

City of Ramsey
Agenda
Environmental Policy Board (EPB)
Monday, November 19, 2018
6:30 pm
Council Chambers, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Citizen Input**
3. **Approve Agenda**
4. **Approve Minutes**
 1. Approve Meeting Minutes Dated October 15, 2018
5. **Policy Board Business**
 1. Discussion on Topsoil Requirement and Potential Amendments or Alternatives (Project No. 146)
6. **Board/Staff Input**
 - Receive Update on Water Efficient Potential Project Analysis
7. **Adjournment**

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

4. 1.

Meeting Date: 11/19/2018

By: Chris Anderson, Community
Development

Information

Title:

Approve Meeting Minutes Dated October 15, 2018

Action:

Attachments

Meeting Minutes Dated October 15, 2018

Form Review

Inbox

Tim Gladhill

Form Started By: Chris Anderson

Final Approval Date: 11/19/2018

Reviewed By

Tim Gladhill

Date

11/19/2018 07:28 AM

Started On: 11/13/2018 01:24 PM

**ENVIRONMENTAL POLICY BOARD
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

On Monday, October 15, 2018, the Environmental Policy Board (EPB) met in the Council Chambers at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive N.W., Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Chairperson Michael Valentine
 Board Member Reid Bernard
 Board Member Jane Covart
 Board Member Melissa Fetterley
 Board Member Laura Moore

Members Absent: Board Member Michael Hiatt
 Board Member Michael Madison

Also Present: City Planner Chris Anderson
 Acting Mayor LeTourneau, City Council Liaison

1. CALL TO ORDER

Chairperson Valentine called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. CITIZEN INPUT

None.

3. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Bernard to approve the agenda as submitted.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Covart, Bernard, Fetterley, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Hiatt and Madison.

4. APPROVE MINUTES

4.01: Approve Meeting Minutes Dated August 20, 2018

Motion by Board Member Fetterley and seconded by Board Member Covart to approve the regular meeting minutes dated August 20, 2018.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Fetterley, Covart, Bernard, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Hiatt and Madison.

5. POLICY BOARD BUSINESS

5.01: Review Updated Alternative Urbanwide Area Review (AUAR) for The COR (Project No. 18-112)

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that in 2003, the City Council adopted Resolution #03-01-012 ordering an Alternative Urbanwide Area Review (AUAR) for The COR (formerly known as Ramsey Town Center). An AUAR is an environmental review process that can be used in lieu of more traditional environmental reviews such as Environmental Assessment Worksheets (EAW) and Environmental Impact Statements (EIS), as long as the geographic area is covered by an acceptable Comprehensive Plan. When considering The COR as a whole, it is likely that a series of individual projects in short sequence could trigger the need for an EAW. For example, the recent project known as Affinity at Ramsey likely would have triggered the need for an EAW based on the number of projects approved in the past number of years.

City Planner Anderson reported that WSB has completed a draft update of The COR AUAR. There have been no new findings of threatened or endangered species (based on the Natural Heritage Information System). There have been no significant deviations or changes to the overall vision or development plan for The COR since the last update. The document has been updated with all development within The COR since the last update and the Mitigation Plan has also been updated as well.

City Planner Anderson stated that ultimately, Staff will be bringing forward this planning document for City Council authorization to distribute the updated AUAR to the requisite agencies. The updated AUAR also needs to be submitted to the Environmental Quality Board (state agency) for a ten (10) day comment period. Upon completion of the comment period, the City will need to develop responses to any comments received and add them as an appendix to the document. It then must go back to City Council for final adoption.

Chairperson Valentine expressed appreciation to staff for the thorough description, as this is a complicated process.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau agreed that this is a complicated process. He asked if there was any discussion to expand the boundary of the AUAR to include the Bunker Lake industrial park.

City Planner Anderson explained that could be considered but noted that if the boundaries are changed, that may trigger the need to start a new AUAR rather than simply completing an update. He noted that the Bunker Lake industrial park did not trigger the need for an AUAR and therefore it was not contemplated to expand the boundaries.

