

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, September 25, 2012, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Bob Ramsey
Councilmember Randy Backous
Councilmember David Elvig (arrived at 5:48 p.m.)
Councilmember Colin McGlone
Councilmember Sarah Strommen
Councilmember Jason Tossey
Councilmember Jeffrey Wise

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Fire Chief Dean Kapler
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Development Services Manager Timothy Gladhill
Development Manager Darren Lazan

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Ramsey called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:41 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Identify Trail Priority Categories, Rank Trail Gaps, and Review Funding Sources

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the staff report, costs analysis for trail gaps, funding opportunities, and potential partnerships with the Metropolitan Council. He asked the Council whether the generalized categories of trails and internal/external sources of funding are acceptable and if the priorities and methodology on trails is adequate to respond to resident's requests. He indicated staff will seek external funding sources and partnerships, noting the Trail Fund will be nearly exhausted by the trail from Central Park to Alpine Drive.

Councilmember McGlone stated he has brought up the issue, many times, that the City has 270 properties with about 57 parks. He noted a land inventory has been completed and the Council was considering how to use some of those funds in the Park system. Councilmember McGlone asked where the Council is at on the thought of changing from a park land dedication to a park fee dedication and using those funds for connecting trails.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood advised that the utilization of public land and disbursement process of properties identified as unneeded is progressing and the

City Attorney is working on the Windsorwood parcel that the Council directed for sale. However, the Council has not yet identified where those funds will go in the Park system. Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood indicated trails are high in community priority in comparison to other items and if the Council determines land proceeds should go to trails first, he would encourage that.

Councilmember McGlone asked whether staff has considered a value of those properties.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated the Council will need to determine the land disbursement process, noting that many properties, since they were dedicated, involve other restrictions so the cost to disburse may be more than the proceeds. He indicated staff can tally the assessed market value of the 36 parcels but that number may not be useful. Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted the focus has been on “low hanging fruit” first and then to identify where those revenues are used.

Councilmember Tossey asked whether the City is set on the overpass location. He noted the Council has indicated the importance of Armstrong Boulevard and he questions why the skyway cannot be moved to the Armstrong Boulevard overpass instead of having two structures over Highway 10.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that is a germane and prudent point. He used a map to note the proposed location of the skyway and described the distance to points of crossing. Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted the crossing of Ramsey Boulevard or Sunfish Lake Boulevard involves a huge expanse of pavement and he is unsure how that would be handled from a design standpoint. He stated the proposed skyway crossing has great value for the land on the south side and the apartment will also fill faster with a connection to the regional trail. In addition, there may be reverse commuters and bicyclists using the train for trail access.

Councilmember Tossey stated the overpass is a need and if it did not restrict the funding, he would like it not ruled out to move the pedestrian overpass to Armstrong Boulevard. He indicated he wants to assure the City’s priorities are straight and thinks that is with Armstrong Boulevard so he does not want it ruled out.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood agreed the City should be mindful to not have the skyway interfere with interchange funding. He explained that Federal highway bills have been such that 10% is routed to transportation enhancements, usually trails and multimodal facilities (skyways) so there may be opportunity to get some federal funding back that does not compete with the interchange.

Councilmember Elvig stated years ago he was not a trail fan but admitted he has changed his mind and now finds them to be a high priority. He noted the City constructed Alpine Park and regional parks, such as Central Park, without addressing safe pedestrian connections. Councilmember Elvig commented on the importance of creating connections and indicated he would like to “keep an eye” on connecting Anoka County Regional Park North to Anoka County Regional Park South, which is the last leg to connect the seven county regional linear parkway.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood advised that the Metropolitan Council, through Anoka County Parks, has opened public comment for the Rum River Regional Trail. He stated he had argued that it should be in Ramsey but Anoka County proposes it to be along County Road 7. Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted that is one way to provide connections, via County Road 7. In addition, the City should still look at the Trott Brook Trail as being part of the solution; however, it involves traffic volumes and whether Mn/DOT turns back Highway 47.

Councilmember Elvig stated at the Metropolitan Council Land Use Advisory Committee (LUAC) meeting, there had been discussion of infrastructure, trails, and the importance of accessibility to promote better health. That initiative targets trails through Minneapolis and Uptown and found that people are flocking to those areas due to large regional trails, confirming they are a tremendous amenity.

