

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, December 11, 2012, 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 (arrived at 5:43 p.m.)  
Councilmember Jason Tossey  
Councilmember Jeffrey Wise

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Fire Chief Dean Kapler  
Police Chief James Way  
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
Development Services Manager Timothy Gladhill  
Management Analyst Patrick Brama  
Interim Engineer Shane Nelson  
Councilmember-Elect Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember-Elect John LeTourneau  
Councilmember-Elect Chris Riley

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

Snowplow Update

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reported snow plowing started on Sunday morning with five trucks to complete mains and then all staff was called in. The trucks were pulled off at 8:30 p.m. and started again at 3 a.m. until 1:30 p.m. when the plowing was done. Plows were back out today at 7:30 a.m. for cleanup work. Mr. Riemer stated about 50% of the trails have been plowed. Tomorrow crews will focus on the southeast corner of the City and keep salting. He noted the forecast for this weekend is another 1-2 inches.

Mayor Ramsey asked if he was aware of the condition of Andrie Street where snow is about four-inches deep.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer explained the salt is now working and the crews will plow the main streets again tomorrow. He stated the trucks are putting down salt and three trucks also have brine.

## **2.01: Discussion with Local Legislators**

The City Council and staff members introduced themselves to the Legislative Delegation.

Senator Branden Petersen introduced himself and reviewed the committees on which he serves, indicating he spends 95% of his time on K-12 educational issues to assure there is a great teacher in every classroom and the institutions make decisions in a student centric manner. He noted the upcoming session will have a change in legislative make up where the DFL controls all three levels of government and while it is up to the governing majority to make the decisions, there are some issues that he will work on such as the Highway 10/Armstrong overpass. Senator Petersen stated he had authored a bill that received bipartisan signatures from incoming and current legislators. In addition, he will be involved with issues relating to Anoka Hennepin schools that are unique, such as funding equity issues on per pupil aid. Senator Petersen explained he wanted to make sure our students are treated in an equitable fashion by the State when compared to other areas of the metro. He will continue to serve on School Finance, Higher Education, and Workforce Development.

Representative Peggy Scott introduced herself, indicating she is in her third term in the Legislature. She stated her party is now in the minority so she will not have much to do with what goes down in the Legislature but plans to focus on constituent services. She stated if something is important to her cities, she wants to foster a good relationship with all and to carry their "torch." Representative Scott reviewed her committee assignments: Civil Law, Judiciary, Energy, Housing Policy, and Finance. Representative Scott thanked the Council for the invitation to attend tonight's Work Session and indicated she will make sure to be accessible to Ramsey.

Representative Jim Abeler introduced himself, indicating he is in his eighth term and has known Ramsey well during that time. He serves on the Health and Human Services, which does not touch specifically on city business but does impact residents with disability and in need of food support. Representative Abeler noted this takes a lot of the State's money so he tries to make it go as far as possible. Representative Abeler stated he will work on the City's interest in getting a bridge. He reviewed the conversation from a recent County meeting where a representative of Coon Rapids indicated support to widen Highway 10 from Hanson to Round Lake. Representative Abeler stated he knows Ramsey is trying to get \$17 million for an overpass but he also knows Ramsey wants to be left alone so he will try not to step on the good work Ramsey is already doing.

### State Bonding Bill

- Capital funding for Armstrong Boulevard Interchange
- Capital Funding for Other Highway 10 Improvements

City Administrator Ulrich stated one item of concern is the Highway 10 and Armstrong interchange, which is a priority project for Ramsey to address public safety, recent fatalities, need for a safe crossing access on the Armstrong interchange because it connects the City and provides safe and convenient on and off to Highway 10. He noted the railroad track is only two car lengths away from Highway 10 where cars travel up to 70 mph. In addition, the Police and Fire Stations are on the other side of the railroad tracks. City Administrator Ulrich stated Ramsey would appreciate the Delegation's help to get a bill passed to fund this project.

Representative Abeler pointed out that Ramsey will also need the help of the Metropolitan Council. He cautioned that it is not easy to get such funding but it is expected there will be a substantive bonding bill, more than \$500-\$700 million, so the \$17 million needed for Highway 10 is not much when compared to the total. Representative Abeler stated Ramsey will need to use all of its political alliance on the DFL side, engage active business owners, and pull every "card" it has to get that funding. He explained that part of the trouble is that Highway 10 is not on anyone's fix-it list and all of the transportation dollars go to the southwest and south metro. Representative Abeler stated the City needs to use whatever collateral resources it has with the Metropolitan Council that are friendly to the topic and get Governor Dayton involved.

