attendees. Reviews of the sound quality were highly positive, though issues were noted with long lines at restrooms and bar areas. Those concerns were addressed during a post-event debrief with the Reif Center, with improvements planned for future events.

Staff also shared plans to submit a Minnesota DNR Regional Grant application for major improvements at Blandin Beach, building on a previously unsuccessful 2017 application. The new proposal includes a large rental pavilion, a new public restroom, a splash pad, and accessible sidewalks throughout the park. The estimated project cost is about \$1 million, with hopes to secure \$300,000 from the DNR and additional funding from the Blandin Foundation and IRRR. The splash pad would use fresh water and drain into the lake, potentially improving lake health. Alternatives, like a recirculating water system, are being considered but would require certified staffing and more maintenance. The pavilion connected to the restroom would remain open to the public, while the large pavilion would be available for rent, similar to Veteran's Park. The existing playground will remain in place.

Finally, staff reported on a busy spring season at the sports complex. Even during periods without ice at the arena, staff stay fully engaged by maintaining the community's softball and baseball fields, particularly for high school and ICC sports. The season went well, with facilities in good shape and heavily used throughout April and May.

REVIEW OF REGULAR AGENDA:

Upon review, no changes or additions are noted.

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 4:50 PM.

Respectfully submitted:

Kimberly Gibeau, City Clerk