

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, February 12, 2013, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen  
Councilmember David Elvig  
Councilmember Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember John LeTourneau  
Councilmember Chris Riley  
Councilmember Jason Tossey

Member Absent: Councilmember Randy Backous

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
Development Services Manager Timothy Gladhill  
Management Analyst Patrick Brama

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 6:25 p.m.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: FOR DISCUSSION ONLY: Receive Presentation from the Charter School Fund in  
Regard to Potential Charter School Development**

Development Services Manager Gladhill reviewed the staff report and request of Charter School Fund to explore potential sites in Ramsey for a future charter school, a tax exempt entity. He requested the Council provide direction as to whether the Development Team should work with this applicant.

Mayor Strommen addressed the timing to get through the presentation tonight and still allow Council the ability to ask questions.

Development Services Manager Gladhill indicated the Charter School Fund representatives are from out-of-state and suggested land use issues be forwarded to the Planning Commission and the Council address tax implications.

Ryan VanAlfen, Charter School Fund, introduced the Athlos Leadership Academy school model, explaining that Athlos means “notable feat” or “accomplishment,” and uses athletics as modality to teach. He presented slides of their other projects and stated they have delivered 700,000 sq. ft. in facilities. Mr. VanAlfen addressed the importance of assuring students are ready to compete and model of delivering character education to broaden appeal. He noted kids learn in physical ways and athletics produce a microcosm of life in working as a group for common good. Athleticism is taught through Velocity Sports Performance for core competency and adapted to be age appropriate to work in a school model. This process does not pit child against child or individual sports. They have found that character development and building social intelligence is critical for the child’s future. Mr. VanAlfen displayed a slide of their character report card and explained how it is integrated and reinforced into the classroom. After school opportunities are provided in the training school including team sports by Velocity, adult fit courses, Braintree Kids (a before and after school program), and Parent Partnerships. Mr. VanAlfen advised of partners in the school and displayed colored elevations depicting state-of-the-art facilities they have constructed.

Brian Huffaker, Charter School Fund, stated they are excited about the school and benefits it provides and hope the Council sees the assets it will bring to the community. He stated he would like to address the financial impacts to the community. Mr. Huffaker explained Charter School Fund provides real estate services to complete the facility, and an experienced team deals with the City and application process to make it a jointly beneficial project. Athlos Academics is the school function. He stated the property at the southwest corner of Sunwood Drive and Ramsey Boulevard is just less than 15 acres and based on expected lot configuration, fronts on both Sunwood Drive and Ramsey Boulevard. Mr. Huffaker displayed the front elevation of the proposed school, noting it shows an educational institution and strong depiction of that education. He then displayed the beginning footprint of the school and described the floor plan with the entry/lobby/gymnasium located in the center. The anticipated enrollment is 850 the first year, growing to 1,215. The building size of 85,000 square feet would have 46 classrooms and staff of 84. The annual gross budget is \$9.7 million/year. The project would result in 300 construction jobs paying \$8 million in wages and \$11 million in materials. The project is estimated at \$19 million in privately funded project costs and \$350,000 privately paid project fees (plus SAC/WAC). Mr. Huffaker stated there is demand in Ramsey for quality schools and this project offers a unique type of education and would host tournaments by Velocity Sports Performance. He stated they are willing to discuss the option of sharing of facility as a community center during off school hours. Mr. Huffaker stated this project will bring more interest to The COR, add the social value of a unique school, and improve the demand for the high-density residential options in The COR.

Development Services Manager Gladhill stated as staff reviewed potential tax implications, he wanted to note this site was within an existing Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District.

Councilmember Kuzma asked about the proposed grades.

Mr. VanAlfen stated they plan to start with K-8 and see if demand grows to K-12. They would like this expansion to grow organically.

Councilmember Elvig asked what is the attraction of The COR instead of other land in Ramsey.

Mr. VanAlfen stated the initial attractions were its proximity to Highway 10, rail, and the school's leader lives in the general vicinity.

Councilmember Elvig asked if they would be interested in other property, noting The COR is expensive ground and within a TIF District. He explained that constituents who paid for infrastructure improvements want to get tax benefit.