Councilmember Strommen stated she was at the Legislature today and told Representative Hornstein that Ramsey would be knocking on his door very soon. She indicated that once the City has a "game plan" for Highway 10, she intends to make good on that promise.

Senator Petersen suggested Ramsey not stop with the legislative caucus because the Governor's office can make a unilateral decision and has a political interest in bipartisan projects across Minnesota. In addition, the Governor has the ability that some legislators and senators do not have. Senator Petersen explained the reality to understand is that the Governor may be the only one who sees political value in accomplishing that project.

Councilmember Strommen noted senators do not pass capital investments.

Representative Scott pointed out that the Metropolitan Council's emphasis is more on transit than on highways and it just wants to fix roads and put its money towards trains and transit. She commented there may be benefit in being the "squeaky wheel" because this area is due for some improvements. Representative Scott stated the video from Ramsey of a real time crash was played at the Metropolitan Council Commission meeting, it was sobering, and told the true story that there really is an issue.

Councilmember McGlone stated he is not so discouraged and knows the DFL is "alive and kicking" in Ramsey, Minnesota so if you go around and pull some strings, you will see pretty quickly if it is for real or not.

Mayor Ramsey stated another issue is RALF funding.

Councilmember Wise stated the City has a 20-year plan that goes into the RALF Program. He noted that Ramsey had acted progressively to take down 17 properties yet every time the City raises the opportunity for the interchange to address public safety and economic growth, it is

ignored. He stated the interchange is key to real development and he thinks it is owed to the citizens of Ramsey to get back some of that tax base.

Councilmember Elvig stated the cost is just short of \$20 million.

Councilmember Wise stated if the City had known the interchange was not going to be considered, it would have stopped taking down businesses and would have been able to receive taxes from those 17 businesses. Now, all businesses in Ramsey have to pay more in taxes.

Councilmember Elvig stated Ramsey has been proactive, lobbied the Legislature, and worked with the Metropolitan Council on a working policy that wrote out improvements to Highway 10, and obtained design build status on that project. He noted the video mentioned by Representative Scott was provided by the City, not Mn/DOT, and the Ramsey Police Chief was instrumental in its production. Ramsey has also done campaigning and invested another \$5 million into ancillary projects that will feed into an overpass. Councilmember Elvig stated the City has received other minor funding but mostly the costs are from the City's pocket. He stated it may be prudent to create a scorecard for the Legislative Delegation to show what Ramsey has already done over the last dozen years. Then instead of starting another session all over again, Ramsey can build on what has been accomplished and move forward.

Councilmember Tossey stated he has often spoken with Representative Abeler about Highway 10, and Armstrong Boulevard is a piece of that. He supported a freeway from Anoka all the way through Ramsey. Councilmember Tossey stated it has to be remembered with the Armstrong Boulevard interchange that the City did not take money to improve it at the time in hopes of an overpass. In addition, Ramsey Boulevard and Sunfish Lake Drive have all been hard channeled and it is horrible with many near misses and unbelievable tragedies that transcend partisan politics. He noted Highway 10 is a US Highway and as Representative Abeler mentioned, Ramsey needs to work it into the TTP Plan before US Representative Bachman will support it. Councilmember Tossey stated he would support scheduling a joint meeting with the City of Anoka to bring others into the mix. He noted Ramsey received good press in the *StarTribune* and needs to keep that going.

Representative Abeler agreed that public relations will help.

#### RALF Program Modifications

- Allow cities to pool property lease revenues for property maintenance and upkeep

City Administrator Ulrich explained a difficulty with RALF purchased properties relating to maintenance. He stated the building is either cleared or rented but there are limitations in the RALF policy on what can be done with the rental revenue from RALF properties. That rent can only go back to the same rental property. City Administrator Ulrich explained the City would like to pool rental revenue and be able to use a portion to keep the properties in prime form so they do not look run down. The City is asking for the ability to share the rent value.

Representative Abeler stated he will put something in about that issue because the City should be able to use rent revenue for similar properties.

Senator Petersen agreed that should not be too controversial of a change.

Councilmember Elvig stated if the Legislature is willing to change the policy on where rent funds are directed, could it bond an overpass and earmark those revenues to pay for the bond. He stated if RALF properties are generating revenue, he wants it used to improve Highway 10.

Representative Abeler stated he would be interested in talking about that option.

