

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Joint Work Session with the City of Anoka on Tuesday, April 30, 2013, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, Lake Itasca Room, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen  
Councilmember Randy Backous  
Councilmember Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember John LeTourneau  
Councilmember Chris Riley  
Councilmember Jason Tossey

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
Development Services Manager Timothy Gladhill  
City Engineer Bruce Westby

Anoka Members Present: Councilmember Carl Anderson  
Councilmember Mark Freeburg  
Councilmember Steve Schmidt  
Councilmember Jeff Weaver

Also Present: City Manager Tim Cruikshank  
Planning Director Carolyn Braun  
Economic Development Coordinator/Planner Erik Thorvig  
Director of Public Services/City Engineer Greg Lee

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Joint Work Session to order at 6:05 p.m.

**2. INTRODUCTIONS**

At the invitation of Mayor Strommen, all present introduced themselves.

**3. DISCUSSION & UPDATES**

**3.01: Highway 10**

City Administrator Ulrich stated that there has been progress on Highway 10, noting this is a State issue that needs to be solved as a corridor. He said they will be traveling to Washington

D.C. at the end of May to speak with representatives on obtaining federal funding. City Administrator Ulrich said the COR could be considered either as a series of smaller projects or one large project, adding they have preliminary numbers on many projects. He said they were successful on a joint resolution on the western terminus of this project and that they want to move Armstrong forward as a top priority, with Anoka's Fair oak/Thurston interchange next. City Administrator Ulrich said he has seen positive support from the Legislation with Congresswoman Bachman and Senator Franken recognizing Highway 10 as important corridor for the State.

Councilmember Schmidt asked if there is any money in the bonding bill for preplanning of Highway 10.

City Administrator Ulrich said there is money under the transportation bonding bill on the House side of \$35 million so hopefully, \$10 million will be dedicated to the Armstrong Boulevard interchange. He noted the project still needs to get through the process, adding it did not make the Governor's proposal.

Councilmember Tossey said there is \$10 million proposed in the House but that Senator Petersen said out of the transportation bill they will direct up to \$17 million for the project so hopefully, the goal is if we can acquire some of that funding, we can do other financing options for the balance. He said he had been in touch with other County officials on CTIB funds so there are various other funding options in place. Councilmember Tossey said that after Armstrong Boulevard the next push should be Thurston Avenue and that Ramsey will support Anoka's efforts in that project.

Councilmember Weaver thanked Councilmember Tossey for getting the coalition together because they can work better as a group.

Mayor Strommen said Ramsey has designated Councilmembers LeTourneau and Tossey and her as a subcommittee on this effort.

Councilmember Tossey stated that Sheriff Stewart supports this effort too which is helpful as it is a safety concern.

Planning Director Braun shared the latest proposal from 2009 of Alternative B: Tight Diamond; stating if something results it will be better than nothing. She added that there will be a MnDOT access management study beginning soon which might help lower the cost too because the project will require approximately \$300 million overall.

City Manager Cruikshank said the Highway 10 topic came up many years ago and our cities joined forces then and continue in this effort, adding without the cities working with the County we wouldn't have anything. He said Anoka appreciates this partnership.

Mayor Strommen said this region can and will be left behind if road improvements are not made. She referred to Senator Franken's recent business forum and the importance of this corridor for the businesses.

### **3.02: Great River Energy Transmission Project (115 kV Route Plan)**

Development Services Manager Gladhill updated the Councils on the work on the transmission line project, stating upgrades are needed especially as the cities grow. He thanked Anoka for their work on protecting Rivers Bend Park through co-locating, noting this compromise has worked out well.

Planning Director Braun referred to the construction in Enterprise Park with grading and foundations beginning soon, but noted they are still working on easement acquisitions. She thanked Ramsey for their work on creating the south alignment and for crossing the Rum River, stating the line is now north of the Grey Ghost Field and will have no impact. Planning Director Braun said they are currently in negotiations for easements on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and are working on locating the substation on 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and Garfield Street, which will include an under build agreement and several other easement documents sometime in May.

Development Services Manager Gladhill said staff has been working with Mark Struff from Great River Energy on visual impacts trying to select the one with the least impact. He said this is Phase I of two phases that will eventually continue west.

Mayor Strommen inquired about the size of the poles.

Planning Director Braun said they will be monopoles but taller with hangers.

Councilmember Weaver noted the poles will be at 300-foot spacing instead of 100-foot so there will be fewer poles but taller. He noted Anoka did not receive a lot of opposition from residents, which was surprising, adding that they selected the best route possible.

Planning Director Braun said this project was difficult to do in a fully developed city.

Councilmember Schmidt said site approvals are still needed from the Public Utility Commission, which is likely part of the delay.

Planning Director Braun agreed, adding that this is especially true because of the route change.

Councilmember Schmidt said we are spending \$5-\$6 million for two substations on this line.

