

City of Ramsey
Agenda
City Council Work Session
Tuesday May 17, 2011
Immediately following Special CC
Lake Itasca Room 7550 Sunwood Drive NW

- 1. Call to Order**
- 2. Topics for Discussion**
 1. Review Long Term Public Opinion Survey
- 3. Future Topics for Discussion - *See Attached Calendar***
 1. Review Future Work Session Topics/Calendar
- 4. Mayor/Council/Staff Input**
- 5. Adjournment**

CC Work Session

2. 1.

Meeting Date: 05/17/2011

By: Brian Olson, Engineering/Public Works

Title:

Review Long Term Public Opinion Survey

Background:

Since January of 2009, the City Council has discussed the roads and financing of this infrastructure within the City of Ramsey. Pursuant to your direction, Staff has worked with Himle Horner to produce the attached draft questionnaire for your consideration. After a number of reiterations between Staff and the Consultant, we feel that it is ready for distribution but wanted to take this opportunity to hear comments and concerns from the City Council before its release in June.

Attached to this case is the final proposal that was approved.

Notification:

As discussed previously this public opinion survey involves a 30-question telephone survey among a randomly-selected sample of 300 adults in Ramsey. The sample would provide an accuracy rate of +/- 6.0% at the 95% confidence level. HHI would design, manage and analyze the public opinion research.

Recommendation:

Staff recommends release of the survey based upon feedback from the City Council

Funding Source:

This initiative is funded from the Public Improvement revolving fund. No additional resources are necessary for this activity.

Council Action:

Provide consensus to move forward with the release of the survey after the Memorial Day holiday.

Attachments

Road Questions

Final Approved Proposal

Form Review

Inbox
Kurt Ulrich
Reviewed By
Jo Thieling
Form Started By: Brian Olson

Date
05/12/2011 12:01 PM
Started On: 05/10/2011 10:56 AM

Final Approval Date: 05/12/2011

Ramsey Long-Term Road Maintenance Program
Draft Survey Questions
Revised, May 2, 2011

Goals

The following survey questions are recommended to:

- ✓ Test community attitudes/satisfaction with current city roads/services
- ✓ Learn what residents know/perceive about the city's road maintenance needs and potential policy solutions
- ✓ Identify information gaps and what information residents need or want to make informed decisions about road maintenance
- ✓ Better understand how to communicate that information to residents

Draft survey script

[Intro text provided by survey caller]:

- ✓ The following survey is being conducted on behalf of the city of Ramsey by Decision Resources Ltd of Minneapolis.
- ✓ The purpose of the survey is to better understand city residents' attitudes toward city services and road maintenance, and to discuss with you potential options for a long-term maintenance program.

1. Approximately how many years have you lived in the city of Ramsey?

- Less than two years
- Two to five years
- Five to 10 years
- 10 to 20 years
- 20 to 30 years
- More than 30 years
- Don't Know/Refused

2. What do you like most, if anything, about living in the city of Ramsey?

3. What do you think is the most serious issue facing the city of Ramsey?

4. How would you rate the quality of life in Ramsey?

- Excellent
- Good
- Only Fair
- Poor
- Don't Know/Refused

In Ramsey, local property tax revenues are distributed to the city of Ramsey, Anoka County and either the Anoka/Hennepin or Elk River school district. In 2011, the percentage of your local property taxes going to the city of Ramsey is 38 percent.

5. When you consider the property taxes you pay and the quality of city services you receive, how would you rate the value of those city services — excellent, good, only fair or poor?

- Excellent
- Good
- Only Fair
- Poor
- Don't Know/Refused

I'd like to get your feedback about Ramsey city streets and roads. Since we are interested in your views of streets built and maintained by the city of Ramsey only, you should exclude county roads such as County Road 83/Armstrong Boulevard or County Road 56/Ramsey Boulevard, as well as state highways such as 47 and Highway 10.

Using a rating of Excellent, Good, Fair or Poor, how would you rate the following?

6. The overall quality of city-maintained streets and roads
7. The width of city streets and roads
8. Safety features such as street lighting, sidewalks and signage
9. The quality and condition of Ramsey's roads and streets compared to neighboring cities
10. The responsiveness of the city to road maintenance and repair needs

Nearly half of the city of Ramsey's 178 miles of city roads were constructed between 1976 and 1985. With routine maintenance, the average expected life of these roads is 40 years, which means that between 2016 and 2025, about \$90 million or more in road reconstruction will be necessary to repair or replace city streets. The majority of the cost of this work will be the responsibility of local taxpayers. Currently, the city's street reconstruction policy funds reconstruction projects by assessing adjacent property owners.