### Funding of Local Road Improvements

City Administrator Ulrich stated Ramsey has an issue with funding local road improvements and the Council has held discussions on options such as a road improvement fee or transportation utility fee. He noted the Governor's Task Force is recommending a street improvement fee as an option and Ramsey would like that fee in its "toolbox." City Administrator Ulrich noted the Council had discussed assessments or other fees to fund road improvements but maybe that would be more directional to cost and benefit to the residents.

Representative Abeler stated they are trying to assure the project is correctly sized but he does not see where that amount of money will go anywhere.

Representative Scott agreed, noting the Governor has already backed off that option.

Representative Abeler acknowledged that the problems Ramsey faces are real but at some point, cities are on their own. He noted that with a road project, residents can see it has been fixed and are usually all right with that cost. He asked if Ramsey thinks some piece of that bill can be protected for Ramsey's local road projects.

Senator Petersen asked for more information about the fee.

City Administrator Ulrich explained the City would set up a street maintenance reconstruction utility and charge a fee across the properties being improved. That money would be specifically targeted to certain areas.

Senator Petersen asked if the fee would then be used within that area.

City Administrator Ulrich indicated it would be used in the area with problem streets that can be geographically separated to address funding for road reconstruction. He explained Ramsey has pushed many of those costs back into the General Fund and budget savings have gone into street reconstruction.

### Special Services District (SSD)

- Include Multiple-Family Housing in SSD Legislation

City Administrator Ulrich stated cities are enabled by law to set up Special Services Districts (SSD) if they want to provide an enhanced level of service to a commercial area such as the West

End in St. Louis Park where a SSD was established to take care of additional plowing and landscaping. It is meant to provide a higher level of service. City Administrator Ulrich explained The COR, Ramsey's downtown, includes multifamily housing and the Council would like the option to consider establishing a SSD to provide an increased level of maintenance instead of taxing the general population.

Mayor Ramsey stated he was supportive of SSD because large apartments are built for profit and benefit from having nicer landscaping. He does not think the rest of Ramsey's residents should pay for apartment dwellers having nicer landscaping and removing snow from the site.

Representative Scott stated this would be a user fee.

Representative Abeler asked if legislation is needed for that option.

Councilmember Tossey indicated he does not favor creating a SSD because it is an additional tax on commercial properties that are already appraised at a higher level and pay a higher tax.

Senator Petersen asked who would be the arbiter as to whether the City has provided that higher level of service.

City Administrator Ulrich stated it would be the City Council.

#### Electronic Publication of Legal Notices

City Administrator Ulrich stated the City spends \$9,000 a year on publishing legal notices that have no more exposure to the public than if posted to the City's website. Ramsey supported legislation that would allow electronic publication of legal notices.

Senator Petersen stated this is not a new issue.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed, noting the laws have fallen behind technology.

Representative Abeler explained that newspapers say they will not survive if they do not have this kind of business.

Senator Petersen agreed that legal notices bring in a lot of revenue for local newspapers.

Mayor Ramsey stated the legal newspaper has to meet circulation thresholds and asked if there is oversight on distribution.

Councilmember Tossey asked if the only reason to require published legal notices is to keep small newspapers alive. He noted that even judges use electronic signatures.

Representative Abeler stated it is part of the Job's Bill.

#### Legislation to Allow Use of Closed Landfill Property for Public Purpose

City Administrator Ulrich stated Ramsey has a closed landfill and approached the PCA about adaptive reuse for some of that property. The City purchased a lot of acreage around the landfill that has good exposure to the roadway and usability. However, the PCA Commissioners told Ramsey that State monies were used to purchase the land so it has many restrictions and cannot be sold for private use or public use. The PCA is concerned about the trail of liability so while private use may not make sense, Ramsey would like the PCA to work with the City and County to use some of this land, with indemnifications. City Administrator Ulrich explained that State law would have to provide those guarantees to allow the PCA to deal with uses such as this landfill that have been identified.

Representative Abeler asked if a bill has been drafted.

City Administrator Ulrich indicated it has not.

Representative Abeler stated Ramsey will have to work through the issue of whether it is something they want the PCA to “may do” or be “required to do.”

City Administrator Ulrich stated the City would be supportive of a narrow bill addressing only the Ramsey landfill.

Mayor Ramsey explained the City had discussed whether the property could be used for a Public Works facility or recycling center and the PCA seemed receptive.

Representative Abeler stated he would provide City Administrator Ulrich with names of researchers and write the bill in ‘may/permissive’ language if a project should be presented.

Councilmember McGlone stated the PCA is required under federal law to maintain this type of property almost into perpetuity so it may be a waste of time.