Board Member Covart referenced the example of Little Duke's and their underground storage and asked what the City would do to help the company implement the sensors mentioned.

City Planner Anderson replied that would be a discussion. He stated that may have already occurred and simply was not recorded in the inspection process. He noted that the tank storage is double walled and explained that the sensor would simply be another element of safety that could alert to a leak. He stated that staff is looking through documentation to determine if the

sensor was installed and if not, staff would then talk to the business owner to determine how that sensor could be retrofit.

Motion by Board Member Covart and seconded by Board Member Bernard to recommend that the City Council authorize staff to distribute The COR AUAR update for comments.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Covart, Bernard, Fetterley, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Hiatt and Madison.

5.02: Consider 2019 Municipal Recycling Funding Request

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that each year, Anoka County receives funding from the State of Minnesota pursuant to Minnesota Statute 115A.557. The County distributes these funds, known as SCORE (Select Committee On Recycling and the Environment) funds, to municipalities within the county. In 2019, the allocation includes a base of \$10,000 plus \$5.00 per household, which would place Ramsey with a base allocation of \$55,390 for 2019. He explained that the funding is intended to help municipalities achieve their recycling goals as established by the Anoka County Board of Commissioners. Ramsey's 2019 recycling goal, established by Anoka County, is 2,777 tons (which is an increase of 81 tons from 2018). The goal is based on 215 pounds per person. The City of Ramsey has traditionally used these funds to promote recycling and waste reduction education and awareness, notifying new residents of the recycling program components, to offset costs of the spring and fall recycling day events and other collection events/opportunities, and to fund the recycling coordinator position, whose duties are a component of the City Planner position.

City Planner Anderson provided background information on the recent changes in the recycling market.

City Planner Anderson stated that in addition to the base allocation, there are four broad funding categories where additional funds can be requested: drop-off, general enhancement, organics, and an open-grant option for general program expansion. Staff is proposing to request an additional \$2,700 for the Summer Recycling Event (drop-off), \$12,800 for general enhancement (covers parks recycling, event promotion, etc.), and \$1,600 for the organics program. While there is the potential for up to \$20,000 for the open-grant option, it is clearly not intended to be long-term funding and therefore staff has not included that in the current request.

Chairperson Valentine stated that the future of plastics recycling is in doubt and asked if that may bring back interest in incineration rather than landfills.

City Planner Anderson stated that the GRE facility in Elk River is closing sometime in 2019, as it was losing funds in the operation. He was unsure that incineration would be a long-term option. He stated clarified that he does not think plastics recycling is going away, but simply needs to be refocused with better education on what is recyclable. He stated that there are markets for the plastics if the contaminates can be taken out on the user end.

Board Member Fetterley asked if increased education of the public will allow the City to continue to meet the recycling tonnage goals or whether residents would be less likely to recycle in fear for doing it wrong.

City Planner Anderson replied that Ramsey residents do a great job recycling. He stated that in speaking with ACE Solid Waste, the large amount of contaminants are not coming from the Ramsey routes. He acknowledged that it is a fine line as you do not want to discourage people from recycling but simply emphasize recycling the correct materials rather than “wish-cycling”. He explained that the mindset for years has been that if you think something can be recycled, put in the recycling whereas the new motto is “when in doubt, throw it out”.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that it is clear that recycling is becoming more complicated because of the changing markets, which is changing the way people look at recycling. He believed that it is important for the EPB to make a statement on recycling.

Chairperson Valentine agreed that it is important to be clear on the stance of the EPB to continue to support recycling and seek additional funding in order to continue to be successful. He stated that this is a key juncture in the recycling world.

Commissioner Fetterley agreed that it is important to continue to focus on this topic. She thanked staff for bringing this request forward for the City to request additional funds to continue the recycling efforts effectively.

City Planner Anderson stated that recycling is still extremely important and beneficial, there are just changes occurring right now. He stated that there are benefits to having a successful recycling program, which Ramsey has had for many years. He stated that it will become more challenging in the future to meet the increasing goals in the changing market. He noted that a portion of the additional funds being requested will be to facilitate the summer recycling event, which continues to increase in participation. He stated that there will just be an emphasis on providing clear educational messaging to the participants in the program on what is recyclable.