Mr. VanAlfen stated that is a potential.

Councilmember Elvig stated he is fascinated with the programming and agreed it would be new to Ramsey.

Mayor Strommen referenced the comment indicating there is demand for schools in Ramsey, and asked whether this was based on geographic region or demographics. She also asked where is the next closest school that they operate and if other schools are currently under construction.

Mr. VanAlfen stated they will have a school underway in 2014 in northern Brooklyn Park. He stated Ramsey currently has no middle school or high school besides PACT so they think there is a competitive landscape. In addition, based on enrollment in other area schools, there seems to be demand. Mr. VanAlfen stated they looked at The COR and found it to be very appealing from a development standpoint.

Councilmember Tossey explained that The COR is part of a TIF District, contains a lot of infrastructure costs, and bringing in a tax exempt defeats the purpose of TIF. He explained that PACT came in prior to the TIF District and Legacy Academy is on Bunker Lake Boulevard and Armstrong Boulevard. He noted there is private property available west of there and with the potential overpass at Armstrong Boulevard, that may be an option to be near The COR but not in The COR. Councilmember Tossey indicated a church approached the City last summer and the Council had the same concern with that request. He believed their concept was interesting, new, and knew PACT was very successful with a waiting list but there is hesitation due to expectation of the taxpayers.

Mr. VanAlfen stated they are sensitive to that and would like to begin dialogue to see if interest is there. He stated they would consider other sites; however, due to the challenges with their first construction project dealing with Minnesota winter, The COR pad is prepared and ready. That is a big draw to mitigate winter construction challenges.

City Administrator Ulrich asked whether they have worked with communities to make an annual contribution in lieu of property taxes.

Mr. Van Elfin stated he is familiar with the concept and willing to hold that conversation. He pointed out that the property will be held by a taxable entity for the first five years.

Councilmember Elvig asked about the property taxes paid for a \$19 million value project.

City Administrator Ulrich stated it is estimated this property could generate, at optimal commercial development, \$24 million in value and generate City taxes of \$500,000 to \$800,000 annually at full development.

Councilmember Elvig stated he is assuming that with a 14-acre site, there will be athletic fields and a concern is with getting the highest and best use of The COR property. He noted the City owns a portion of property south of Alpine Drive and west of Armstrong Boulevard where there is surrounding property of 40 acres. That site has traffic access to Highway 10 and may be a good site for this project that has an estate appearance. Councilmember Elvig stated that site is in the back yard of Legacy Academy but creates draw for The COR, and if constructed would draw residential next to the school, creating a handsome mix. He agreed that the option of contribution in lieu of taxation is worth exploring.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated this is an amazing project and concept, and he agreed with the aspect of athletics in learning. He stated it has been mentioned the City needs to review how this proposal fits with the overall development plan of The COR and Comprehensive Plan. Councilmember LeTourneau stated he would like to learn more about that, to identify alignment with those two, and also identify gaps so the Council can address placement and opportunity.

Mayor Strommen agreed there is an issue of alignment with the vision of The COR and Comprehensive Plan. She stated the City was notified of another potential user with an interesting project that was slightly different and she is concerned with the potential for a case-by-case erosion of that master vision. Mayor Strommen supported it being addressed holistically, including the Planning Commission, and diving into the tax impacts.

Councilmember Tossey explained there are commitments with this TIF District that need to be met and this property is to help do that but he is interested in talking about a resolution. He stated the Charter School is incredibly successful with graduates that continue on to college and receive scholarships, all benefits to the community as a whole.

Mr. VanAlfen stated it was clear from the beginning that this was not intended for a school site and the Council would have to find auxiliary benefits to make it attractive for a school. He indicated it may be a waste of time if not in the Comprehensive Plan and vision for The COR, but they thought there might be interest beyond what was originally planned. Mr. VanAlfen stated this model is unique enough that it will drive traffic to The COR and draw high density residential that the City wants to accomplish.

Mayor Strommen thanked Messrs. VanAlfen and Huffaker for this presentation.

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

Noted.

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

None

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Councilmember Elvig, seconded by Councilmember Tossey, to adjourn the Work Session meeting.

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:56 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.*