Councilmember Riley asked if this project will provide more power.

Councilmember Weaver said the project will provide more power, backup, and connectivity.

Development Services Manager Gladhill said we are at capacity now and that one more data center would have surpassed capacity.

Councilmember Schmidt said Enterprise Park was at full capacity last summer as well.

Councilmember Backous said the substation was at Garfield Street and 7<sup>th</sup> Avenue and asked why it went farther north.

City Manager Cruikshank outlined the proposed property owned by the State, stating they wanted to acquire it so the Public Works building can be moved when the rail station area develops. He said this is not the best location for Public Works and that this could be a nice opportunity to place the new substation here. City Manager Cruikshank said it originally was to be closer to the Grey Ghost Field and was unsure if the substation location is why the route ended here.

Planning Director Braun said Highway 10 would not work because of the right-of-way and the track did not allow enough room.

Councilmember Schmidt noted the former park and ride was abandoned and that is why we are using it too.

Mayor Strommen asked how resident communication will occur.

Development Services Manager Gladhill said Great River Energy will be sending that communication but that the City will do other informational pieces on the City's web page and newsletter this summer.

Planning Director Braun said construction could potentially begin in the fall but will likely be spring but that they will work with Great River Energy on the timing.

### **3.03: Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization / Rum River Dam**

City Manager Cruikshank gave an overview of the recent member city meeting on April 25 that included a number of topics, the most interesting of which was the Rum River Dam and its future. He said the meeting included four proposals: (1) Anoka wants support to apply for a \$250,000 grant to study upstream hydrology and determine the necessary Dam improvements to create a better invasive fish barrier; (2) members and board support to work with the Legislature in 2015 to obtain more funding in the bonding bill to make Dam necessary improvements around \$4-\$5 million, including a mechanized Dam system and change gate system on the east side of the Dam to create the recreational pool instead of a top loading gate. He said this request is more immediate and that Anoka wants to submit the grant by May 16.

Councilmember Weaver said the Dam is structurally sound for 30 years but that we just need redundancy because it is the last line of defense to Mille Lacs Lake for invasive species such as Asian carp. He said they want to be proactive because this is important to area cities as well as the region.

Councilmember Freeburg inquired about the possibility of a taxing district for this project.

Councilmember Weaver said this is a requirement of the Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization (LRRWMO) that a plan is in place for maintenance of the Dam.

Councilmember Schmidt said the Conservation District is proposing to approach all 11 watershed districts between here and Mille Lacs.

City Manager Cruikshank continued that the proposal (3) includes how we pay for ongoing maintenance and other costs of the Dam, which total about \$15,000 annually. He said they are proposing a cost share based on the budget of LRRWMO land share; 49% Ramsey, 20% Andover/Anoka, and a small portion of Coon Rapids. He concluded that proposal (4) is repair and replacement of the Dam, which would include State involvement or converting it to a taxing watershed with stormwater fees, etc. City Manager Cruikshank said we have some time to create a plan but that they wanted to initiate the conversation. He said there are many reasons why the Dam exists and that is why it needs to remain for years to come.

Councilmember Weaver said he forwarded an email outlining the process, effort, and time involved in raising the gates.

City Administrator Ulrich said we want this discussion about costs and maintenance to be fair to the users as the fisheries issue is State-wide and that recreational uses may be more regional.

Councilmember Weaver said we want to make sure we have support for funds for redundancy, noting the maintenance is another aspect.

Mayor Strommen said until a study has been completed it is difficult to talk about cost share. She said she appreciates Anoka's leadership on this topic but that she has been through the process before and knows how much work is being done with the University of Minnesota and the DNR. She said we need to learn from the experts before we continue as this is a significant amount of money. Mayor Strommen said many are new to the Ramsey Council and that they need to learn more about this background.

Councilmember Weaver said that June 7 is the deadline for the grant so there is not much time for a debate. He said if we are afraid to invest, we will waste a year, adding Ramsey will come to the same conclusion because we will not know the outcome of the Stanley consultants until we spend the money. He said this is an important part of the invasive species study and that time is of the essence.

Mayor Strommen said she understands the urgency but is concerned because there is lots of competition and most of the discussion is farther downstream. She said when they are in the process they will ask a lot of questions.

Councilmember Weaver agreed but said we have to do the study to answer the question because they need to protect Mille Lacs Lake. He said redundancy is critical on any river to combat this problem, adding that while many forms already in place appear to be only 75% effective.

Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee calculated that they are 90% effective so anything we can do for preventive measures is best.

Mayor Strommen said this is true but that she wants to know what the DNR says since this is such a competitive process. She said we need to position ourselves for the best outcome.

Councilmember Weaver said we need the study to determine the best route as the DNR's job is to do what they are told.

Mayor Strommen said the legislature will make the decision on the appropriate action and will want the information.