Representative Abeler explained that if Ramsey has a bill, then at least the State law will not be a barrier. He noted that at some point, Ramsey will run out of land and want to use this site.

Representative Scott indicated that Andover used its closed landfill for ball fields.

#### Cost of Additional Employer Contributions to Public Employee Retirement Association (PERA)

City Administrator Ulrich stated the impact for Ramsey to make additional contributions to PERA is \$17,000/year. This is for an additional 1.8% employer contribution, which is a significant impact to the Ramsey budget. He asked the Legislative Delegation to keep that in mind and look at impacts to local units of government as well as employees.

Representative Abeler stated PERA is funded up to 75% and a big deal in police and fire negotiations.

Councilmember Tossey stated the additional contribution is 1.2% for employees and 1.8% to the employers.

Representative Abeler acknowledged that this is a time of flat salary for employees so the additional contribution will take a nick out of their paycheck but this is the only realistic way to solve the problem. He noted that people made promises, bargaining agreements were reached, and it is difficult to change that situation. Representative Abeler indicated there has been an effort to constrain annual increases and cautioned that there could be a worse solution to 1.8% contribution by employers.

City Administrator Ulrich stated Ramsey has 64 full-time employees including police and fire is paid on call.

#### Enhanced Local Control of Group-Home Operations

City Administrator Ulrich stated it is a concern to Ramsey that group homes are starting over night in residential areas and the City's ability to control this from happening is limited since there is no prior notice. The City would like some consideration for more ability to monitor and respond when problems arise.

Development Services Manager Gladhill stated the City has received concerns from residents about lack of notification. Residents do not realize what is occurring until the use is already there and would like the ability to understand ahead of time. Development Services Manager Gladhill explained additional concerns relate to the amount of activity occurring in standard single-family areas, off-street parking, parking in the front yard, and parking on the street, which can be regulated by ordinance. The City would support a limit on the number of occupants in the dwelling, thresholds of group homes in multiple categories, and to address adverse secondary effects over time.

Representative Abeler stated the group homes are four-resident situations and there is nothing Legislators or the City can do about it because Federal laws require these sites to move forward and they have considerable Constitutional rights. Representative Abeler stated he has tried, but could not even get notification rights included in the bill. He stated Ramsey is on the right track to control parking with zoning and asked if the City has an ordinance that allows four unrelated individuals.

Development Services Manager Gladhill replied that Ramsey does not.

Representative Abeler noted the City of Anoka has an ordinance about four unrelated individuals. He advised there is no relief to be had relating to group homes and the counties do not even know about the locations. Representative Abeler described the need to address housing for sex offenders who have completed their sentences and risk that if the Legislature does not act in some way, a judge may take action about this program. He stated he is willing to again raise the issue of notification, if Ramsey wants, but he doubts he will be successful.

Police Chief Way stated Ramsey has 40 Level 1, 25-30 Level 2, and zero Level 3 offenders.

Representative Scott stated former Governor Pawlenty tried to double sentences for these offenders, but was not successful.

### Highway 47 and Highway 10 Congestion and Funding

On the topic of transportation, Councilmember Backous noted all agree that Highway 10 needs to be approved but getting to Highway 10 is also an issue. He explained that Highway 47 is becoming more of the problem every year due to congestion, the curve through Anoka, and high school drivers. Councilmember Backous stated he would like Highway 47 to be included on a list of topics to explore solutions, widening, and extra turn lanes.

Representative Abeler indicated that Highway 47 is a State route that is on nobody's list. He felt the only hope was when County Road 22 becomes a State highway. Then the State can abandon Highway 47 from County Road 22 south and it can become a County road. Representative Abeler reviewed other locations of congestion that need additional lane width and turn lanes. He felt it would help if Highway 47 was a County road because it could make improvements that would help, but it will be a hard problem to solve. Representative Abeler pointed out that Highway 10 is a big deal and it is not on the project list and since Highway 47 impacts fewer people, it is on no list. He felt the more people who bring up the condition of Highway 47, the better.

Councilmember Backous stated that is why he wants Highway 47 on a list.

Representative Abeler stated Highway 47 needs to be on a Transportation Bill, noting an additional gas tax is not an option because no one has a nickel to pay more for gas. He agreed to put Highway 10 in a bill; however, the study by Mn/DOT will slow down the progress.

Mayor Ramsey stated the City already had a study done and held open meetings showing alignments and bridges.

Representative Abeler stated this is a good pressure point of which to remind them.

Councilmember Tossey asked how Chaska, a city of 4,000 residents, received funding to construct four-lane Highway 212, yet Anoka County is fast growing and cannot get funding for Highway 10.