Jade Moore, 8277 155th Lane, referenced a statement made by City Planner Anderson regarding a barrier of language and asked for additional clarification.

City Planner Anderson replied that the barrier is that English is the second language of some residents of multi-family apartments and therefore the educational material may be more difficult to understand. He stated that the use of pictures is being contemplated to make it easier to understand. He stated that the City does have access to documents in different languages through Anoka County. He stated that Ramsey does not have the same ratio of multi-family apartment housing that other communities in Anoka County may have. He stated that he is not aware of the language barrier being a large problem in Ramsey but is aware that the documents are available because of the need in other communities.

Motion by Chairperson Valentine and seconded by Board Member Covart to recommend that the City Council authorize staff to submit the 2019 Recycling Funding Request to Anoka County.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Chairperson Valentine, Board Member Covart, Bernard, Fetterley, and Moore. Voting No: None. Absent: Board Member Hiatt and Madison.

6. BOARD / STAFF INPUT

- **Fall Recycling Day Recap**

City Planner Anderson provided an update on the fall recycling event, which was held on September 29th. He stated that it was another successful recycling event and noted that in 2019 it is planned to have spring, summer and fall recycling events, pending the approval of funding from Anoka County.

- **Reminder of Connexus Energy's Invitation for their Solar Array Project (Presentation and Tour)**

City Planner Anderson reported that Connexus Energy is planning to have a celebration for their solar array project on Thursday, October 25th from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. He noted that the event will begin with a presentation at the Connexus Energy office in Ramsey and will then transition to a tour of the solar array project site in Ramsey. He stated that RSVPs are desired and asked any interested Board Members to advise staff if they would like to attend.

Board Member Covart asked if the event is open to the general public or just the Board Members.

City Planner Anderson stated that the City received a specific invitation for the City Council, Boards and Commissions and therefore did not believe the event was open to the general public.

7. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Board Member Bernard and seconded by Chairperson Valentine to adjourn the meeting.

The meeting adjourned at 7:23 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Chris Anderson
City Planner

ATTEST:

JoAnn Shaw
Community Development Secretary

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.

Environmental Policy Board (EPB)

5. 1.

Meeting Date: 11/19/2018

By: Chris Anderson, Community Development

Information

Title:

Discussion on Topsoil Requirement and Potential Amendments or Alternatives (Project No. 146)

Purpose/Background:

As the Board will recall, a couple months ago, a general discussion on the City's topsoil standard occurred. The impetus for that discussion (and this case) is a request from a developer/builder that the City revise the topsoil standard by eliminating the specification for Premium Topsoil Borrow. The request identified two negative effects of the current topsoil requirement. First, that the topsoil is doing too good of a job in terms of holding water. They acknowledge that many homeowners are not adjusting their irrigation systems to account for the topsoil and are actually contributing to the problem. Secondly, they identified price as a concern compared to the cost of 'regular' black dirt.

As part of that initial discussion, Staff was asked to gather information on what similar peer communities (with similar sandy soils) require and what the purpose of the requirement was (to see if it is an apples to apples comparison). Additionally, Staff has attempted to compile water usage data for the City over the past ten (10) years or so in an attempt to assess the effectiveness of the current topsoil requirement to reduce water usage.

Observations/Alternatives:

Review of Peer Communities Topsoil Requirements

Staff contacted multiple communities that are all situated within the Anoka Sand Plain (these would, in general terms, all have sandy 'base' or native soils with less water holding capabilities). A summary of each communities' standards is attached to this case. Based on this review, it is clear that Ramsey has a much more stringent approach to topsoil, from how it is defined to our inspection process, than other communities. It seems that communities that have adopted a topsoil requirement have done so with an intention of reducing demand on groundwater while also assisting with vegetation establishment.