Knowing this information...

11. Do you believe the city of Ramsey needs to develop a long-term street reconstruction and funding policy? Do you feel strongly that way?
 - Yes, Strongly
 - Yes
 - No
 - No, Strongly
 - Don't Know/Refused

12. Would you favor or oppose an increase in your city property tax if it were dedicated to the long-term maintenance and reconstruction of city streets? Do you feel strongly that way?
 - Favor, Strongly
 - Favor
 - Oppose
 - Oppose, Strongly
 - Don't Know/Refused

Let's consider three different options the city might consider to pay for long-term road maintenance and reconstruction. For the following three options, please tell me if you would favor or oppose the proposed funding options.

13. Option 1: The city could use the road improvement assessment method that is typically used for general maintenance projects. This means that the city would assess your property for your portion of the total project amount, based on the lineal footage of your property. For a typical two-acre lot size, this could amount to an assessment of \$27,000

total or about \$225 per month for 10 years. For a quarter-acre lot size, the assessment could be \$9,000 total or about \$75 per month for 10 years. Would you support or oppose this option? Do you feel strongly?

- Favor, Strongly
- Favor
- Oppose
- Oppose, Strongly
- Don't know/Refused

14. Option 2: The city could initiate a citywide property tax levy that charges all property owners for the total cost of a long-term maintenance and reconstruction program. Your portion of the citywide tax would be based on your property value. For an average \$150,000 home, this could amount to \$24 per month and \$51 per month for a \$450,000 home. The tax would be added to your property tax bills and would be payable for the next 40 years. Would you support or oppose this option? Do you feel strongly?

- Favor, Strongly
- Favor
- Oppose
- Oppose, Strongly
- Don't know/Refused

15. Option 3: The city could initiate a citywide franchise fee that charges all customers, including tax exempt properties, an equal amount of the total cost of a maintenance and reconstruction program. In other words, the franchise fee would be the same whether you own a \$150,000 home, a \$450,000 home. This could amount to about \$28 per month for every residential customer and \$54 per month for commercial customers. The fee would be payable for the next 20-40 years. Would you support or oppose this option? Do you feel strongly?

- Favor, Strongly
- Favor
- Oppose
- Oppose, Strongly
- Don't know

16. Of these three options — a standard assessment of just affected property owners, a citywide property tax based on the value of the property, or a standard citywide franchise fee charging everyone the same amount — which do you most prefer?

The following are statements that some have cited in support of city-wide long-term road maintenance and funding program. Please tell me if you find these statements very convincing, convincing, not too convincing or not at all convincing.

17. The road maintenance and reconstruction program will spread out the cost over a long period of time so property owners are not burdened by large annual assessments.
18. This program more fairly distributes the cost of a road maintenance program to all property owners, all of whom benefit from well-maintained roads.
19. A long-term road maintenance program and dedicated funding source are needed to ensure road projects are not delayed and ultimately cost us more.
20. We need this program to ensure our local roads and streets are safe for pedestrians and drivers.
21. Ramsey's streets are a citywide asset. Investing in them is necessary to attract new residents, businesses and jobs.

The following are statements some critics have cited in opposition to a long-term road maintenance and funding program. Please tell me if you find these statements very convincing, convincing, not too convincing or not at all convincing.

- 22. Ramsey's streets are in fine condition; they don't need more investment.
- 23. In the current economy, our residents cannot afford to spend more.
- 24. The city needs to put the money it already has to better use.
- 25. By instituting a long-term road maintenance and funding program, the city is taking away taxpayers' power to petition against or stop a road project.
- 26. We should be focused on other priorities right now, like lowering local government spending and attracting new jobs.

Moving on to just a few final questions for demographic purposes...

