

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, August 23, 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
Finance Officer Diana Lund
Public Works Director Brian Olson
Economic Development/Marketing Director Aaron Backman
Police Chief James Way
Parks Supervisor Mark Riverblood
Senior Planner Tim Gladhill
City Engineer Tim Himmer
Development Manager Darren Lazan
City Attorney William Goodrich
Planning Intern Patrick Brama
Environmental Coordinator Chris Peterson

CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ramsey called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:33 p.m.

APPROVE AGENDA

The agenda was approved as submitted.

COUNCIL TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

1) 2011 Development Costs Study

Planning Intern Patrick Brama presented the staff report. He noted it was difficult to compile this information from other cities. He said it was not a comprehensive study, but to the extent that the information was obtainable, it is as complete as possible. He acknowledged it was a

challenge to compare apples-to-apples and explained the portions of the survey and how the pieces worked together.

Councilmember Wise stated he has had many discussions with developers over the years, and the perception is that Ramsey's rates are high.

Public Works Director Olson confirmed Mr. Brama did an excellent job on this survey and it will be very helpful for planning and developing competitive rates.

Councilmember McGlone stated he has spoken with developers who say the developer fees are key to where they will build. He suggested instituting a usage fee instead of a developer fee.

Councilmember Backous inquired why the League of Minnesota Cities (LMNC) hasn't drawn a comparison chart together throughout the State to get accurate information. He stated this document is good, though there was varying levels of cooperation. He suggested there might be more willing participants if the study was done by the LMNC.

Councilmember Strommen agreed the information from city to city would not be comparable with only a small number of cities participating. She also noted developers choose where they will develop based on the flexibility of the process.

Mr. Brama explained the cities were selected geographically. He tried to contact a few outlying cities, though Prior Lake was the only city that responded.

Mayor Ramsey commented if the perception is that Ramsey is too expensive for developing, that perception needs to be changed.

Public Works Director Olson appreciated the comments and concerns. He raised the issue of utility rates. He noted the two options to bring them inline are to scale back improvements or shift more fees onto the residents.

Councilmember Wise stated it is not the hard costs of the fees that are an issue; it is the process. He noted when an applicant has to appear before the Council to make a minor change that requires new drawings; it costs the applicant money for that process.

Senior Planner Gladhill responded the Planning and Zoning Department is trying its best to improve that process. He invited the Councilmembers to bring forth ideas.

Consensus was reached to schedule a larger group discussion with various participants regarding fees in the near future.

Councilmember Tossey brought up a concern about fees for inspection for soil and erosion. He said he wanted to be sure the fee was justified and if there is a state law, Ramsey needs to follow it.