Cost Comparison

Staff has also obtained cost estimates from the builder/developer making the request and others regarding the cost of topsoil meeting the City's current specification and 'normal' black dirt. The information helps illustrate the cost added to an individual lot (and therefore, passed on to the home buyer) to comply with this standard. As a reminder, the topsoil requirement is applicable to any lot (commercial/residential/industrial/institutional) being developed with a new, principal building, regardless of whether it is connected to the municipal water system or not. These costs are representative of the typical lot sizes being developed currently.

Approximate Lot Size	Estimated Cost of Premium Topsoil Borrow	Estimated Cost of Regular Black Dirt	Price Difference
6,000 sq. ft. (0.15 acres)	\$3,690	\$2,250	\$1,440
10,800 sq. ft. (0.25 acres)	\$5,740	\$3,500	\$2,240
43,560 sq. ft. (1 acre)	\$10,660	\$6,500	\$4,160

108,900 sq. ft. (2.5 acres)	\$19,000	Unknown	Unknown
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Alternatives to Premium Topsoil Specification

As has been noted, the present request is not to entirely eliminate the topsoil requirement, but rather to modify it to something more consistent with surrounding communities. This would still provide improved soil characteristics (compared to the native/base soil), but at a more cost effective rate. This could also help eliminate some of the undesirable characteristics that many yards have exhibited, such as oversaturated, spongy/soggy ground (which is also a result of over watering, not just simply due to the topsoil).

Advances in irrigation technology over the past decade have made it easier and more cost effective to conserve water through better sprinkling habits. Smart controllers can be connected via the internet to local weather information, weather stations, historical precipitation data, etc. to assist with reducing unnecessary waterings. Also, soil moisture sensors, often available for \$150 or less, can be utilized in different parts of a yard (with different growing conditions) to ensure that the irrigation system doesn't turn on that zone unless there is insufficient moisture in the soil. The message coming out of the U of MN's Extension team is that water efficient irrigation systems, not new turf varieties or soil amendments, have become the most cost effective means to reducing non-consumptive water usage (e.g. irrigation).

City Code now requires any new irrigation system to have a water efficient technology. However, there are many systems out there that could be retrofitted. This comes at a higher cost than 'upgrading' a new system. The City could (should?) consider developing a rebate program that may incentivize owners of existing irrigation systems to retrofit them with newer technology. Additionally, a simple 'irrigation system tune-up' could also be incentivized to not only ensure that a system is running properly with no leaks or malfunctioning parts, but also, hopefully, results in some homeowner education about how their system works. The city of Elk River, through their municipal utilities division, has an established rebate program that could be used as a model. It may also be possible to find grand funds that could be utilized to establish and offer these rebate programs.

Weather/Precipitation/Landscape

The largest factor in water usage has always been and will likely always be the weather, and more specifically, precipitation. That's one of the greatest advantages of the new technologies now available for irrigation systems, weather can be and is factored into the programmed run-times. The water usage data does show a clear correlation between reduced precipitation and increased water usage.

Additionally, canopy cover can also play a significant role in watering needs of a yard. Shady portions of a lawn require much less water than sunny portions. Again, options such as soil moisture sensors placed in differing growing conditions within a yard, can significantly reduce water usage by restricting which zones actually run on a scheduled day/time.

Recommendation

While topsoil is a beneficial addition, both for water conservation and vegetation establishment, the cost difference of an engineered soil compared to a more standard black dirt is significant. Focusing more on the irrigation systems and water efficient technologies rather than engineered soils, along with additional educational information on irrigation systems, should be as effective as the current standard regarding reducing demand on groundwater. It would certainly be accomplished at a lower cost to the future homeowner (and possibly current homeowners if a rebate program were implemented). Thus, Staff would recommend proceeding with an Ordinance Amendment to modify the definition of topsoil consistent with other peer communities (such as "black dirt composed of unconsolidated material, largely undecomposed organic matter with no more than 35% sand").

Funding Source:

This case is being handled as part of Staff's regular duties.

Action:

Motion to direct Staff to prepare an Ordinance Amendment to revise the definition of topsoil.

