

## Toni Gage

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**From:** Jennifer Bergman  
**Sent:** Friday, April 22, 2022 10:25 AM  
**To:** Toni Gage  
**Subject:** FW: Charter

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**From:** Mike ODay <moday@ci.brainerd.mn.us>  
**Sent:** Wednesday, April 20, 2022 9:14 AM  
**To:** Jennifer Bergman <jbergman@ci.brainerd.mn.us>; Kelly Bevans <kbevans@ci.brainerd.mn.us>  
**Subject:** Charter

Jennifer,

Please let the following letter serve as my comments regarding the funding of the arboretum in my absence today.

Fellow members of the charter commission, I apologize for my absence. I want to give you all my thoughts on how to answer the question from the council's personnel and finance committee of what we meant by "within the city limits of Brainerd."

In the discussions regarding how to specifically reword the language regarding the half mill levy for what we had already decided to call "an arboretum or greenspace," I recall suggesting that we add in the language "within the city limits of Brainerd." My reasoning for this is that we have an overabundance of existing greenspace already in our city that needs attention, and it is irresponsible for any city government to tax its citizens to pay for any type of project that is:

- #1. Not geographically located within its own well defined boundaries.
- #2. Located within another city.

The Northland Arboretum has penned a letter to the council suggesting that they are and always have been partially in Baxter. That claim would deem any use of funds toward the Northland Arboretum from this discussion a direct violation of the city charter. These funds cannot, and should never fund any type of programs, building improvements, or maintenance that is not within our city limits. I do not know of any buildings or improvements that the Northland Arboretum currently has that are in Brainerd. They have built their main entry, signage, event center, parking lots, gazebo, gardens, trails, etc. all within the city limits of Baxter. Understand that this means that we have taxed Brainerd citizens to pay for buildings and parking lots in the city of Baxter. Does the state of Minnesota provide funding for Wisconsin state parks? Does Baxter provide funding for Brainerd city parks? Then why does Brainerd provide funding for another city? Are we bursting at the seams with funds and can't find anywhere in town to spend money? No. In order to fund the arboretum, and not be a direct violation of the city charter, the Northland Arboretum could theoretically have two options.

1. Go through the lengthy process of annexing its entirety into the city limits of Brainerd.
2. Somehow prove that each and every cent from this levy is being spent on its unimproved and unused property that lies within the city limits of Brainerd.

I'm not sure that the first option is even in the best interest of the city of Brainerd or Baxter, and I don't think that the second option is even possible.

I am a fan of the Northland Arboretum, and I appreciate everything that they have to offer for the citizens of Baxter, and the entire area. I am simply not in favor of spending tax dollars taken from the citizens of Brainerd on projects that are clearly in Baxter or any other city for that matter. Our charter supports my thoughts. Please recommend to the

personnel and finance committee that funding the Northland Arboretum would directly violate the Brainerd City Charter.

Thank you,

Mike O'Day

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