

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, April 24, 2012, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Bob Ramsey  
Councilmember Randy Backous (arrived at 5:37 p.m.)  
Councilmember David Elvig  
Councilmember Colin McGlone  
Councilmember Sarah Strommen  
Councilmember Jason Tossey  
Councilmember Jeffrey Wise

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Public Works Director Brian Olson  
City Engineer Tim Himmer  
Fire Chief Dean Kapler  
Police Chief James Way  
City Clerk Jo Ann Thieling  
Human Resources Representative Colleen Lasher  
Senior Planner Tim Gladhill  
Planning Intern Patrick Brama  
Development Manager Darren Lazan  
Robert Schunicht, Landform  
Brad Dewolf, Bolton & Menk,

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Ramsey called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Discuss Request for Special Events Permit**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report and presented the request of SPM Properties, The Penalty Box Bar & Grill, 14077 St. Francis Boulevard NW, for a special events permit to host a tent party on June 22-23, 2012 including a live band both nights from 8 p.m. to midnight.

Police Chief Way stated his comments were included in the case report.

Councilmember Wise stated he received several telephone calls after the last event with concerns about trash and traffic. He supported relocating the tent.

Shawn McManus, The Penalty Box, applicant, stated he does not object to moving the tent towards the front of the building but not behind the building.

Councilmember Wise asked about past due utility bills.

Mr. McManus stated that is the responsibility of the landlord.

Councilmember Tossey asked if it is common to require an upfront escrow for Police and clean up costs.

City Administrator Ulrich answered it is common as well as requiring a deposit for services provided.

City Clerk Thieling explained that due to past events, there is some experience so they know the number of officers needed and amount of escrow to cover those expenses.

Councilmember Tossey asked how many people will be attending.

Mr. McManus estimated several thousand.

Councilmember McGlone reviewed issues with past events on this property and stated he found the number of complaints to be low when compared to the number of attendees and number of residents. He indicated he has attended past events and agrees with the applicant that a location behind the building would restrict view of the event but placing the tent up to the building, would alleviate a lot of the concerns. Councilmember McGlone noted the applicant occupies the end of the building and the nearest tenant is a dentist that is not open during this time. He supported creating flow of traffic around the edge of the property.

Councilmember Backous arrived at 5:37 p.m.

Councilmember Elvig noted the City had addressed the issues raised during the first event so the second event was better organized and controlled. He asked about the timing to close the event.

City Clerk Thieling advised the request is to allow the band to play until midnight, which can be considered by the Council.

Councilmember Elvig noted the Council has granted a similar request until midnight.

Fire Chief Kapler reported a letter was received on March 29, 2012, indicating the monitoring contract for the alarm system is past due so monitoring service will not be provided after April 30, 2012. Should that occur, this business could no longer remain open after April 30, 2012.

Mr. McManus assured the Council he will take care of that payment.

Mayor Ramsey stated he prefers the tent in back but understands the concern with view of the event and would support the event request as long as the tent is removed by the following Monday morning.

Mr. McManus assured the Council the tent will be removed by Monday morning.

City Administrator Ulrich asked if there was Council consensus to allow the tent in the front and to extend hours of operation until midnight.

Councilmember McGlone used a site map to identify a tent location in the front of the building, which would allow the front drive aisle to remain open.

Mr. McManus indicated the tent is 60' x 100' so the side (end) parking lot is not large enough. He stated he would not object to moving the tent toward the front of the building; however, it would then be located in front of Subway. He stated they have picked up all the trash, addressed any complaints that came up, and this event brings a lot of people to Ramsey.

Mayor Ramsey stated he does not support locating a tent in front of other tax paying businesses, including Subway.

Mr. McManus stated Subway has not objected and they offer Subway to place signs on their tent. He suggested Subway and other businesses benefit from this event.

City Administrator Ulrich noted the staff recommendation is to require the applicant to obtain letters from tenants to assure they are aware of the event and do not object.

Councilmember Backous stated if tenants have not complained in the past they probably don't object.