Attachments

Current Topsoil Specification

EPB Meeting Minutes Dated August 20, 2018

Comparison of Topsoil Requirements of Surrounding Communities

Request from Capstone Homes

Form Review

Inbox

Tim Gladhill

Form Started By: Chris Anderson

Final Approval Date: 11/19/2018

Reviewed By

Tim Gladhill

Date

11/19/2018 07:28 AM

Started On: 11/14/2018 03:57 PM

Table 3877-3 Premium Topsoil Borrow		
Requirement	Minimum	Maximum
Material Passing 2.0 mm (#10) Sieve	95%	--
Clay	10%	25%
Silt	25%	60%
Sand & Gravel	25%	60%
Organic Matter	5%	15%
pH	6.0	7.1
Soluble Salts	--	0.15 siemens/m 1.5 mmho/cm

5.02: Review Request for an Amendment to the Current Topsoil Standard

City Planner Anderson presented the staff report. He stated that the City has received a written request to consider an amendment to the current topsoil requirement. Presently, the issuance of any Building Permit for a new principal building (residential and commercial/industrial buildings) triggers installation of four inches of topsoil meeting MnDOT's Premium Topsoil Borrow specification, across all disturbed areas not otherwise improved with impervious surfaces (e.g. building, walkways, driveways, etc.). Staff has not prepared any draft ordinance amendment but did want to initiate a discussion with the EPB about what information will be helpful for a future discussion on this topic. He stated that staff received an email this afternoon from PSD, which he provided to the Board prior to the meeting, and stated that PSD would like to leave the topsoil requirement as is and focus more on education on the homeowner level. He stated that part of the concern is that perhaps the first homeowner is aware of the topsoil requirement, however when the property changes ownership the information is not passed on to future owners. He stated that staff continues to research water conservation techniques and it is becoming apparent that the most effective water conservation tool is the smart sensor technology for inground irrigation systems.

Board Member Covart asked what would happen if there is not enough topsoil.

City Planner Anderson stated that presently the City's engineering staff does the topsoil inspection and provided additional details. He stated that if the sod is laid prior to inspection the builder would need to roll back the sod to allow for the inspection.

Board Member Fetterley stated that she would like to see comparisons from other communities. She stated that as a recent homeowner in the community they installed a smart sensor without knowing the requirement of the City. She stated that they have seen a decrease in their water bill after installing that technology. She noted that if builders are installing the smart sensor, there should not be an issue with over watering going forward. She agreed that education of existing homeowners and with the change in ownership of property would be helpful but noted that if the smart sensor is installed that should prevent over watering.

City Planner Anderson stated that the irrigation amendment was done more recently and agreed that the City should not see the issue as much moving forward. He stated that the cost to meet the topsoil requirement for the smaller lots is about \$5,000, while the cost to meet the requirement for larger rural parcels would be higher.

Board Member Madison asked for details on the Capstone request.

City Planner Anderson stated that Capstone is aware of the City requirement. He stated that the City has created a list of pre-approved soil suppliers. He stated that if an alternate supplier is used, the developer/resident would have to have the soil tested.

Board Member Madison asked where the soggy yards are occurring for Capstone.

City Planner Anderson stated that could occur in swale areas that are lower in elevation. He provided additional information on the grading requirement of the City.

Board Member Madison referenced a relation of flat lots that use sump pumps and soggy lawns and asked if there is a requirement for drain tile for flat lots.

City Planner Anderson replied that the City does not have that requirement.

Board Member Fetterley asked if there are unintended consequences that could arise from changing the topsoil requirement.

City Planner Anderson stated that Capstone is not requesting to eliminate the topsoil requirement but is asking to eliminate the MnDOT certified soil requirement and instead use a standard topsoil mix. He stated that standard topsoil would have between one and three percent organic material while the City's specification requires at least five percent organic material. He stated that the perception could be that additional watering is required but did not believe homeowners think along those lines. He stated that in relation to erosion control, that is considered to be met once sod is installed or if grass seed is used, once grass has been fully established. He did not think a change in the topsoil specification would result in greater erosion concerns.

Board Member Fetterley stated that if there is less quality soil, people may water more frequently or not water enough to maintain grass/sod.

