

**CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
CITY OF RAMSEY
ANOKA COUNTY
STATE OF MINNESOTA**

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, October 25, 2011, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Deputy City Administrator Heidi A. Nelson
Public Works Director Brian Olson
Police Chief James Way
Senior Planner Tim Gladhill
Parks Supervisor Mark Riverblood
Human Resources Representative Colleen Lasher
Environmental Coordinator Chris Anderson
City Attorney William Goodrich

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ramsey called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:37 p.m.

APPROVE AGENDA

The agenda was approved as submitted.

COUNCIL TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

- 1) **Discussion with Ramsey Lions regarding First Right of Refusal with regard to Lawful Gambling Premise Permits**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

City Attorney advised that no such provision exists in code to permit the Council to give the Ramsey Lion's first right of refusal but an ordinance amendment could be considered that would be fair with other competing organizations. He explained the City needs to assure a process that allows other charitable organizations the right to be considered, such as through a lottery system.

Councilmember Wise asked if an RFP process would work.

City Administrator Ulrich stated a process similar to an RFP could be considered with prescreening and allowing different agencies to compete for the next license location, which would provide equal opportunity.

Councilmember Wise noted one of the grandfathered organizations is not from Ramsey and is Anoka based.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that is correct and the question would be if another Ramsey based organization comes in, would the Council want to give the Ramsey Lions precedence over them.

Councilmember Wise noted the Ramsey Lions are asked to make a donation every time there is an event so he thinks the Ramsey Lions are a partner and should be helped to be successful.

City Administrator Ulrich stated if the Council supports this request, staff will research options available.

Councilmember McGlone thanked the Ramsey Lions for all they do but stated he sees this request is fraught with potential legal trouble because the City cannot discriminate against any organization by geography. He felt this request would result in “un-leveling of the playing field.”

Tom Kujawa, Ramsey Lions Gambling Manager, explained they don't want the right of first refusal but are asking that the non-Ramsey based organizations grandfathered into Ramsey not be allowed to expand and that locations be kept for local charities. He read a portion of Anoka's ordinance, noting it restricts to organizations with a main physical office in the City of Anoka. However, the Ramsey ordinance allows organizations from Ramsey and Anoka. He asked that the ordinance be revised to delete Anoka or new outside organizations from expanding further into Ramsey.

Mayor Ramsey noted that Anoka limits charitable organizations to those having an Anoka address yet Ramsey allows allow Anoka organizations to operate in Ramsey.

Councilmember Tossey asked whether a future organization, such as a Ramsey High School Hockey Association, would be prohibited from charitable gambling in Ramsey if the ordinance is amended as requested.

City Attorney Goodrich advised that such an organization would be permitted in that scenario. He explained that when the Council last visited the ordinance, the Anoka Hockey and Anoka Ice Arena uses were included because they already had locations in Ramsey.

Councilmember Elvig explained at that time, many Ramsey children were involved with Anoka activities so it was thought that Anoka organizations should be able to raise funds for activities that benefit Ramsey's children.

Mayor Ramsey stated people often forget that about one-third of Ramsey's children attend Elk River schools so maybe Elk River should be allowed. He indicated he understands the Lion's issue and request and would not be opposed to striking "City of Anoka" from the ordinance.

Martin Schindel, Ramsey Lions, reviewed City Code provision that grandfathers organizations and asked if one of those grandfathered organizations would be allowed to expand to sites where Ramsey Lions are currently located. He stated Ramsey Lions is primarily concerned with the grandfathering clause and is asking for an amendment similar to Anoka's language.

Councilmember Elvig stated he is willing to restrict expansion of grandfathered organizations if they are not located in Ramsey.

City Attorney Goodrich advised that could be done.

Mr. Kujawa stated if another charity with an office in Ramsey wants to expand into pull-tabs, the Ramsey Lions does not want to stop them. But, the Ramsey Lions would want to stop an organization from outside of Ramsey that wants to expand into pull-tabs. He explained that the Ramsey Lions can only go into an Anoka location after all Anoka organizations say they are not interested. The Ramsey Lions wants our local charities to have that same treatment.

Councilmember McGlone noted that "first right of refusal" is not what the Ramsey Lions are requesting.

Mr. Kujawa agreed and indicated they are suggesting that Ramsey use the Anoka language so an outside organization is not allowed into Ramsey's establishments unless no Ramsey organizations are interested.

