

**CITY COUNCIL/STAFF RETREAT
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council/Staff Strategic Planning Session on Monday and Tuesday, January 24 and 25, 2011, in the Lake Itasca Room at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Bob Ramsey
Councilmember Randy Backous
Councilmember David Elvig
Councilmember David Jeffrey (arrived 4:34 p.m.)
Councilmember Colin McGlone
Councilmember Jason Tossey
Councilmember Jeff Wise

Also Present: City Administrator Kurt Ulrich
Deputy City Administrator Heidi Nelson
Finance Officer Diana Lund
Director of Public Works Brian Olson
Police Chief James Way
Fire Chief Dean Kapler

INTRODUCTION

City Administrator Ulrich welcomed everyone to the annual Council/Staff Strategic Planning Session at 3:04 p.m. and explained the agenda and the exercises for the benefit of the new Councilmembers. He asked Council to come up with ground rules. They are as follows:

- 1) Do not make any personal attacks and don't take anything personal.
- 2) Stay focused/on track
- 3) Do not disrupt the agenda – no side meetings

If there is something you wish to talk about and it is not on the agenda, place it on the “parking lot”. Mr. Ulrich read the objectives and the vision and talked about how the vision came about. He read the values. Councilmember Backous inquired if all of this information was on the City's website to which Mr. Ulrich replied it is. Councilmember Elvig noted that there was a lot of talk about citizen involvement – he felt these were good points. Mayor Ramsey stated that the only issue with that is we are having difficulty filling our Boards and Commissions right now. Mayor Ramsey stated we have better avenues now for communicating with residents. Councilmember McGlone stated we are doing as much as we can to involve people. Councilmember Elvig commented that there has been talk about a difference of opinion with the City Council and citizens may not want to serve on the Commissions. He suggested that Board memberships be placed on the parking lot.

Mr. Ulrich explained that the session objectives are as follows:

- To review progress and disappointments from previous year
- To learn from our successes and failures
- To identify and discuss opportunities over the next 1 – 2 years
- To develop an updated goals program
- To Prioritize goals
- To develop preliminary action plans for the highest priority goals
- To enhance the working relationship among participants

Mr. Ulrich continued that the vision and values will determine our actions and goals. The vision reads as follows: Without compromising private property rights and the needs of future generations, Ramsey will evolve through citizen driven, collaborative processes that respect the balance and connectivity between its unique urban, rural and natural environments. Values include:

- Encourage walkability through pedestrian friendly neighborhoods and transportation.
- Maintain landowner rights.
- Employ careful foresight in city planning that includes citizen review, reliance on peer-reviewed science, and comprehensive data collection and analysis.
- Involve all citizens in decisions that impact their lives, property and neighborhoods through the use of a facilitated process such as collaborative decision-making.
- Embrace a people-centered, long-term perspective that nurtures neighborhood and community interactions and meets the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs.
- Preserve unique natural resources for the community, its residents and future developments.
- Attract and sustain businesses that serve the whole community.

Mr. Ulrich stated that what we do will determine what we think we are. He introduced the first exercise.

Exercise 1: What business are we in. The group broke into smaller groups – listed ideas – then each read aloud their ideas and they were discussed. They talked about common themes such as providing for the health, safety and welfare and, within the Constitution, we are here to protect life, liberty and property. There needs to be a balance of the needs of the public while protecting all rights of citizens – a balance of needs and rights. We need to provide and maintain infrastructure, creating an environment for economic prosperity. It was pointed out that the actions the Council took to buy property were to protect the public.

Mr. Ulrich presented information on the 2010 strategic goal categories and gave the status of each one.

Development and Marketing: A lengthy discussion ensued relating to RALF properties and if the funding was still available – would we buy more properties. The overall feeling was that it was an advantage to be ahead of the game. The “recycled” community center was discussed as well as possible community center partners such as the Y, churches, private . . . Discussion also ensued about green construction and what we, as a City encourage.

Transportation: Discussion ensued relating to trails for snowmobiles, go-carts, etc. They talked about “complete” streets and about connection of 167th Avenue. Mr. Ulrich gave an update on the funding for the rail station.

Housing: Council received the status of this goal – and talked about development in the “Town Center” area as well as 167th Avenue/Highway #47 areas. It was noted it may be worth it to do another master plan for that area – look at a mixture of housing. They talked about executive type housing – Ramsey has a lot of amenities – we can incent executive type housing.