City Planner Anderson stated that multiple professors at the University of Minnesota have said that grass does not truly die, as it only goes dormant and once watered again, most will start growing again.

Chairperson Valentine referenced the regulations of neighboring communities and whether they have a soil type specification as well as depth.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that he would obtain that information from neighboring communities prior to the next time this topic is discussed, specifically what the definition of topsoil is, the amount of topsoil that is required, and the manner in which topsoil is required to be applied. He was unsure that any other communities have identified the premium topsoil specification that Ramsey has identified.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau asked if there would be a different definition of base soil for neighboring communities, specifically whether their base soil is also sand or perhaps clay.

Chairperson Valentine agreed that it would be important to compare other communities that have a similar sandy base soil that Ramsey has.

City Planner Anderson stated that Plymouth has clay soils and therefore comparing their requirements to Ramsey's would be like comparing apples to oranges. He agreed that it would be more important to focus on areas like Elk River and Andover as those are similarly growing communities that also have sandy soils. He stated that although Blaine is more developed, they also have sandy soils and perhaps that would also be a good comparison.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau stated that it would also be interesting to find out the other communities' orientation on water conservation. He noted that Ramsey is very orientated towards water conservation and if other communities do not share that concern, they may not have the same requirements. He stated that it is his understanding that Ramsey is handling the majority of the recharge of the aquifer while the discharge is being shared.

Board Member Fetterley referenced the educational standpoint and stated that perhaps there could be brainstorming on the information that would need to be shared. She noted that there are different areas of the community, noting that her property has no topsoil and is mostly sand and some property owners have City water while others have well water and therefore there would need to be different educational information shared to different property owners.

City Planner Anderson stated that the Board previously developed a water conservation toolbox that could be updated and perhaps there could be discussion of time appropriate information shared in the City newsletter and on the website for this topic. He stated that part of the challenge is that the City can make the information available but cannot make people read the information. He stated that perhaps there would be an opportunity to include information in the new resident mailing and packet that is made available to new residents.

Board Member Fetterley asked if the Board could target the irrigation companies that work in this area to assist in education of homeowners. She stated that her family has an irrigation company they work with that actually suggested the smart sensor.

City Planner Anderson stated that existing irrigation systems are not subject to the smart sensor requirement and explained that the intention was that any new systems installed would need to have the sensor.

City Council Liaison stated that the City's Communication Specialist could also possibly assist in the educational component.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that he would likely be working with the Communication Specialist on the educational components.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau asked the timeline of when this would move forward to the Council.

City Planner Anderson reviewed the potential schedule for this item noting that perhaps this would move to the Council in November or December. He stated that if there is any change, his intent would be to implement the change prior to the construction season in 2019.

City Council Liaison LeTourneau stated that he will appreciate the input of the Board Members at the future discussions in order to better represent their opinion when this does move forward to the City Council.

City Planner Anderson confirmed that to be his intention. He noted that the intent tonight was simply to introduce the discussion to the Board and obtain input on what the Board would find helpful for the next discussion.

Board Member Moore stated that it would be helpful to have the information from the City Engineer on the University of Minnesota session he attended regarding topsoil and watering.

Topsoil Info from Peer Communities

Blaine

Definition: *Top soil*: Black dirt composed of unconsolidated material, largely undecomposed organic matter with no more than 35% sand. Requires 4 inches. They do inspect but simply lift up sod to verify that topsoil is there. They do not require any documentation regarding the material. The requirement is for both vegetative growth and water conservation.

Andover

Definition: "organic/black topsoil" shall be defined as soil/dirt that has sufficient amounts of organic material to establish a suitable foundation for vegetative growth. The topsoil should contain no more than thirty five percent (35%) sand content.

Requires 4 inches and is encouraged to be tilled in with the existing grade for optimal growth. Do not require load tickets nor do they routinely do any inspections. Originally implemented for water conservation and turf establishment purposes. Only required for lots on municipal sewer and water.

Elk River

Doesn't have a topsoil requirement. ERMU attempted to incorporate into City Code several years ago to assist with water conservation, but it was not well received (presumably by the community/developers) and therefore was never adopted.