Finance Officer Lund clarified that the ordinance passed in 2007 does not include "City of Anoka" in its language. In addition, the Anoka Ice Arena could only qualify to operate in the City of Ramsey by submitting a list of Ramsey students using the arena.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the issue is to give precedence to local organizations. He indicated staff will review the ordinance language to place Ramsey organizations in the first tier and others in a second tier.

Councilmember Backous asked how "local" will be defined since Ramsey's children benefit from Anoka and Elk River sports that may not be officed in Ramsey. He stated he agrees with the concept of first benefiting local charities.

Councilmember Strommen stated the City will have to think it through because an organization without a place of business in Ramsey may still benefit Ramsey's residents. She noted there is also a requirement for spending within trade area. Councilmember Strommen suggested this item come back for consideration after additional staff research.

It was the consensus of the City Council to support the request of the Ramsey Lions and direct staff to review ordinance language as discussed and recommend amendment language.

2) **Discussion Regarding a Ramsey Lions Corner in *Ramsey Resident***

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report and presented the request of Ramsey Lions to have space in the *Ramsey Resident*.

Deputy City Administrator Nelson presented the option of using Patch, an on-line site that provides global coverage for government, athletic, schools, and businesses can sponsor and promote their events. She explained this would be another local media outlet that provides up to the minute coverage by a local Patch reporter that attends meetings and events.

Councilmember Elvig asked about the cost and how it is monitored/edited.

Deputy City Administrator Nelson stated there is no cost to the City to establish the Patch because they glean their revenue from business sponsorships. This is considered media, so it is independent. She reported she had talked with other city administrators who indicated coverage is dependent on the local reporter and editor and how they interact. Some voiced positive and some with less than positive experiences.

Mayor Ramsey stated this case may involve two issues. He stated he has no objection with the Lions request to include an article in the *Ramsey Resident* if it is submitted by the Lions. He suggested if the City receives too many requests, the organizations could be rotated.

Councilmember Strommen expressed concern that a number of organizations may be interested in similar coverage and asked how big the newsletter should get. She also asked whether it should apply to only Ramsey entities or also entities that serve Ramsey's residents.

Mayor Ramsey suggested if the organization is a Ramsey entity that serves the City, there would be no charge.

Councilmember Backous stated he has no issue with including an article from the Ramsey Lions since they are asking but he does see the benefit of Patch farther down the road. He noted that any tie that can put people and organizations together is good thing but understood that including a Lions' article in the *Ramsey Resident* may result in requests from others.

Martin Schindel, Ramsey Lions, explained the Ramsey Lions are not trying to sell anything but want space to make announcements of meetings, services, or classes.

It was the consensus of the City Council to approve the request of Ramsey Lions to have space in each issue of the *Ramsey Resident*.

3) Consider Work Plan for Rum River Retail Node Master Planning Effort

Senior Planner Gladhill reviewed the staff report and described a public involvement process to gain input in the creation of a master plan for the area surrounding the commercial node at 167th Avenue and St. Francis Boulevard.

Mayor Ramsey stated the process proposed by staff is beyond what he had envisioned. He felt that common sense and logic indicates what will survive based on what did not survive on that corner.

Councilmember McGlone stated he shares that sentiment and in theory believed that government should not be involved. He stated the Council's job is to guide and that is done in the Comprehensive Plan. Councilmember McGlone stated the City should not put development plans over private property and noted the market has already told us what to do on that corner.

Councilmember Wise indicated that some planning is necessary but he would have a huge issue with any work being done until every stakeholder has been contacted, including residential. He agreed the market tells us what will work and he would not support a citizen group saying what will work.

Mayor Ramsey stated he clearly remembers the Council telling staff to do something with 167th Avenue but thought that meant getting stakeholders and property owners together in one room and asking what they want to do with their land, possibly trying to facilitate the sale of land, construction of a building, or putting a user on the property.

Councilmember Wise stated he wanted the City to be used as a conduit for a commercial business owner that needs more land, or whatever, and provide a staff contact person. He indicated that while he thinks some planning needs to be done, he would not support a huge process that takes a lot of staff time when the market has not shown interest towards this property.

Councilmember Strommen stated one of the things she has heard is that the corner is an important commercial node and of value to residents who live in that area so it is better optimized. She felt the value of this process was in contacting stakeholders and having a public process to verify how to move it forward and create economic development. She noted the City has been talking about this property since at least 2003 so she felt it was time the Council figure out how to move forward. She indicated it is important to not focus all the City's development energy in The COR and the City should do what it can to maintain other retail nodes that are important to residents. Councilmember Stromman stated she does not know if this full process is warranted but the Council should hear what the stakeholders have to say and open it to the public to hear what role they feel this area should play.