Representative Abeler explained that Governor Pawlenty's Transportation Commissioner and Lt. Governor lived in that area. He noted that at worst peak traffic, Highway 212 carries the same level of traffic as Highway 10 past Elk River, next to nothing. Representative Abeler stated it will help if Ramsey can make a big story about the accidents and tragedies occurring on Highway 10.

Councilmember Tossey asked what will happen with Highway 22 north of Highway 47.

Representative Abeler stated Highway 22 would be a State highway until north of St. Francis. He noted the County has more freedom with its roads.

Councilmember Elvig stated a dozen years ago Ramsey went through the rebuild of Highway 47 to add lanes and hard channeling, which worked for a while. Since that time, Ramsey has doubled in size. Another improvement doubled the lanes over the rail track, added a bypass around the wrecking yard, and turn lane onto McKinley. Councilmember Elvig noted the City has been making improvements to Highway 47 in incremental bites and is now working on County Road 116 and Highway 47 to widen lanes but may need additional leverage to get that to happen. He pointed out that during evening and morning rush hours, all have to cross that intersection to cross the River and get to Anoka. That point of roadway is the problem.

Representative Abeler explained that in terms of process, he has found State traffic engineers to be rigid. He reviewed roadway locations and configurations that he had worked on with State traffic engineers to improve the design, some of which required a year of effort. Representative Abeler stated if the City has a plan, he will help negotiate with Mn/DOT.

Mayor Ramsey stated the City has already been told it cannot do what it wants with a study on Highway 47 and Bunker to open an access in a concrete median to gain access to SuperAmerica. This roadway was funded by the Thurston project and included federal money so Anoka County will not support that median change since it may impact its federal funding. Mayor Ramsey noted Ramsey has already been threatened that it may lose the turn/median cut at 142<sup>nd</sup> at Highway 47 so he is concerned that by ordering the study, the State will decide to remove that access which will kill SuperAmerica and the strip mall businesses. Mayor Ramsey stated he spoke up about this concern at the Public Works Committee meeting.

Interim Engineer Nelson agreed it is a concern and when dealing with Mn/DOT and Anoka County, both only see the engineering side and do not hear from the business owners and residents. He stated there was a Mn/DOT engineer who indicated he would support a left turn from Highway 47, going north, into the old Snyder's and that would help Anoka.

Mayor Ramsey stated he did not want Ramsey to lose the median cut on 142<sup>nd</sup>.

Representative Abeler stated he thinks they would approve a turn off Bunker Lake Boulevard instead of 142<sup>nd</sup>.

Interim Engineer Nelson stated the Thurston project received safety money because it closed access points so it would be extremely challenging to get a new access point approved.

Councilmember Elvig stated the idea of the study is to engineer around those problems and determine what is feasible, maybe running two lanes up to 142<sup>nd</sup>. He stated he does not think the State would have the legs to shut off that intersection. In addition, the study would engineer the intersections and with two lanes, it could accommodate traffic stacking.

Mayor Ramsey stated he does not support doing the study and will remove that item from tonight's Consent Agenda. He believed it would be prudent to wait and look into it more.

Councilmember Strommen noted information from the study is needed before the City can talk with the County and State.

Councilmember Elvig stated the City is lacking in connecting efforts with Mn/DOT. He recalled that 8-10 years ago, the City had a close relationship with Mn/DOT when working on projects.

Mayor Ramsey stated he would prefer the approach of postponing the study so time can be taken to talk with Mn/DOT traffic engineers.

Councilmember Backous asked what are the ramifications of waiting.

Interim Engineer Nelson explained at this time, the City of Anoka is willing to fund one-half of the study (\$14,000).

Mayor Ramsey stated the City of Anoka has been told they may get an access but the City of Ramsey has been told it may lose an access. He felt the City of Anoka would be willing to pay one-half for the study next year too.

Councilmember Backous agreed there is a risk that access will be closed to the strip mall.

Representative Abeler pointed out that Mn/DOT prefers no access anywhere so he wondered if it would approve another access in Anoka when there are so many other little points of access. Representative Abeler asked staff to provide the Legislative Delegation with a list of topics of interest for Ramsey so he can connect them with House research.

Councilmember Strommen stated the Members Elect should discuss the list of topics prior to forwarding that information to the Delegation.

The Council thanked the Delegation for attending tonight's Work Session.

### **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 Backous, seconded by Councilmember Wise, to adjourn the Work Session meeting.

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:54 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.*