Big Lake

Definition: Black dirt consisting of not more than 35% sand. Requires 4 inches across all disturbed areas. There is a basic landscape inspection that is done to verify that the yard is established, trees have been planted, and topsoil was installed. No documentation is required regarding the soil material. Likely established to reduce demand on groundwater for lawn maintenance (water conservation).

Ramsey

Looking back at the cases initially prepared for consideration in 2008, the original proposed definition of topsoil was "Black dirt composed of unconsolidated material, with a sufficient amount of organic matter to establish a suitable foundation for vegetative growth. The composition of topsoil shall be limited to no more than thirty-five percent (35%) sand content."



Tim Gladhill
Community Development Director
City of Ramsey

July 24th 2018

Mr. Gladhill,

I'm writing to address the city policy regarding the spreading of black dirt on new construction lots at the time of construction.

The current policy requires homebuilders to place four inches of D.O.T. certified black dirt on all sodded areas of the lot. We understand that this certified dirt is an attempt to reduce irrigation need/usage and ultimately decrease water consumption in the city.

The builders are experiencing two negative effects of this policy:

1. The certified black dirt does hold more water, in fact it holds water like a sponge, and the residents often call us to complain about spongy or highly saturated areas of their yard that never dry out. We've experienced problems especially in drainage swales and lower elevation areas of yards remaining wet most of the time.
2. The cost of the certified black dirt is \$425 per load versus \$250 per load for regular black dirt that we use in all the other communities we build in. The typical lot uses approximately 8-10 loads of dirt at \$1400-\$1750 more per yard than what it costs in other communities.

The reason for the saturated, soggy lots is that people run their sprinkler systems too much. They typically set them to keep their lawn green in the driest, hottest months but they don't adjust for cooler days, or upcoming rain.

We would like to propose an alternative that we feel will be more affective at reducing water consumption, provide a better quality yard for the resident, at a lower cost for us and ultimately the resident.

Capstone Homes would like to propose that as an acceptable alternative in lieu of the current certified black dirt requirement that the builder provide an in-ground sprinkler system equipped with a Wi-Fi smart control system and four inches of regular black dirt on the entire sodded area of the lot. Enclosed is a brochure for an example of this product. The product would be installed during construction of the house, and the customer would be educated at the time of final walk through. Capstone homes will do

the system set-up so it is pre-programmed when the resident takes possession of the home and gets internet service

We ask you to consider our request and to reach out to us for further information if desired.

Our goal is a win-win-win for the city, builder and the future residents.

Thank you for your consideration,

Ben Minks

President



Hydrawise-Ready Products:

Controllers: Hunter's touchscreen residential controllers are your best choice for efficient and reliable watering.



HC Flow Meter: Flow meters allow you to detect broken pipes, spray heads and faulty wiring or valves.

Schedule an appointment with your local irrigation contractor to see how you can maximize your system's performance to save both water and money.

 **Hydrawise™**
The Most Complete Wi-Fi Irrigation Control System





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Manage from Anywhere

Gain convenient system access anytime from your smartphone, tablet, or the web for a range of remote management capabilities. Remote monitoring allows you to conveniently view, manage, and monitor your irrigation controller.



Save Water

Advanced, web-based climate monitoring uses local forecast data including temperature, precipitation, wind speed, and other factors to automatically adjust your irrigation system to area weather conditions, ensuring plants remain healthy — rain or shine.

No more wasted water. No more dead plants.



Protect Your Landscape

Designed to manage different landscapes across various climate zones, Hydrowise™ prevents over- and under-watering to ensure your plants get exactly what they need to remain healthy and flourishing.



Add Your Contractor

Built-in flow rate and valve monitoring instantly alert your professional landscape contractor in the event of a problem, so you can rest assured that your outdoor living space remains protected and your irrigation system is in good hands.

“Every summer, our water bills are over \$100 just to keep our small grass area and other plants green. Since installing the Hydrowise unit, our water bill has gone from \$137 to \$74!”

- Darlene - Las Vegas, Nevada



Discover Awesomeness at hydrowise.com