Councilmember Backous stated the area is an eyesore and starting to become an embarrassment. He noted that in January, all agreed it was important to get that commercial node turned around so he does not understand why this area is any different. He felt the City should take considerable effort to push the market; however, agreed with Mayor Ramsey that the City should

first get the parties together and facilitate a meeting. If that does not work then the Council can consider the approach suggested tonight.

Councilmember Wise stated he would want to be careful about how much effort to put into this commercial node. He felt more effort was going into The COR because the City owned it.

Councilmember Strommen noted when the Council started to put effort into The COR, it did not own the property and started through a partnership with the owner.

City Administrator Ulrich pointed out the City is a significant owner in the 167th Avenue and St. Francis Boulevard area with the water tower site and wants to look, long-term, at how it fits into what is being done on the commercial corner. He noted that even with an internal process or public process involving stakeholders, land uses need to be considered so roads can be planned and utilities extensions designed so the City is assured of making good investments. All of those things need to be taken into consideration and that is where a master plan and involvement with stakeholders and property owners would be beneficial.

Mayor Ramsey stated he thinks a small convenience store would be successful but it would need sewer utilities.

Councilmember Elvig stated the whole property is tired, not well laid out, and needs a complete facelift to participate better with its surrounding uses. He agreed that a full-blown process is not the way to go at this time. Councilmember Elvig indicated that at one time there was pushback for other types of housing but now that the retail services are gone, there may not be much pushback.

Councilmember Tossey stated support for limited involvement with stakeholders and property owners and stated concern that “we,” as the government, are more involved than we should be. He felt that the property would have potential once Highway 47 was a viable and safe transportation hub.

It was the consensus of the City Council to not move forward with the proposed work plan and direct staff to scale back the process and provide ideas on what the City can do that would not cost too much.

4) Acknowledge Elmcrest Park’s Building as Local Match for Minnesota DNR Trail Grant Application along T.H. #47

Parks Supervisor Riverblood reviewed the staff report and recommendation to submit a DNR trail grant application including the Elmcrest Park building as the City’s match.

Mayor Ramsey stated the issue is how to pay for the cost of the building.

Kotchi Prosper, Northern Lights Soccer Association, stated they sponsor two tournaments a year that cost \$5,600 for additional tents, portable toilets, etc. and could pledge those dollars. In addition, they could implement a bond for 1,700 Association members. Mr. Prosper explained

that a building at Elmcrest Park would allow them to sponsor a third tournament, raising additional revenue for building maintenance or debt service. He noted that tournament events bring many people into the area that use local restaurants.

Councilmember Backous asked what type of “bonds” the Association uses.

Mr. Prosper explained the “bond” is a volunteer commitment from the Association membership to contribute two hours during the season to help stripe fields, service the building, field marshal, work concessions, do pickups, etc. Last year, the Fall Jamboree brought 6,000 people to the park, resulting in a lot of work for the Association.

Parks Supervisor Riverblood clarified this action would allow staff to submit the grant and, if awarded, the City Council can decide whether to move forward. It is not a commitment to fund the building, but an indication the City intends to build the building at a subsequent time if the award is received.

Mayor Ramsey asked about the cost of the building.

Parks Supervisor Riverblood stated the estimate is \$430,000 because of clay soils and the need for sanitary sewer.

Councilmember Tossey stated he would not oppose including the park building but would not approve final funding unless it could be used year round so another stakeholder, like the Hockey Association, can be included.

Parks Supervisor Riverblood clarified that the estimate is for a full-service building. If a heating system is not included, the cost would be lower.

Councilmember Strommen supported including the park building because it leverages the partnership with the Soccer Association, puts the grant in a better position to leverage State funds for the trail, and includes a number of goals in one package.

Councilmember Elvig supported including the building, noting it would also provide benefit since this is the drop site for snowmobiling so people may be interested in utilizing the building. In addition, a baseball field is proposed.

Mr. Prosper reported that interest in lacrosse is growing and may be another partnership because they are currently using Anoka High School. He indicated the park building could also serve as a meeting place.

Mayor Ramsey asked what the total costs will be if the City is awarded the DNR trail grant.

Parks Supervisor Riverblood responded if a boardwalk is constructed along the wetland north of 167th Avenue on the west side of TH47, it would add \$140,000. However, he thinks the City can get permission to fill the ditch section so that would bring down the cost. He indicated the total

project cost estimate is upwards to \$900,000 but the City could reduce costs if some work can be done in-house.

Mayor Ramsey asked how much the DNR grant is.