Councilmember Strommen stated the Council is being asked to ratify the trail methodology and trail priorities and asked whether the priority project is to complete the loop trail.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood explained the three steps identified in the staff report (Step 1 – Trail priority categories and ranking of major/significant trail gaps and projects; Step 2 – Trail priority methodology; and, Step 3 – Funding source categories for significant trails) was an internal document to work through the priorities and outcome from the Council's Strategic Work Session.

Councilmember Strommen asked for the list of priorities.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted there are many projects listed.

Councilmember Strommen stated the list indicates the only high priority is the Highway 10 overpass.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted The COR loop is another high priority project.

Councilmember Strommen stated support to identify priorities and trail connections to first address including regional connections and safe passage to schools. She noted this will also be valuable from an external funding perspective that can be shown when seeking those funds.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood explained this is a bit of a struggle because there is such a vast need for trails, making it difficult to identify whether a one-quarter mile connection in an urban neighborhood is more important than a one mile segment of the loop trail. He stated he has identified the funding categories, which may drive the priority. Or, the list of projects (100 segments) can be reordered if so directed by the City Council.

Councilmember Strommen agreed it is legitimate to consider trails a priority if they can be funded.

Councilmember Wise stated he had the same question and asked if it would be practical to consider extremely expensive trails as a lower priority and smaller easily completed urban projects that provide a lot of “bang for the buck” as a higher priority.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated he is asking for feedback on how to determine priorities, noting it is difficult to list trails since none are easy and there is no funding.

City Administrator Ulrich stated Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood has done a good job of laying out four priority areas. He stated resident comments are most often that they only need a short section of trail completed to provide safe passage to another trail. A high priority is also to complete the interloop trail, which provides a lot of “bang for the buck” since it connects to miles of trails and sometimes only short sections are needed. City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the location of several trail sections that had been completed and asked whether staff should vigorously pursue a Highway 10 overpass.

Councilmember McGlone stated it all comes back to needs being greater than available revenue in this category. In addition, he felt the Council should also address trail reconstruction since it may be possible to combine those sections with construction of new segments. Councilmember McGlone noted another factor is whether there are grant or partnership opportunities.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated he is not recommending this option, but other communities pursue a referendum where residents decide how important trails are to them. The trail projects can then be combined for greater economy of scale and that option allows residents to determine what a priority is.

Councilmember Strommen stated this topic will require additional discussion and at this point she is unclear of the categories for priority, which will need to be addressed, and criteria in how decisions are made.

Councilmember Elvig noted surrounding communities have a representative at LUAC meetings and have found that neighborhood gardens are wildly popular and people even come from a distance to take advantage of that program. He suggested consideration of trails as a linear park, perhaps incorporating a neighborhood garden program. Councilmember Elvig asked whether the University of Minnesota or Greenways would be a resource.

City Administrator Ulrich indicated staff will objectify the list of projects and create a ranking system, similar to that used by funding agencies. In addition, the Park and Recreation Commission will be asked for its recommendation for City Council consideration at a future meeting.

2.02: Update on Process and Progress of the Mississippi Skyway

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the staff report.

Development Services Manager Gladhill provided an update on the Metropolitan Council's TOD grant consideration for the Mississippi Skyway. He indicated that all initial technical questions are answered and the project is currently under technical review so it can move on to the next phase.

Metropolitan Council Representative Reynoso reported the Metropolitan Council has indicated support and once finalized the project can move forward, which he hopes will occur by the end of the year.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood displayed a rendition of the skyway, noting the skyway and trails meet the same need.

Metropolitan Council Representative Reynoso stated it is also hoped to increase ridership.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated the intent of this case is to bring the City Council up to date. He indicated the project is ready to proceed once funding is approved and a funding analysis to get the project shovel ready is at \$100,000.

Metropolitan Council Representative Reynoso noted there was a need for some tweaking, which he is glad was accomplished, and he hopes this project will move forward some time soon.

2.03: Historic Town Hall and Rail Station Update

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report and updated the City Council on the potential of moving the Historic Town Hall to the Ramsey Commuter Rail Station. It was noted the estimate to move the building was also included in the staff report. He asked for Council direction whether or not it supported moving forward with this project.

