

5.02: Consider Draft Ordinance Amendment Addressing Irrigation Requirements

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that over the past two months, the Board has discussed a potential ordinance amendment regarding irrigation requirements for multi-family and commercial/industrial developments. He stated that based on the discussed at the January meeting, staff has updated a draft ordinance that eliminates the irrigation requirement and also stipulates that if an irrigation system is installed (including single family parcels), it must be equipped with a rain sensor, per state statute, as well as one or more water efficient technologies. This could include, but would not be limited to, a smart controller, soil moisture sensor(s), and/or an evapotranspiration (ET) sensor(s). He stated that this provides enough flexibility so that as future advances in water efficient irrigation technologies are developed, it will not require additional ordinance amendments. He noted that while not specifically included in the draft ordinance, it may be worth noting that this could be an opportunity to encourage more native landscaping within projects; noting that the Board would contemplate some sort of landscaping credit for projects incorporating a native grass and plant community. He noted that staff is not suggesting that this be contemplated as part of the draft ordinance but something that the Board may wish to keep in mind from a broader water conservation perspective. He noted that staff is still assessing how the water efficient requirement would be verified in the field and any potential action on the draft ordinance could be contingent upon finalizing an effective and efficient inspection methodology.

Board Member Anderson asked if there is some sense of how an inspection could occur.

City Planner Anderson stated that the building official did not say he could not do an inspection but simply stated that it would not fit in with an existing inspection. He stated that he believes that there is a way to fit in the inspection but simply wants to ensure that the proper methodology can be identified. He stated that he has heard positive comments from the staff members he has spoken with, noting that they all agree that it makes sense to have the sensors as a requirement.

Board Member Anderson asked whether staff would be looking for the sensor or ensure that it is functional during the inspection.

City Planner Anderson stated that staff is most likely going to check to ensure that it's installed.

Chairperson Stodola stated that he likes the language proposed as it provides flexibility for future technology that is developed. He asked if City Planner Anderson believed that the Council would agree with the vague language or whether they would like it more defined.

City Planner Anderson stated that there are specific examples listed, but the language simply leaves the door open for future technologies. He stated that if the Council is in agreement with the concept he did not believe that there would be a problem with the language.

Board Member Anderson noted that another option would be to use different language and state other approved technologies. She stated that she does prefer the language as proposed but was simply providing an alternative.

City Planner Anderson noted that City Attorney Langel has reviewed the language and approves of the proposed language. He confirmed the consensus of the Board to use the language as proposed and if there is a problem the alternate suggested could be used.

Motion by Chairperson Stodola and seconded by Board Member Covart to recommend adoption of Ordinance #17-04, Amending Multiple Sections of the Ramsey City Code Relating to Irrigation Requirements, contingent upon staff developing an efficient and effective inspection methodology.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Stodola, Board Member Covart, Anderson, Bernard, Trossen, and Valentine. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Hiatt.

It was the consensus of the Board to direct staff to vet out the opportunity to encourage more native landscaping within project, with the use of some sort of landscaping credit for projects incorporating a native grass and plant community; as well as the possibility to retrofit existing irrigation systems.