Parks Supervisor Riverblood answered it is \$100,000.

Mayor Ramsey stated it would cost \$400,000 to complete the trail plus \$400,000 for the park building. He stated it seems the City is contributing a lot for the trail so this should be a competitive application.

Parks Supervisor Riverblood agreed this is a strong proposal as written because a city can have a match as low as ten percent but the more trail, elements, and synergy to benefit the trail, the better. He noted this trail would provide connection of all neighbors in northern Ramsey.

Mayor Ramsey stated he thinks the City will be awarded the grant if the park building is included so the question is whether the Council is prepared to spend the money on the rest of the trail and building. Or, that may be a decision for a future Council.

Councilmember Tossey stated he thinks Mr. Prosper can get other groups involved to offset building costs and if it can be used year round, he would support including it in the grant proposal.

It was the consensus of the City Council to authorize staff to apply for Minnesota DNR trail grant funding for a significant trail along T.H. #47 with the Elmcrest Park building as part of a local match.

5) Discuss Police Services Proposal Response to City of Nowthen

Police Chief Way reviewed the staff report and noted Nowthen is only seeking coverage four days a week so he does not think Ramsey can compete with a proposal from the Sheriff's Department.

Mayor Ramsey pointed out that the last time Ramsey submitted a proposal to provide police services to Nowthen, the Council tried to cover every penny expended. He explained he had no problem with that approach but asked if there was any benefit to Ramsey in having some police service with Nowthen in the same way Ramsey benefited by contracting for fire services with Nowthen.

Councilmember Elvig asked Police Chief Way for his thoughts about supplying services to Nowthen. He asked if it would be a benefit or difficult.

Police Chief Way stated his opinion that it would not be a good deal for citizens of Ramsey to provide police services to Nowthen because they only want 8 hours of coverage so the other 16 hours a day would be paid by Ramsey's residents. He estimated that 30-34% of calls require response by two squads so Ramsey would have to respond in that manner to Nowthen. Police

Chief Way explained that currently the Sheriff's Department has to respond to Nowthen emergencies and equals 1,500 calls per year in Nowthen. He stated if Nowthen wanted to pay for 24-hour coverage it could work but not with the current request.

Councilmember Elvig stated he thinks the price should be competitive but the City's costs should be covered.

Councilmember Tossey asked if the Sheriff's proposal is for 24-hour coverage.

Police Chief Way explained Nowthen did not ask that from the Sheriff's Department.

Councilmember Tossey asked whether Ramsey's cars also respond when the Sheriff's Department covers an emergency in Nowthen.

Police Chief Way answered they do not.

Councilmember Strommen stated she finds a difference between fire and police coverages. She agreed there were benefits with providing fire coverage because Ramsey put a Fire Department there and has fire fighters who live in that area so response times can be quick. Councilmember Strommen stated she was not sure the same benefit resulted with police services based on what Police Chief Way has indicated. She did not support preparing a proposal if it is known the City cannot be competitive.

Councilmember Wise concurred.

Councilmember Elvig stated he would rather not submit a proposal.

Mayor Ramsey asked about submitting the previous proposal.

Police Chief Way advised that proposal was prepared in 2009 when gas was \$2.40 a gallon. He noted the price of gasoline would add \$7,000 to the cost and wages are up 2% since 2009.

It was the consensus of the City Council to not submit a proposal for police coverage in the City of Nowthen.

6) Discuss Mayor's Recommendations of Desirable Changes and Improvements Pursuant to City Charter 2.6.2

City Attorney Goodrich advised that Mayor Ramsey has requested further analysis of his recommendations prior to presentation to the City Council. As a result, Mayor Ramsey will request this item be tabled to allow additional time for staff analysis.

Deputy City Administrator Nelson asked whether staff will be made aware of the recommendations before they are presented to the City Council.

City Attorney Goodrich explained the Mayor's recommendations will be presented as a normal agenda item and included with the agenda packet so the City Council, staff, and public will have the opportunity to view prior to consideration.

Councilmember Strommen stated she understands the Charter provision to allow the Mayor to make recommendations and asked whether the City Council can make a decision on staff time involved in the analysis.

City Attorney Goodrich advised that the Charter provision gives authority to the Mayor to direct certain staff time. He explained an outside consultant will not be used so the cost will not be significant.

FUTURE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Noted

MAYOR, COUNCIL AND STAFF INPUT

None

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Tossey, seconded by Councilmember Wise, to adjourn the Work Session Meeting.

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Drafted by Carla Wirth
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.