Councilmember Weaver said they could get the information on the bonding bill.

Councilmember Tossey said he would like to support this effort as Mille Lacs Lake is very important to 90% of anglers. He said we need to get the facts and that he doesn't want to wait another year, adding the DNR is late on addressing invasive species and that we have to protect fisheries. Councilmember Tossey said if the species gets north of the Dam it will be very bad, adding we should get the City of Cambridge to help as well.

Councilmember Schmidt said it is the best thing to allow Stanley Consultants to move ahead with the study and have the City Managers share any information possible to help advance their efforts. He said the cost is slight compared to the potential dangers.

Mayor Strommen said she is not arguing the importance but said there are other avenues to try and that she wants to say we have done everything as part of the grant application.

City Manager Cruikshank said however that gets done is great, adding both cities seem to be in agreement.

Councilmember Schmidt said without tips from Stanley Consultants on the Coon Rapids Dam there would not be any bonding bill.

Councilmember Weaver said he heard all the pros and cons of the Coon Rapids Dam Commission and understands that this is a million dollar fishery. He said he hopes they can get Ramsey's support on May 16<sup>th</sup> at the LRRWMO meeting.

City Manager Cruikshank said Anoka will likely give Stanley the approval to move forward and that he hopes they have Ramsey's support on May 16<sup>th</sup>.

Councilmember Schmidt said Mayor Gamache and four other cities will likely support this effort as well.

City Administrator Ulrich said they have a proposal from the engineering consultant of \$2,000-\$10,000 so they hope to have the scope of services complete soon.

Councilmember Kuzma spoke about LRRWMO funding but said we need to come back to our Council to get everyone up to speed.

Councilmember Backous asked what started this process.

Councilmember Weaver said this was reviewed over a year ago and that Representative Abeler was going to carry the bonding bill but we were not ready yet but that Jamie Schurbon (Anoka Conservation District) felt strongly that it is being driven by the Conservation District and the deadline for the grant application.

### **3.04: River & Shoreland Regulations**

Development Services Manager Gladhill stated that in 2009 the Legislature authorized rulemaking to protect the shoreland along the Mississippi River that received a lot of pushback because not one size fits all cities along the River. He said the rules are included in the current Legacy Omnibus Bill but that Ramsey has not reviewed it yet so they are unsure of their our position. He said the northwest group bonded together the last time with benefits to Ramsey but that they need to review this more before a resolution can be considered by the Council.

Mayor Strommen asked if this bill includes new rulemaking or is being picked up from last time.

Councilmember Weaver said the rulemaking continues from last time but that no sunset date is included on completion.

Development Services Manager Gladhill said the bill is in the House now and that there is lots of background data on what the regulations are.

Planning Director Braun said the last version included definitions but are not included now, adding there is language that the DNR needs to incorporate and industrial aspects too.

Councilmember Weaver said they say they have toned down the rules but have really made them more onerous, affecting the Rum River and making us comply with MNRA rules. He said their plan for the Thurston interchange and the tight diamond along Kings Island is half a mile from the River and that the plan was rejected because it encroached in the MNRA area 600 square feet. Councilmember Weaver said these rules result in making all properties on the river non-conforming and that variances will be required for gardens, etc., that have to have a 50-foot buffer.

Development Services Manager Gladhill said they need to do more work on educating both Councils on where the rules are starting from.

Mayor Strommen said this is not in the Senate yet but that they will know when it is on the floor.

Councilmember Schmidt said there is not much chance for public input as they have already spent funds for this.

Councilmember Weaver noted that anything could happen at the conference committee.

Development Services Manager Gladhill said they will ensure that there is a local voice and be fully educated on the topic before then.

Councilmember Weaver said the minimum standards were more onerous than City standards already in place.

Planning Director Braun said these rules will be difficult to enforce and administer so we will end up in litigation. She noted insurance will not cover costs if we bring to litigation and said they are not sure of the consequences.

Mayor Strommen said we need more education on the potential impacts.

Councilmember Schmidt said Nowthen is an isolated area but we have positive support from Representatives Uglem and Abeler.

Councilmember Weaver said bipartisan support is great, adding this is all encompassing and more government needs to be involved. He thanked Development Services Manager Gladhill and Planning Director Braun for their work on this topic.

### **3.05: Mississippi River Trail**

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood shared slides from the joint meeting as well as history on the Mississippi River Trail (MRT).

Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee outlined the proposed schedule and the project on Kings Island, including amenities such as a suspended pedestrian bridge and hunting blinds for handicapped hunters.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood outlined the rest of the trail system and amenities such as restrooms and drinking water at Riverplace Park.

Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee said the project will be under \$1.4 million and is a cost sharing outlined through a joint powers agreement. He said we each pay our portion, 45% Ramsey and 55% Anoka, including engineering costs. Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee said revenue will come from a Federal Transportation Grant of \$440,000 as well as County participation at \$340,000 from east of Kings Island to Mississippi West Regional Park.

