

From: Hahm, Michael (CI-StPaul) <michael.hahm@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Sent: Friday, February 25, 2022 1:51 PM

To: Messer, Alice (CI-StPaul) <alice.messer@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Hussong, Brett (CI-StPaul) <brett.hussong@ci.stpaul.mn.us>

Cc: Yang, Nelsie (CI-StPaul) <Nelsie.Yang@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Thao, Dai (CI-StPaul) <dai.thao@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Tincher, Jaime (CI-StPaul) <Jaime.Tincher@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; Russell, Tom (CI-StPaul) <tom.russell@ci.stpaul.mn.us>; rep.kaohly.her@house.mn; rep.jay.xiong@house.mn; Paul xiong <paulvxiong@gmail.com>; founghawj@yahoo.com; sen.foung.hawj@senate.mn

Subject: Phalen Friendship Garden

To: Alice Messer, Brett Hussong, Phalen China Friendship Garden Society, Hmong Advisory Committee

Cc: CM Yang, CM Thao, Sen Hawj, Rep Xiong, Rep Her, President Paul Xiong Hmong 18 Council, Deputy Mayor Jaime Tincher

I am writing to memorialize my directions related to this project in my final week as Parks and Recreation Director for this important project.

I start by offering my sincere thanks and appreciation for your work on and service to this project. It is a project that I am proud of. It is a project of great importance and ambition. What started as a more limited Changsha sister city project, took on a more broad mission to reflect both the Chinese and Hmong cultures and their significance the community of Saint Paul, Minnesota, USA. There was much engagement, planning, research, decision making and fundraising to create what is in place today. I am grateful for this progress and partnership of all of the stakeholders. As a whole, I believe what has been established to date is beautiful.

At this point in time, there are known divided perspectives regarding the choices representing written Hmong language and dialects within the project. These divided perspectives are unfortunate. In assessing this, it is clear to me that not all people agree on the choices made, yet it is clear to me these choices were made with good intentions and a rationale. It is also clear that not all people agree on if or how these differences can be resolved. I have also concluded that despite all of the work and research performed by this group and others to chart the best course for this project, that some important voices in the community were not aware of the project work, and others were surprised by the final product. Specifically, the Hmong 18 Council feels they were not fully aware of the project work to date, and I am compelled to improve that.

Before arriving at these instructions for your future work, I specifically sought the counsel and advice from CM Nelsie Yang and CM Dai Thao respected local elected officials of Hmong descent, and the respected leadership of the Hmong 18 council. I also reached out directly and indirectly to other elected leaders, community leaders and academics. I appreciate their generosity and accept their ideas with the humility of my perspective, and also understanding my role to clarify a best path forward at this important time. While unlikely that this path forward is the exact choice of any one individual, it is my belief that it respectfully meets the goals for everyone in the best way possible. I am grateful that my communication forward has understanding and support from CM Thao and CM Yang.

As the project work continues:

- 1) Planning and discussions should focus on the future phases of the project. This presumes that the work completed to date, including the choices for Hmong language and dialect will remain as they have been installed.
- 2) Continuing project engagement is essential and should be expanded with additional effort. Communication between the project advisory council and the Hmong 18 Council should be formalized and recorded in the project record. This should avoid any misunderstanding regarding future issues or timeline.
- 3) Future issues of project choice representing the written Hmong language and dialects should specially be fully vetted within community, and formal public feedback sought. This is an essential community commitment, in asking all perspectives to move forward from the project choices made to date.
- 4) Our Parks and Recreation work can be elevated by embedding additional Hmong speaking staff that will be involved as we implement these services.

Again my thanks to you all. It is my hope that for the continued success of this project, and that of the community, we can all support this direction. That will be my request to all stakeholders.

Respectfully, Mike H

Mike Hahm, CPRP, Director

Pronouns: he/him/his

Parks & Recreation

City Hall Annex #400

25 W. 4th Street

Saint Paul, MN 55102

P: 651-266-6409

M: 651-248-0629

michael.hahm@ci.stpaul.mn.us

www.StPaul.gov



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