27. What is your principal source of information about Ramsey city government and its activities? _____

28. Could you please tell me which of the following ranges includes your age?

- 18-30
- 31-40
- 41-55
- 56-65
- 65 or older

29. How many school-aged children or pre-schoolers live in your household?

- None
- One
- Two
- Three or More
- Refused

30. Do you own or rent your residence? If you own, what is the value of your current residence?

- Under \$100,000
- \$100,000 - \$150,000
- \$150,000 - \$200,000
- \$200,000 - \$250,000
- \$250,000 - \$300,000
- Over \$300,000

31. Gender (by observation)

- Male
- Female

Public Information Proposal for City of Ramsey Long-Term Road Maintenance Program

Submitted by Himle Horner Inc. — November 19, 2010

Background

Roughly 45 percent of Ramsey's 174 miles of roads were constructed between 1976 and 1985. With routine maintenance, the average expected life of these roads is 40 years, which means that between 2016 and 2025, the City expects an estimated \$90 million or more in road reconstruction to be necessary to repair its aging streets. While approximately 20 percent of Ramsey's roadways would qualify for state aid, 80 percent will be the responsibility of local taxpayers. Currently, the City does not have a street reconstruction policy or a reliable funding source apart from costly individual property assessments.

Recently, the Ramsey City Council agreed to take a more proactive approach to street maintenance. It directed staff to develop a street reconstruction policy and a more balanced funding approach to this long-term issue. Specifically, the City hopes to establish a policy that:

- **Spreads the cost over time** so individual property owners are not surprised by burdensome multi-year assessments
- **More fairly distributes the cost** to all property owners who benefit from well-maintained roads
- **Removes roadblocks to maintenance** such as insufficient funds or property owner petitions against street repairs, which delay projects and ultimately increase costs
- **Better positions Ramsey for the future** by maintaining the high-quality streets necessary for motorist safety and to attract housing, commercial and other economic growth

The City has requested a proposal from Himle Horner, Inc. (HHI) for communications assistance with developing a plan to inform the public about the need for a policy; engage residents and property owners in a dialogue about funding options; and ultimately propose a new policy for City Council approval in late summer/early fall 2011.

However, several issues and environmental conditions should be considered, including:

- **A challenging economic environment** in which homeowners and business owners will find it difficult to support higher taxes, fees or other property costs
- **Currently well-maintained roads** that have not shown visible wear. This will make it difficult to communicate the need and urgency for a road maintenance policy.
- **A lack of public awareness** about the history and anticipated expense of maintaining the city's road system
- **Public sensitivity** to any increase in taxes or fees — as well as increased government spending.

Recommended Goals

To overcome these challenges, it will be important for the City to involve property owners and local opinion leaders in the policy's creation and implementation. Specifically, HHI recommends the City consider implementing a public information and engagement program through the end of 2011 to:

- Inform residents, businesses and other property owners about the long-term challenges that lie ahead for Ramsey's roads, and how the community will be impacted without a proactive approach
- Engage Ramsey property owners in a public discussion about potential policy and funding options
- Build public support for establishing a road reconstruction and long-term funding policy
- If a policy is approved, increase property owner awareness about the new policy and how it will affect them

Recommended Approach

To work toward accomplishing these goals, HHI recommends the following approach:

Step 1 — Research — Design research to identify:

- What residents know/perceive about the city's road maintenance needs and potential policy solutions
- Information gaps and what information residents need or want to make informed decisions
- How best to communicate that information to residents
- Also, test community attitudes/satisfaction with city services and other issues

Specifically, the research would include:

- Online/media scan of 3-4 other municipalities that have taken a similar long-term approach to road maintenance to learn from their successes, failures and messages
- Public opinion survey that involves a 30-question telephone survey among a randomly-selected sample of 300 adults in Ramsey. The sample would provide an accuracy rate of +/- 6.0% at the 95% confidence level. HHI would design, manage and analyze the public opinion research. We recommend working with Decision Resources, Ltd. to develop survey samples, conduct telephone interviews and tabulate data.
- Present public opinion results/analysis during a meeting in Ramsey (up to 2 hours) with City staff and/or council members.

Step 2 — Messaging and Public Information Plan — Based on the research, develop a plan for a public information and engagement program to be largely implemented by City staff and officials. The plan will include **goals**, **audiences**, a **strategic overview** and **key messages**, as well as outline **public information and engagement strategies** and **related tactics**. To accomplish this, HHI would:

- Draft a public information plan to include the sections outlined above for implementation during calendar year 2011; review and finalize plan in cooperation with Ramsey staff
- General talking points document, including information for specific stakeholder groups as needed

- Provide advice and counsel to city staff as needed
- Present plan recommendations during a two-hour meeting at the Ramsey Municipal Center

Step 3 — Implementation Assistance (Optional) — While HHI understands that primary responsibility for implementation of the plan will rest with City staff, it may be helpful for staff to involve HHI in the following:

