

**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 24, 2013, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen
Councilmember Randy Backous
Councilmember Jill Johns
Councilmember Mark Kuzma
Councilmember John LeTourneau
Councilmember Chris Riley

Member Absent: Councilmember Jason Tossey

Also Present: Acting City Administrator/Finance Director Diana Lund
Fire Chief Dean Kapler
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Human Resources Manager Colleen Lasher
Development Services Manager Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby
Assistant to the City Administrator Patrick Brama
City Attorney Joe Langel

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Receive Presentation by Leigh Lenzmeier, Chair of Northstar Corridor Development Authority

Leigh Lenzmeier, Stearns County Commissioner and Chair of the Northstar Corridor Development Authority, explained that he is making an effort to better communicate with City Councils in Station cities. Mr. Lenzmeier stated for the next two years, the big focus will be on Station cities. He explained there are two philosophies with transportation service: to connect developments; and, to create a transportation corridor where you think development should be located. Mr. Lenzmeier stated Northstar does not have the density the Hiawatha line enjoys but The COR development is the model and what is needed. It also demonstrates two competing types of multi-family housing (work force housing and higher rent boomer-generation housing). In addition, land use is the key to move forward with Northstar.

Jill Brown, Northstar Marketing Director, provided a presentation on the Northstar Line, Hiawatha Line, and the Central Line that will open in several months, all coming together at the Target Center Transit Station. She stated that means there will be 500 trains per day in addition to 2,000 bus connection per day at the Target Center Transit Station. Ms. Brown stated people now want to move in different ways, especially Millennials who are embracing transit better than previous generations. She advised of the housing, commercial, industrial, medical facility, and parking projects underway in Big Lake, Elk River, Ramsey, Anoka, Coon Rapids, and Fridley. She reported that ridership is up with August of 2013 being the best month to-date. Ms. Brown thanked City staff for its work with Northstar and provided a fact sheet relating to the Northstar Commuter Rail.

Mr. Lenzmeier stated in 2015 he would like to work towards linking private transportation (i.e., employers) to the transit stations. He described how calls about transit are handled as well as dispatcher training, noting they would like to improve communication so the dispatchers get to know each other personally. Mr. Lenzmeier described a program that significantly raised awareness of the need for Wi-Fi on the commuter train. Wi-Fi is now available on one car so it can be determined how it will work out. He stated this makes the Northstar Millennial friendly, which is important as that generation supports transit.

Mr. Lenzmeier stated the interchange depot opens April 7, 2014, the same day as the Twin's opening game and by July 15, which is the All Star game at the Twin's Stadium, all of the kinks should be worked out. He noted having that transit depot will widen the opportunity for transit routes.

Mr. Lenzmeier explained that the St. Cloud State Technological College advertising program has done some high profile campaigns and taken on non-profit and government projects at no cost. In addition, they will meet with North Hennepin and Anoka Ramsey to see if there is a piece for those schools in the Northstar effort. Mr. Lenzmeier stated he knew he would not get additional staff or funding so he is exploring those opportunities. He indicated that City Administrator Ulrich has been very helpful in their efforts.

Councilmember Kuzma thanked Mr. Lenzmeier for doing a great job.

Mr. Lenzmeier stated it is exciting, especially for the apartment boom that developers claim has another two years to run so he is optimistic there will be more development in Station cities.

Councilmember Backous noted the drop off in ridership coincides each year with the baseball season and stated he thinks the new station will provide the opportunity to use other routes.

Mr. Lenzmeier stated it is correct that special events added a significant increase to ridership but what is significant about the August figures, is that special event ridership was down significantly and the core market increase is commuters. He stated another significant difference between the two lines is that Hiawatha owns its right-of-way but Northstar rents its right-of-way.

Councilmember Backous asked whether the Twins organization participated in costs, as they are a huge benefactor.

Ms. Brown stated the Twins contributed more than \$2 million to build the Target Center Station.

Mr. Lenzmeier stated the two largest events were the Kenny Chesney concerts last year and this year. This year 12,000 people arrived by train and 2,000 by Northstar, with that ridership driven by the alcohol legal limit of .08 so they can party. He stated projections are best estimates and while Hiawatha met 20 year projections in year 2, that has not occurred with Northstar but it is getting better.

Mayor Strommen asked if there are recommendations for Ramsey or other Station cities to advance Northstar and how it can be best used with economic development.