Councilmember Weaver said this will be an economic engine and that TC Gateway ads featuring bicycling in this region will be very good.

Mayor Strommen said the economic potential has always been a selling point and that she is glad to see TC Gateway and others promoting the trail.

Councilmember Freeburg asked if the regional biking industry will promote this trail as well.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood said there are disparate bike groups under Pedal MN and that they will be advocating for the Northstar line to expand to other areas.

City Administrator Ulrich said this trail will be one more connection between the two cities.

Councilmember Weaver said this trail will be a great asset once it is all linked.

Mayor Strommen said this has been a great partnership and that we need to maximize it to bring people to this region.

City Administrator Ulrich said they will be hosting a ribbon cutting event and bike riding activities when complete.

Councilmember Schmidt suggested discussions be held with hotels and motels right on the Trail.

Councilmember Weaver suggested utilizing TC Gateway for communications.

Councilmember Backous noted that TC Gateway was not interested in having Ramsey join the consortium.

Councilmember Schmidt said dollars flow into TC Gateway from many different cities, which is a great concept.

Councilmember Weaver said the funding is driven by hotel and motel rooms used in each community.

Councilmember Backous said the City is responsible for collecting these fees, which places government in the middle.

Councilmember Weaver agreed but noted that Anoka has seen a return already, especially since Anoka is the smallest contributor.

Mayor Strommen said she was curious on the rejection and would like to find out why Ramsey was denied.

Councilmember Freeburg said it could be due to Ramsey's outlying location.

Councilmember Weaver said the former Visitors Bureau was dominated by the City of Maple Grove so many cities withdrew and created their own that concentrates on the north metro area.

### **3.06: General Development**

Development Services Manager Gladhill reviewed current development projects in Ramsey, including McDonald's, SuperAmerica, Northgate Performing Arts Center, and Residence at The COR.

City Manager Cruikshank asked if any units have been rented yet at The Residence. Development Services Manager Gladhill shared that some units have been pre-leased, noting that without a mobile leasing office it had been difficult but now a temporary construction office will be open and one existing unit.

Councilmember Freeburg inquired about the rental rates. Development Services Manager Gladhill said the project will include some high amenities and that rents will be market rate or even higher.

Development Services Manager Gladhill shared information on the Seasons of Ramsey rental townhomes, noting the project included 50 units. He reviewed Ramsey's building permits and valuations, noting that they will meet or exceed last year's activity and that there has been a reduction in foreclosures. Development Services Manager Gladhill then reviewed the Highway 10/Armstrong Boulevard interchange, boat launch landing and other economic development focuses.

Councilmember Anderson asked if the river crossing project was still active. Development Services Manager Gladhill said that project is not their highest priority because the interchange is instead.

Mayor Strommen said that they need to work with the City of Dayton on that project first.

Development Services Manager Gladhill said it has been an exciting year in Ramsey with positive developments coming.

Economic Development Coordinator/Planner Thorvig reviewed the City of Anoka's highlights, including Volunteers of America, HealthPartners/Riverway Clinic, Castle Field, Caribou Coffee, and residential and commercial developments north of County Road 116.

City Manager Cruikshank noted that an amateur baseball team, Northwoods, may be coming to Anoka in 2015.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood inquired about the level of homes in the new development north of County Road 116.

Economic Development Coordinator/Planner Thorvig said it will be an upper level development by the Rum River Regional Trail, Mississippi River, adding the potential for docks will be a big factor for the developer.

Planning Director Braun highlighted the Anoka Northstar Station project including the pedestrian bridge.

Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee referred to Greenhaven Road improvements, Castle Field Phase II, and the trail behind City Hall, which is the segment that has been missing from the Rum River Regional Trail.

City Administrator Ulrich inquired about bicycle trail connections. Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee said this new segment will be part of that trail connection.

Economic Development Coordinator/Planner Thorvig outlined other projects including the Historic Rum River District, Anoka Station Master Plan, and Greens of Anoka around Green Haven Golf Course. He stated the economy is beginning to turn which is making for some exciting developments.

#### **4. OTHER ITEMS / COUNCILMEMBERS COMMENTS**

Councilmember Anderson said it is tremendous that they were able to meet together, noting the two cities had many ties historically. He said that Lake Itasca has a historic presence in Ramsey and he hopes they continue to highlight that fact.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood said interpretive signage on the River will help tell that history.

Mayor Strommen said it was great to be able to get together as Ramsey and Anoka share many interests and partnerships.

Councilmember Weaver thanked Ramsey for their participation in the recent Mayor's Trail Ride, adding that it was quite an event.

#### **5. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Strommen adjourned the Work Session of the City Council at 8:06 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 Cathy Sorensen  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*