- Materials development including up to 2 fact sheets (including content, in-house design and two rounds of edits), template PowerPoint presentation and other content necessary to introduce the policy's need and potential solutions to Ramsey property owners and opinion leaders, and to explain the policy once it is approved
- Series of earned media columns (up to 3) that may be submitted by City officials and/or interested third parties to local media to explain the need and potential policy solutions
- Template media release that may be used by staff to publicize a staff-planned series of public information meetings and/or public hearings about the proposed policy
- Implementation and media relations counsel to City staff as needed
- Assist with other tactics as agreed upon by City staff and HHI, budget permitting

Budget

Based on this approach, we estimate the following fees for a December 2010 – December 2011 contract:

Research (Step 1)		\$21,000 - \$24,500
<i>Decision Resources, Ltd.</i>	\$9,000 - \$10,500*	
<i>HHI Professional Fees</i>	\$12,000 - \$14,000	
Messaging and Public Information Plan (Step 2)		\$14,000 - \$16,000
Implementation Assistance (Step 3)		\$8,000 - \$10,000
Total		\$43,000 - \$50,500

Note: The budget is an estimate based on our current understanding of the potential engagement and can be adjusted depending on the desired scope of services from HHI. Should the client require additional services that are outside of the proposed or final budget, those services will be billed according to our standard hourly rates. HHI professional services and general office expenses, including but not limited to phone costs, photocopies, mail costs and mileage for up to two meetings in Ramsey are included in the above amounts. This budget also assumes that design, printing, mail house or other materials development vendor costs (except where noted above) will be the responsibility of the City and are not included in this estimate. HHI bills clients on a monthly basis for fees and expenses as they are incurred. Payment is due within 30 days of the invoice date.

*This fee estimate assumes that the City of Ramsey will be billed directly by Decision Resources, Ltd. If the City prefers that this work be billed through HHI, as part of HHI's overall work, a 15% mark-up will be added.

CC Work Session

3. 1.

Meeting Date: 05/17/2011

By: Jo Thieling, Administrative Services

Title:

Review Future Work Session Topics/Calendar

Background:

Attached is the list of Future Topics/Calendar for Council review and information.

Funding Source:

N/A

Council Action:

No formal action necessary - for review and informational purposes only.

Attachments

Future Topics/Calendar

Form Review

Inbox
Kurt Ulrich

Reviewed By
Jo Thieling

Date
05/12/2011 03:24 PM
Started On: 05/12/2011

Form Started By: Jo Thieling

Final Approval Date: 05/12/2011

**Work Session Calendar
2011**

Month	Date	Topics for Discussion
Others on List – including 2011 Strategic Planning Items		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> ● LRRWMO Administrative Services (KU) ● Look at pilot programs (e.g. volunteer programs – low maintenance) ● Proactively recruit residential development and seek builders input ● Review Outside Storage in Industrial Areas – Slated for Joint CC & Planning – June 2 ● Seek feedback from developers re process, regulations, standards & fees - research our fees vs. other cities’ fees – Slated for Joint CC & Planning – June 2 ● Review development fees and standards regarding construction ● Develop TIF tracking plan with regard to fiscal disparities impact ● Establish fund reserve policy ● Review City-owned lands and create plan for it ● Review park programming and potential reallocation of parks ● Construct boat landing at River’s Bend ● Build on outdoors/sportsmen’s market (e.g. stock pond/lake) ● Develop Office/Industrial Park west of Armstrong and South of U.S. Highway #10 – Slated for Joint CC & Planning – June 2 ● Coordinate COR marketing and City marketing ● Create Master Plan 167th Avenue/Highway 47 – plan for redevelopment – Discuss after Joint Meeting between CC & EDA ● Develop community center/indoor sports complex ● Old Town Hall relocation ● Review & revise Development Management contract and manage COR expenditures ● Seek grant funding for transportation projects and service delivery ● 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 ● Review Dirt Road Elimination Policy (DREP) ● Create opportunities for snowmobile, four-wheeler & golf cart use ● Review sidewalk plowing policy ● Review of New Office Park Zoning Standards ● Review of Escrow account Collection Procedure – to be discussed at April 26 Finance Committee <ul style="list-style-type: none"> ○ Delinquent Accounts – Part of Finance Committee discussion – 4/26 ○ Updating Billable Time Procedure – Part of Finance Committee discussion – 4/26