Mr. Lenzmeier stated the City can welcome developers, as density is the driving element. He noted Ramsey is ahead of the game and he actually promotes Ramsey's efforts and model when he talks with the other five Station cities. He stated the opportunity for retail is not what you think it would be because commuters are in a hurry and will probably not stop to eat at a restaurant or go shopping. However, there may be more opportunity for destination-types of uses. He stated he hopes their linkage with schools will be fruitful and indicated they will keep City Administrator Ulrich and the Council updated. Mr. Lenzmeier urged the Council to talk up Northstar and promote it whenever possible.

Mayor Strommen thanked Mr. Lenzmeier and Ms. Brown for providing this update.

2.02: Potential Future Business Park Lane (Update Only)

Assistant to the City Administrator Brama reviewed the staff report, noting in 2012 the Ramsey EDA and City Council identified a shortage existed in property available for development by businesses in Ramsey outside of The COR. Therefore, a strategic priority in early 2013 is to secure a future "Business Park" location. He reviewed action taken in 2012 and 2013 by the Council and EDA to review potential locations. In August of 2013, the EDA crafted a recommendation to be considered first by the Planning Commission and subsequently the Council of six potential sites. Assistant to the City Administrator Brama described the features and status of each of the six identified sites. He stated the EDA would like to pursue the Al Pearson property on the north side of Highway 10 as the primary site with the Hageman Holdings site being the secondary site for a future Business Park. The Planning Commission would like to conduct a public open house to gather input regarding potential future land use changes. He stated following completion of the public hearing, a feasibility study will be prepared relating to the required improvements to Bunker Lake Boulevard and Puma Street. Once those costs are determined, it will be known whether the Pearson site is financially feasible for that use. Assistant to the City Administrator Brama stated Mr. Pearson is a willing seller at \$65,000 per acre (\$1.49 per square foot), willing to change the zoning, to hold the land for this future use, and to partner with the City.

Councilmember Riley stated the EDA determined the Al Pearson property was the best site overall as he was a willing seller and since he is willing to partner, the EDA would not have to play the role of developer.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated many thoughtful hours were put into this consideration, none of it is easy, but the EDA wants a Business Park so he hopes it can move forward.

Councilmember Johns asked if the property abuts a park.

Assistant to the City Administrator Brama stated it is adjacent to the golf course and the north side abuts property zoned for single-family residential. He noted there is wetland on the northern boundary that would provide a significant buffer from single-family residential. Assistant to the City Administrator Brama stated those are issues that will be discussed during the public input process.

Councilmember Kuzma stated this looks to be a good opportunity for the City and Mr. Pearson as the current Business Park is out of land.

Assistant to the City Administrator Brama stated the process today is to conceptually understand if this is an acceptable site as a land use and if so, then it will be determined whether a financially acceptable partnership can be put together with Mr. Pearson. He stated part of the recommendation is to conduct due diligence on the Hageman Holdings site as well.

Councilmember Kuzma noted the two properties are close to each other.

Assistant to the City Administrator Brama stated they are and noted the site under consideration does not include the school site. He used a map to point out the portion of the Hageman Holdings property and Al Pearson property under consideration.

The consensus of the Council was to support the recommendation of the EDA to focus on the Al Pearson site as the primary site for a potential future Business Park and the Hageman Holdings property as a secondary site.

3. FUTURE TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

Councilmember Backous stated a constituent on Bunker Lake Boulevard, in a rural area, said he was cited for having an unused vehicle on an unimproved surface so that person looked around Ramsey for other vehicles on unimproved surfaces. Councilmember Backous explained this constituent's house is in a rural area and asked if the ordinance should be refined to address rural areas. He stated for him, it is an issue of property rights and while he understands the concern in urban areas where houses are closely located, this is a case within a rural area.

Mayor Strommen asked Development Services Manager Gladhill to put this on the list of future topics for consideration.

Mayor Strommen reminded members of the October 4, 2013, deadline to submit City Administrator performance evaluations.

Councilmember Riley asked when the preliminary budget is reviewed in detail.

Acting City Administrator/Finance Director Lund stated that occurs once the City's tax rate is determined by Anoka County, usually by the end of October. She stated the line items can be discussed at any time or can be referred to the Finance Committee. Acting City Administrator/Finance Director Lund stated the Finance Committee will consider the five-year budget on October 8, 2013.

Councilmember Riley stated he supports consideration by the Finance Committee if it is supported by the Council.

The consensus of the Council was to support consideration and recommendation by the Finance Committee.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Strommen adjourned the Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Diana Lund
Acting City Administrator/Finance Director

ATTEST:

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Drafted by Carla Wirth
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.