Budget & Finance: Roads, parks and trails are on hold until the street study comes back.

Policies/Programs: Staff will continue to work on performance standards.

2010 Accomplishments: Department of Motor Vehicles housed at City Hall, VA Clinic, Allina Clinic, Acapulco, design build bridge, TIF District, plowing streets during a snow storm, park projects – boat ramp, progress for rail, Flaherty & Collins Apartments, Suite Living, elimination of rental licenses, water tower, school zoned sidewalk, the boardwalk, The COR – marketing – ICSC, added Economic Development position, maintained business services, future planning for parking ramp, etc., kept our tax rate constant without reducing services, going paperless, AgendaQuick, new *Ramsey Resident*, website, upgrade to Bunker Lake Boulevard, talked down some RALF properties, redesign of Dysprosium, repaving of dirt roads, Ute/151st, Lake Itasca Room, good job governing the City, civil election, and reasonable governance.

Councilmember Jeffrey arrived – 4:34 p.m.

Lessons Learned: Proving good stewardship to the public, worked harder legislatively and continue to do that – do not take foot off the gas, do not take no for an answer, number of public hearings, do not take relationship for granted, stay connected, stay involved, do not wait for anything, creativity – thinking outside the box, do not be afraid to play hardball, understanding our strengths better, pushing/taking advantage of our strengths, capitalize on our network in keeping public better informed, embrace technology, clear communication to the public, and Mayor’s Town Hall meetings.

10-minute break: 4:45 to 4:55 p.m.

Disappointments in 2010: the press getting out incorrect information, spent more money than we wanted to for the net result – return on investment. A mistake is only a failure if we fail to learn from it.

Lessons Learned: Control media message – provide the media with already written articles.

Mayor Ramsey stated he did not share the same concern about the return on investment. Councilmember Elvig stated that the things we have here are not ours. To date, the money we spend for what we have gotten back is disappointing. Mayor Ramsey stated he is in favor of that – what Mr. Deal has gotten done will increase our value. Councilmember Elvig stated we need to make sure we are clear with our expectations. Mayor Ramsey stated to not get carried away

with our criteria – we could scare people away – too much pressure. Councilmember Elvig stated in order to keep the ball rolling, there has to be some expectations met. He talked about all our investments. Mayor Ramsey stated he feels we are a long way ahead of where he thought we would be. Councilmember McGlone expressed agreement with the Mayor. Councilmember Wise stated he has some of the same apprehensions but when dirt is flying in a few months, he will feel better. Councilmember Jeffrey stated he does share some of the same concerns about front-loading a lot of money into this and he is not in favor of playing developer. He thinks spring will tell the tale of return on investment. He stated he realizes we will never break even on some but some of the other things – Landform, marketing, etc. - these are faucets that need to dry up somewhat. Councilmember Elvig stated he is anxious and concerned but not really disappointed. Mayor Ramsey cautioned you cannot expect this to happen overnight. He is not really disappointed or concerned. Councilmember Tossey stated there are things happening – there is progress. He, too, believed spring will bring a different perspective. People will see that. He thinks it's a sit back and wait and see deal. We will be able to turn off that spicket eventually. The return will eventually come but the market is still terrible.

Councilmember Elvig restated “what have we learned”? “Do we keep going down the same path”? “What do we do now”? Councilmember Wise stated this is when you do spend the money – we need to continue the momentum. Councilmember Elvig suggested maybe we should raise the bar now – take the opportunity to get out to the press. Mayor Ramsey stated he feels we are pushing the market as hard as we can. He added he is almost 100 percent happy.

Councilmember McGlone stated that there has been talk about disappointments. When the room fills up with people objecting to something, this City Council cares.

A lengthy discussion ensued about sidewalks and road construction. It was noted to make sure we have the intestinal fortitude to make things happen. Councilmember Backous talked about the majority of the Council and how for each issue each Councilmember has to vote with our conscience. Councilmember Wise stated he is disappointed when he hears too many times – that's the way it's always been done. Some of that is coming around but it seems slow to change. Councilmember Elvig stated that was the battle cry from several councils. That's been a battle cry for Ramsey for a long time but we continue to raise the bar. How do we balance our entrepreneurship – that's a challenge for staff. Mayor Ramsey stated he did not have too many issues with that but it's a work in progress. He did not like the whole mantra that if one City does it, Ramsey has to also.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that it's good to know what others are doing – good to look at industry standards.