Police Chief Way advised that tenants have complained about past events. He explained the City does not want traffic between the tent and curb, thus the recommendation to move the tent towards the building. Last year, barricades were supposed to be installed to increase public safety; however, the barricades were not installed.

Councilmember McGlone stated if the tent is on an angle with the building, Subway will still be visible. He noted if the pizza business wants to have a pizza tent, they can make the request. He stated he understands the recommendation to collect fees in advance because this is a tenant (not the building owner) so costs cannot be put on the property tax bill. In addition, there has been a past issue collecting fees from a different tent party applicant.

Mayor Ramsey encouraged Councilmembers to talk with the other tenants to assure their support.

Councilmember Strommen supported requiring the applicant to obtain letters from tenants of this building, as a courtesy.

Councilmember McGlone stated this business has the right to have a tent party if conditions are met.

Mayor Ramsey stated he would prefer the tent be located at the end of the building, because he thinks it will fit, and will make his decision when it is before the Council.

Councilmember Tossey stated support to get permission letters only from tenants that would be impacted by the tent location.

Mayor Ramsey stated he did not support requiring tenant letters and intended to talk with them personally.

City Administrator Ulrich recommended a letter from the building owner be required.

Police Chief Way recommended requiring the applicant to have an employee cover the parking lot, as required during past events.

The consensus of the Council was to approve staff's recommendation to allow the tent to be erected in front of the building and require the applicant to provide disclosure notices of the event, signed by the building owner indicating they are in favor of this event taking place, prior to granting a permit. This item will be considered on the May 8, 2012, consent agenda.

## **2.02: Discuss Comprehensive Utility Plan Updates**

City Engineer Himmer reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Elvig stated he thought the City was at the DNR capacity for wells.

City Engineer Himmer explained there have been mixed messages from the DNR so there is currently nothing definitive whether the City can or cannot get additional wells.

Councilmember Strommen reported she is working to schedule a meeting with the DNR Commissioner to address that issue.

Brad Dewolf, Bolton & Menk, presented the Comprehensive Water Study Utility Fund Analysis.

Mayor Ramsey noted the previously estimated \$20 million water treatment has now become a \$32 million water treatment plant.

Public Works Director Olson advised that time and inflation have impacted the price.

Mayor Ramsey asked how much of the \$8 million in the bank was generated from fees that were supposed to go to the surface water treatment plant.

City Engineer Himmer stated the water treatment plan was supposed to be on line five years ago so those dollars remained in the account and delaying construction generated additional fees and rates to create a larger fund balance.

Mayor Ramsey asked if current residents are being penalized.

Public Works Director Olson explained the City has been collecting fees from users and new people coming into the system because the Comprehensive Plan indicated there will be some form of treatment. Lately, there has not been a lot of new development so the majority of the fund balance was created by existing users, resulting in an expectation that better water quality should be provided. He noted the creation of this fund has put the City in a good position going forward.

City Administrator Ulrich asked what portion of the \$8 million is for the water treatment plant and what portion is for capital improvement costs and repairs.

Public Works Director Olson anticipated a bond of about \$20 million so just over \$1 million a year was collected for the water treatment plant from existing users.

Mayor Ramsey stated support that something be done to improve water quality and asked how water quality can be portrayed as a regional problem when there is excess revenue in the City's account. Mayor Ramsey also asked if water rates can be lowered as additional fees are collected.

City Engineer Himmer stated this analysis factored in 2% and 2.5% rate increases but growth may exceed or fall behind so rates should be analyzed on an annual basis going forward.

Councilmember Elvig commented that in the past, a lot of residents were fighting growth so the City tried to make growth pay for itself. He cautioned there is a need for balance and dropping rates too far may stimulate the idea to encourage people to come to Ramsey because it is cheaper to build here.

Mayor Ramsey stated he believed the reason people came to Ramsey was for cheap land, not cheap utilities.

Councilmember McGlone stated he has an issue with how much of this cost is a City resident issue as opposed to a developer or current user issue. He noted Ramsey is a developing community but residents who do not want water will push back. He asked how much of the cost should be borne by all residents, developers, or new residents. He also asked how it is progressing to make this a regional problem.