Mayor Ramsey supported constructing the basement, noting it will take time to move the Historic Town Hall because the issue of vibration needs to be addressed so the building is not in shambles in several years, or the City could build another more suitable building.

Chris Leverett, Kimley-Horn and Associates, Inc., presented a layout that had been reviewed at a previous Work Session and two location scenarios for the Historic Town Hall. He estimated the difference between a below-ground boiler enclosure and an above-grade boiler option at \$100,000.

Paul Olson, Metacom, stated the new above grade building versus basement enclosure was discussed with staff. He used a diagram of the rail station to point out the location on the south side of the platform that would be more associated with platform structures and not take up prime real estate or street frontage on the south side of the roadway.

Mr. Leverett referenced his September 24, 2012, memorandum that included key assumptions about what can be built on top of an underground vault/basement. He noted it documents some

of those assumptions if it is the Council's desire to move forward this fall while construction is already underway. Mr. Leverett explained the primary concern is with the viability of the Historic Town Hall from vibration, how it can sit on the vault, whether the vault would need to be modified to accommodate it, and whether a floor system of that age would need to be reassessed. He stated they will make conservative structural assumptions but modifications may still be needed in the future depending on the use.

Councilmember Elvig stated it boils down to the footings and flooring and asked if pylons could be used to address the vibration concern.

Mr. Leverett stated he is not an expert in vibration analysis but that may be part of the solution along with foundation details to stop vibrations from passing into the building.

Mayor Ramsey stated he would prefer to go the basement route and then consider later whether to move the Historic Town Hall or construct another building to be used by commuters.

Councilmember McGlone noted there is a lot of cost to move the structure in addition to an engineering study and rehabilitation after moving. He supported going with a substructure with spancrete roofing and then later consider future potential.

Councilmember Backous agreed that moving the Historic Town Hall is a "want" and not a "need" but he would not advocate for ruling it out at this point. He supported a spancrete roof and leaving the option open for the future. Councilmember Backous noted the expense for engineering may be extensive to assure the Historic Town Hall will not deteriorate.

Councilmember Tossey concurred.

Mayor Ramsey stated he would prefer to see something that can be utilized in the future like a coffee shop, library kiosk, or Amtrak station.

Councilmember McGlone asked what rights the City has to build a structure on top of the heater.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the City will assure the agreement with Metropolitan Transit preserves those rights.

Councilmember Elvig asked whether this is a shared cost project.

City Administrator Ulrich explained the agreement was that Metropolitan Transit would pay one half, Anoka County Regional Transit would pay one-half, and the City of Ramsey would provide the land and moving costs.

Councilmember Elvig supported looking at options for the Historic Town Hall in earnest, noting this may be the only opportunity to do something without the City covering all of the costs.

Mayor Ramsey stated if the foundation is constructed, anything to cushion the building would have to be placed on top. He noted time is of the essence to get the pumps in the ground to finish the train stop but the Council can address what to do with the Historic Town Hall next year.

Councilmember Elvig asked if the Historical Society has been asked about the Historic Town Hall.

City Administrator Ulrich advised that the historic designation and impact on grants remains to be addressed. He noted if the building is removed, the City can sell the site, which may be a means to pay for some of the costs to move the structure. Or, if the building is left in place, the City can consider offering it to a private party to rehab the building and use the site. He noted those decisions cannot be made prior to addressing the Metropolitan Transit need.

Councilmember Strommen noted the boiler for the platform and whether to move the Historic Town Hall are operating on different time tables and suggested the issues of whether to move the Historic Ramsey Town be put off.

Mayor Ramsey stated the consensus of the Council is to build the foundation.

Mayor Ramsey stated he will be meeting with Brian Lamb, Metropolitan Transit General Manager, on September 27, 2012, to talk about the number of busses routed to Ramsey. He noted when the Council agreed to enter the Transit Taxing District, it was with the understanding that MTC bus service into Ramsey would be expanded and become part of their system. However, now the City is being told there will be only one or two busses and also being asked to give up some land.

Metropolitan Council Representative Reynoso stated he will contact Mr. Lamb to determine the status of that issue. He stated for the past year they have been discussing the potential of a mid-day run and hopefully it will come to fruition.

3. FUTURE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Work Session Topics / Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. 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 6:45 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.