Councilmember Elvig continued with disappointments – we did not follow through or be more aggressive with a big box development. Some of the marketing that came out showed we could support that gold star development. We need to go out and attack. Mr. Ulrich stated that we made efforts to acquire the property to which Councilmember Elvig commented that so far it's a disappointment. Councilmember McGlone stated that with regard to gold star – we reached the \$40 million amount. He added he is courageous, but not ready to spend that kind of money right now. Big Box retail is still in the plan as he understands it. Therefore – he could not understand

that as a disappointment. Mayor Ramsey felt that this was through no lack of effort. Councilmember Elvig stated there are hundreds of big box destination retailers out there. If \$40 million is not what we want to go after, all of Council should make that decision. Mr. Ulrich suggested that the HRA could have that discussion. Mayor Ramsey added that where they were going to go was not driven by our camp – it was driven by them. He thought progress has not been made – they are still chasing them but you cannot chase something that does not want to run. Councilmember Elvig expressed a disappointment that not all the Councilmembers were privy to information.

Parking Lot Item: 1) Communication of COR development – Communication is an issue.

Councilmember Jeffrey stated that when our out of towners are in town, staff should send out a message that they are here and when the meetings will take place.

Councilmember Backous added that on any issue, he wants the same information as everyone else is given.

Director of Public Works Olson stated he is disappointed with us on Dysprosium Street and not getting that done. He learned he needs to be better at explaining the ramifications of certain things.

Councilmember McGlone stated he is disappointed in the lack of enthusiasm for privatizing some of our functions. Mr. Ulrich gave some examples of privatization that has happened – cul-de-sac plowers, electrical inspector and some mowing. Mr. Olson stated that some things have worked. Councilmember Wise stated that if it is something that is done on a one year or two year contract, it's tough for someone in the private sector to gear up for that – purchase equipment, etc. Mr. Ulrich stated we are not getting the bidders – maybe we need to make the contracts for longer periods of time. He added that we need to identify some of these things now.

Mayor Ramsey stated he was disappointed in how long it took to get the City's website going. Some directives the Council gives takes too long and the website is an example of that. Another one he mentioned was the lion's plaque for the shelter at Central Park and he wondered if that was ever done. He added that it's not that he doesn't understand why but maybe some of that stuff needs to be reprioritized. If it's not getting done in a reasonable amount of time then come back to the City Council and let them know there is not time to get this done.

Councilmember Backous suggested that maybe the website is a place to privatize. Then an already overburdened staff would not be burdened with it.

Lessons Learned: Consider privatization to do some of the things talked about – and that staff needs to communicate back to the City Council if they are unable to get something done. Councilmember Elvig suggested maybe a staff update of what's accomplished and what's lagging. Mayor Ramsey added that he does not see this City Council hammering on staff if they do not have time to get something done. Councilmember Elvig stated that he feels this Council

is hard on staff on camera. It needs to be an open policy. Councilmember Wise stated that we get things done differently in the private sector.

The Strategic Planning Session was recessed from 6:00 p.m. to 6:25 p.m. for a dinner break.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the next exercise deals with four questions: What's working well; what's not working well; what's the City doing that it should not be doing; and what's the City currently doing that it should be doing.

Following are the ideas that came out of this exercise:

What's working well?

- Plowing/PW
- Police/Fire
- Finance
- Lean Staff
- Stewardship of Funds
- Communications/PR
- Business Owner Attitude
- Fire Call Out per Station
- Building Inspections
- Most Staff Tasks
- *Ramsey Resident* (public perception of it)

What's not working well?

- Sometimes running the City as a business/conflict w/public purpose
- Time management/Monday Management on as Project Basis
- Communication between Council/Staff/; Council/Landform; Staff/Staff; Staff/Landform
- Inefficient/Ineffective use of Park Space
- Education from Staff re Public Purpose Overall – One on one good; group discussions not as good
- Plowing Sidewalks
- Communication between Staff/Development team
- Planning Manager
- Too Many Parks
- Too Many Dedicated Resources
- Action on Reduction & Reallocation of Park Funds

What's the City not doing that it should be doing?