Public Works Director Olson advised the City cannot charge residents a utility fee unless they gain benefit. If the resident has a private well, it would be impossible to prove benefit. As it relates to the regional discussion, staff felt it was important, after analysis, to not fully fund with user rates and fees so the City can show a deficit and unfunded amount when it goes before the Legislature to request capital to address this regional issue.

City Engineer Himmer summarized the sanitary sewer rates and fees and asked the Council if it was comfortable with the assumptions.

Councilmember Tossey asked if the maintenance costs for wells was part of this consideration.

City Engineer Himmer answered in the affirmative, noting maintenance and operation of existing equipment is also included.

Mayor Ramsey asked if there is benefit to pulling the wells and using water from the Mississippi River.

Public Works Director Olson stated the idea was to use the wells as the backup and during spring time when river effluent is high.

Robert Schunicht, Landform, advised the best municipal water supplies have a variety of sources (aquifers, wells, surface) so he would encourage the City to keep both options in case something happens to one source, such as bad surface water conditions during spring time.

Mr. Dewolf completed his presentation by summarizing sanitary sewer user rates.

Councilmember Elvig raised the option of creating a fund that can be drawn upon, if approved by the Council, when a resident has an emergency, an entire neighborhood is getting dry wells, or septic systems are starting to fail and they cannot afford to rebuild a private system.

Councilmember Wise expressed concern with creating a government program to “help.”

Councilmember McGlone stated he likes the current system, which has been exercised for residents that need help, and the costs are put on their taxes.

City Engineer Himmer advised there was a recent resident inquiry for help with their septic system. He agreed that reducing the connection fee may swing residents to connect instead of installing a private system, if it is available in their area.

Councilmember Elvig stated he was considering how to encourage residents to connect to the system.

Councilmember McGlone offered the option of a “hookup amnesty day” during which there would be a reduced fee.

City Engineer Himmer asked if the assumptions used to develop these rates were supported by the Council.

Councilmember Wise asked why Andover or Anoka were not used in the rate comparisons.

Mr. Dewolf answered they had used cities experiencing similar growth to Ramsey.

Councilmember McGlone asked about the annual growth assumptions used.

City Engineer Himmer indicated the assumptions used growth of 260 units per year and 2.6 persons per household.

Councilmember McGlone noted that during years there was no growth the City was collecting fees and asked if the Council is comfortable with the assumptions based on growth.

City Engineer Himmer explained it is for 20 years and the assumptions in the overall Comprehensive Plan were higher. The assumptions used were consistent with the Utility Plan and the Council can adjust up or down. He reviewed the reductions to connection fees of about \$1,300/unit in total.

The consensus of the Council was to approve assumptions used by staff to formulate the comprehensive water system CIP budget and associated rate and fee structures to fund the proposed improvements. The Council directed staff to draft the final comprehensive utility plan reports and schedule for adoption at a regular City Council meeting.

### **2.03: Expanded Recreational Vehicle Use**

Police Chief Way reviewed the staff report and asked if the Council still supported the definition of The COR where ATVs and golf carts would be restricted.

Councilmember Wise stated he thinks it will be all or nothing.

Mayor Ramsey stated he would like to approach this differently, make ATV/golf cart use as liberal as possible, and then hold a work session to debate whether to add restrictions.

Councilmember McGlone stated residents in Northfork were thrilled with the idea of taking some other form of transportation to this place.

Mayor Ramsey stated he knows the consensus by some on the Council the last time this was discussed.

Councilmember Tossey stated he does not think anyone will use these things so he does not have a problem with nonrestricted use.

Councilmember Strommen stated she is not in favor of opening it and asked how much staff and Council time will be spent on this issue, noting there are other issues of importance and she has not heard an outcry that there is a need for this. In addition, staff has been cut so she is concerned about an extended debate on restrictions that should or should not be added.

Councilmember McGlone stated some people in Northfork like this idea so he would support an ordinance without restrictions and noted the Council can change the ordinance if something does not work.

