



Employee Appreciation Luncheon Department Update

October 2013

Administration

Financial Stability

New Economic Development Manager

The City is eagerly awaiting its new Economic Development Manager's first day, which is planned for November 18th. This position will be responsible for directing and managing economic development and redevelopment activities that will help retain and attract businesses within the City—with financial stability being key.

Adding the new economic development position will open up time for existing staff to complete the City Owned Land inventory process that began in 2012. The goal of this process is to identify city owned properties that are unneeded for current/future city functions and dispose of surplus city owned land – if possible. Removing properties from tax exempt status (i.e. back on the tax rolls) promotes financial stability.

Minimum Maintenance Fees

The City implemented 'minimum maintenance fees' for room rentals in the municipal center in May of 2013 (along with updating/adjusting other room rental fees). The purpose of the new fees is to help cover the cost of city maintenance staff. The City has seen almost no slowdown in room rental—and an increase in revenues. A financial report will be provided to the Council in May of 2014.

Smart, Citizen-Focused Government

Internships

Administration, Community Development, Public Works and the Police Department have recently worked with several interns to help continue the delivery of quality services at a reasonable price.

An Effective Organization

Communications Committee

Communication is an essential element of effectiveness and Administrative Services staff have been working together as a "communications committee" to promote the City's Strategic Plan, Mission, Vision, and Values. This includes the addition of department Mission and Core Values posters which are displayed throughout the building; as well as meetings such as today!

Three Year Staffing Plan

Staffing is also an essential element of effectiveness. Staff have developed a preliminary three-year staffing plan which includes staffing projections, reclassifications, employee training, and much more.

New Agenda Templates

In an attempt to maximize meeting effectiveness, staff developed a new agenda coversheet template to be used for work session topics. The new template includes the purpose, which will communicate to the Council reason(s) why the topic is being brought to them for discussion. A timeframe was added to aid in keeping the discussion on task as well as give staff and the Council an idea of the time needed for discussion, especially on an evening where there are multiple meetings. "Responsible parties" was added to the information boxes which gives Council a better idea relating to what staff/department is responsible for the item – from writing the case to completing the direction. The "action" dialog box

was changed to “outcomes” to give Council a more general ideal of what it is staff is hoping to accomplish – what direction staff is seeking and why - and the result.

All other agenda case coversheets were amended for consistency, making it easier to “copy over” a case from a Commission to Council or another Commission. It saves staff time and is less confusing for Council, Commissions, and the public. For example, in the past, some cases were brought to Council still bearing “Commission Action” in the final box. That was a result of a copy over from another Commission. With the amendment, the Board, Commission, and Council final action box will be labeled just “Action” – nonspecific.

“Purpose” was added in the Background dialog box (Purpose/Background). The intent is that staff would list the purpose first, which as stated above, communicates the reason the topic is on the agenda for discussion. The “purpose” statement would be followed by the “background” of the case.

Some time ago, staff added “Alternatives” in with the Observations language box and if possible, comes up with two or more alternatives for Council to consider.

Staff will continue to note ideas that will maximize meeting effectiveness, and welcomes feedback and ideas.

CRM: Citizen Request Management

The City of Ramsey purchased a software system in 2012 to help manage customer requests and questions—known as Customer Request Management (CRM). This software system allows for the City to efficiently process, track, and respond to citizen requests and questions.

- CRM has been in operation for a year. Highlights include:
 - 692 requests made
 - 1,620 FAQs viewed
 - 15,670 CRM webpages visited

Participation in State Council on Local Results and Innovation (CPM)

In 2011, the State Innovation Council developed and released a standard of performance measurements for Cities; with the goal of aiding residents, taxpayers, and state & local elected officials in determining the efficacy of Cities in providing services. Cities that elect to participate in the standard measures program must implement a minimum of ten standard performance measures. Results must be provided to local residents through publication, direct mailing, and posting on a web site or through a public hearing.

Cities benefit from participating from the standard measures program by receiving a reimbursement from the State in the amount of 14 cents per capita (\$3,290 Ramsey). More importantly, Cities benefit by developing an annual performance measurement baseline; which can be utilized by elected officials and tax payers to make educated decisions. Lastly, Cities have the ability to view other organizations' program results; which provides the City with comparable* performance measurement data.

*NOTE: All answers are not apples-to-apples.

Ramsey has participated in this program for two years. 2012 results will be posted on the City's website in the next 10 days.

Community Development

Financial Stability. *The City is Building a Stronger Tax Base & Continues to Grow.*

Within the last six months, the City has experienced higher growth than forecasted in all sectors. Major projects began construction, including Seasons of Ramsey (50 unit townhome development) and Stoney River (72 unit assisted living and memory care). A number of businesses have begun to expand existing facilities, including Cullinan Rigging and Diamond Graphics. The Residence at The COR (230 unit apartment) is largely complete and residents continue to move in. Year to Date, the City has processed 1,707 permits, which represents 218 new housing units and over \$52,000,000 in new valuation to the community.