- Plowing sidewalks – look at map/policy
- Programming events
- Feeding City Council
- Competing w/own business/landowners
- Being a developer

What's the City doing that it should be doing?

- Re-examine all aspects of needs/wants – reasonable expenditures – allocation of resources
- Move COR to market viability so we can get out
- Lower Fees (Incent development)
- Seeking more residential development City-wide
- More actively pursuing Industrial Park opportunity
- Recreational uses of Natural Resources (Not maximizing rivers)
- Exploiting demand for youth sport space – gym space – indoor dome
- Communication of calendars

All the responses were talked about and clarification presented if needed.

The next exercise consisted of listing goals in the five goal categories, which included Budget/Finance, Development/Marketing, Housing, Transportation, Policies/Programs/Services. Following the listing, staff and Council then “dot” prioritized all the goals and following are the ones that received four or more Council dots or at least seven dots total.

Budget/Finance

- Review park programming and potential reallocation of parks
- Implement credit cards and online bill pay
- Review & revise Development Management contract and manage COR expenditures
- Develop TIF 14 tracking plan with regard to fiscal disparities impact
- Establish fund reserve policy

Development/Marketing

- Build on outdoors/sportsmen’s market (e.g. stock pond/lake)
- Develop industrial office park west of Armstrong and South of U.S. Highway #10
- Game Fair – larger City presence. Get City of Ramsey mentioned in more of advertising.
- Old Town Hall relocation
- Review development fees and standards regarding construction
- Construct boat landing at River’s Bend
- Coordinate COR marketing and City marketing
- Create Master Plan 167th Avenue/Highway 47 – plan for redevelopment
- Develop community center/indoor sports complex

Housing

- Proactively recruit residential development and seek builders input
- Seek feedback from developers re process, regulations, standards & fees - research our fees vs. other cities’ fees
- Review City-owned lands and create plan for it

Transportation

- Work with County to eliminate hard channeling in Ramsey and revise County policy
- Seek grant funding
- Develop street reconstruction program and policy

- Complete US 10/ County Road 83 interchange design – pursue funding
- Establish position on TH #47 South of Bunker to Highway #10
- Consider creation of a Transportation Taxing District
- Review plan for US Highway #10 pedestrian overpass and connection with Municipal Center ramp

Policies/Programs/Services

- Maintain current service level
- Look at pilot programs (e.g. volunteer programs – low maintenance)
- Review code enforcement and abatement level of service
- Review Dirt Road Elimination Policy (DREP)
- Create opportunities for snowmobile, four-wheeler & golf cart use
- Review sidewalk plowing policy

Mr. Ulrich explained that the City Clerk will develop a goals list from this exercise and staff will look at developing a work plan for each goal and that will be presented to Council along with updates throughout the year.

Mr. Ulrich announced that we would recess this planning session for now and reconvene at 3:30 tomorrow (January 25).

The Strategic Planning Session recessed at 8:45 p.m., January 24.

The Strategic Planning Session was reconvened at 3:30 p.m. on Tuesday, January 25, 2011, in the Lake Itasca Room of the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey.

Members Present: Mayor Bob Ramsey
 Councilmember Randy Backous
 Councilmember David Elvig
 Councilmember Colin McGlone
 Councilmember Jason Tossey
 Councilmember Jeff Wise

Members Absent: Councilmember David Jeffrey

Also Present: City Administrator Kurt Ulrich
 Deputy City Administrator Heidi Nelson
 Finance Officer Diana Lund
 Director of Public Works Brian Olson
 Police Chief James Way
 Fire Chief Dean Kapler
 City Attorney Bill Goodrich (arrived 5:03 p.m.)
 Development Manager Darren Lazan (arrived 5:15 p.m.)

Mr. Ulrich presented the evening's agenda and described the exercises. He reviewed the goals with the Council.

The group was divided into threes to talk about and write down the steps to accomplish the goals.

Each group reviewed their goals and received input from the other groups.

Mr. Ulrich summarized that this planning session allowed goals to be prioritized and a plan was worked out to accomplish these goals. Staff will add a lead person and a time line to the work plan.

Mayor Ramsey noted that we need to prioritize our work session items and talk about the parking lot issues that came up during these planning sessions.

The Strategic Planning Session adjourned at 6:00 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Minutes taken and drafted by Jo Thieling, City Clerk