Councilmember Elvig noted there is a big difference between an ATV and a golf cart, which is often electric and makes little or no noise. He acknowledged that other cities have allowed golf carts to come into a core area and it seems effective but he does not envision four-wheelers coming to The COR in the same way since an ATV has soft tires, not made for road use, and are louder. He stated he could consider allowing ATVs in the northern area, but not The COR, and noted that snowmobiles are not allowed all over Ramsey for a reason. Councilmember Elvig stated ATVs can also damage grass and are a faster, stronger, and louder machine than a golf cart.

Mayor Ramsey suggested that maybe the City should then outlaw Harley Davidsons because they are larger, louder, and some do not have signals.

Councilmember Backous indicated he does not object to ATVs being used in the country but his neighborhood has more narrow streets and he would be concerned with the safety of residents and children since four-wheelers are harder to see. He stated he agrees with Councilmember Strommen that many people sit in the “parking lot” of Highways 47 and 10 so maybe the Council should put its energy into those issues instead of wasting time talking about something that is not a problem. Councilmember Backous stated if this issue involves a long debate, he would just as soon scrap it from the beginning.

Mayor Ramsey stated then the City should outlaw bicycles because they can also be dangerous. He stated this consideration does not have to be a long and drawn out process, it can be done quickly, and addressed again next summer if changes are needed.

Councilmember Tossey stated he has not heard an outcry for this either but would favor unrestricted use because if there is a violation, the ATV will get tagged, just like a moving vehicle.

Councilmember Wise agreed with Councilmember Tossey to open it up and stated he also thinks not many will use ATVs. However, he would support revisiting the issue should any problems arise.

Councilmember Elvig stated he is certain there will need to be regulations, rules, or permits and asked how much time staff has already been spent.

Police Chief Way stated he has invested a few hours.

Councilmember Elvig asked how many staff resources will be used to put together this program, draft rules and regulations, and monitor it. He noted the Council wants to cut staff hours and he wants to protect staff resources.

Councilmember Tossey stated the Legislature has already addressed traffic regulations that dictate what motorists can and cannot do.

Mayor Ramsey stated four Councilmembers (a majority) have indicated support to move forward.

City Administrator Ulrich stated staff will draft an ordinance with regulations on hours of operation, in its simplest form.

Councilmember McGlone stated he does not think everyone will buy a four wheeler but people who already own them may like the idea of having more freedom. He supported trying it and if there are problems, he will then vote against it.

Councilmember Strommen stated she did not believe anyone moved into her or Councilmember Backous' neighborhood expecting to drive an ATV down the street. She felt there would be serious safety concerns allowing ATV use in her neighborhood.

Mayor Ramsey stated if the City restricts ATVs from driving on streets at night, it should also restrict Harley Davidsons without a muffler, which are louder.

City Administrator Ulrich noted the City's ordinances and State Statutes restrict noise, but they are difficult to enforce. He indicated if the City sees issues, problems, or complaints, this item will be back before the Council.

The majority consensus of the Council was to direct staff to draft a separate ordinance for ATVs/golf carts for Council consideration at a future Work Session.

#### **2.04: Consider Customer Request Management (CRM) Software Purchase**

City Administrator Ulrich indicated staff has identified several vendors of CRM software and described how this software would work to track customer requests across departments.

Administrative Intern Brama summarized the staff report and recommendation to purchase GovQA at a cost of \$9,000 the first year and \$6,000 for subsequent years.

Councilmember Elvig stated his support of staff's recommendation, indicating it is a great idea, seems to have vertical integration/blueprint of City staff, tracks clients/requests, and does so in a proactive manner.

Mayor Ramsey stated staff will have to determine how to handle inappropriate questions.

Administrative Intern Brama indicated staff will develop a policy to address those situations.

The consensus of the Council was to support the purchase of GovQA and direct staff to schedule consideration of adoption at a regular City Council meeting.

### **3. FUTURE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

Noted.

### **4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT**

None

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Ramsey declared the Work Session of the City Council adjourned at 6:57 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kurtis G. Ulrich  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

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Jo Ann M. Thieling  
City Clerk

Drafted by Carla Wirth  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*