A Connected Community. *To Determine Appropriate Land Use & Development Opportunities.*

The City has embarked on a number of public outreach efforts to better understand future development opportunities in different areas of the community. Specifically, the City has focused on three geographic areas:

1. **15153 Nowthen Boulevard** - Former Municipal Center/Current Fire Station #2.
2. **167th Avenue Node at Saint Francis Boulevard** - Trunk Highway #47 (former grocery anchored retail center).
3. **Armstrong West** – Future business park and retail area.

A public outreach and collaborative process has commenced or will commence by the end of the year. The information gleaned from these processes will be used to begin to develop the next Comprehensive Plan Update. Additionally, the success of these projects is the result of a number of partnerships and teamwork; these projects result in the collaboration of a number of advisory boards (Planning Commission and Economic Development Authority [EDA]), as well as internal Staff teams (Community Development, Administration, Engineering, Public Works, Fire Department, etc.).

An Effective Organization. *Continue Success, Improve Response Time, and Streamline Internal Processes.*

The City welcomed its newest team member, Rick Jarson, as the City's Building Official. Rick is not new to our organization, and has served the community well as a contracted inspector through Inspectron, Inc. In addition, Rick is a local Ramsey resident. This position is an important component as a developing community, based on current permit levels. The City continues its relationship with Inspectron, Inc. to provide additional inspection services as needed and has begun to develop a new relationship with the City of Saint Francis to share building code administration services where feasible.

Engineering

Development of a Long-Term Street Maintenance Program –

Engineering has been working to develop a long-term street maintenance program to allow the city to maintain an average PASER rating of 6.5 on all city streets, one of the identified goals in the Strategic Action Plan. This work has included the development of a pavement management program that defines a schedule for applying specific pavement maintenance treatments to city streets, as well as how this program can best be funded over time which has resulted in the recent discussion on the use of franchise fees. Once a funding mechanism is in place, Engineering staff will work closely with staff from Administration and Public Works to implement the long-term street maintenance program.

Development of City Design Standards and Construction Specifications –

Engineering has been working to develop a comprehensive set of design standards and construction specifications for all public street and utility improvements within the City of Ramsey. Engineering staff will work in close cooperation with Public Works staff to develop and publish design standards and construction specifications manuals in the spring of 2014. Developers, contractors and designers will then be directed to follow the standards and specifications set forth in these manuals while designing and constructing public improvement projects throughout the city. The implementation of these standards and specification will ensure that we will be enhancing the development of public infrastructure and increasing public safety throughout the city as it continues to grow.

Finance

Financial Stability. *The Financial Health of the City is Strong.*

In 2009, the City's bond rating was upgraded by Standard and Poor's (S&P) to AA+. This rating denotes a high credit-quality investment grade. Only 12 other municipalities in the State of Minnesota have received this rating. Out of 112 municipalities in the State of Minnesota rated by S&P, only 22 have received a rating of AA+ or higher. Many factors go into the rating process including economic diversity, financial performance and flexibility, debt burden, and financial management practices. An outstanding credit rating keeps the cost of financing capital projects as low as possible providing a substantial savings to taxpayers. This rating was reaffirmed in July 2013 by S&P exhibiting that the City has been able to maintain consistent financial stability.

An Effective Organization. *Finance is Taking a Closer Look.*

The Finance Department has been taking a closer look at its policies and processes to create an effective organization. We have prepared and will be presenting a five-year budget to council. This is the first time we've prepared such a long-term budget. It will help our organization be able to better plan for the future. Additionally, we are working to maintain a stable tax rate levy. The five-year budget will help us make assumptions on where our tax rate levy may trend. Our internal processes have been improved. We've heard a lot of positive feedback regarding the green folder delivery change. We reduced the delivery to one green folder per week. We are also working to provide timely I.T. support through the use of our internal help desk. Keep submitting I.T. requests through this tool... its working!

Smart, Citizen-Focused Government. *Utility Billing Processes Get a Fresh Look.*

During the 2013 certification process for delinquent utility accounts, the Finance Department received many phone calls from citizens. The primary complaint on delinquent accounts was they did not know they had to contact the City to setup an account in their name. We listened and we reaffirmed old practices and devised some new ones to get the word out to citizens. Year 2013 will see the following changes to our utility billing processes:

1. **Change past due notice mailing** – Address to “Current Occupant” instead of the name on account. This will eliminate Post Office forwarding services for moved out accountholders and get the notices in the hands of the current resident.
2. **Printed Message on Ace Sanitation Trash Statement** – We have worked with Ace to include a message on every trash bill informing residents that recycling is billed through the City and they must contact the City to setup billing service.
3. **Electronic Payment Service** – We will be implementing an electronic check scanner at our customer service location to process incoming check payments. This will improve cash flow for the City. Instead of weekly deposits from Opus21, all payments will post to our bank account daily.
4. **Continued Communication Bursts** – We will continue to educate residents about City utility services through a variety of media sources including: In the News articles, Facebook posts, Newsletter articles, inserts and messages on the utility statements.

Fire Department

Smart, Citizen-Focused Government. *Box Alarms*

The cities of Ramsey, Anoka/Champlin and Andover will be implementing a Box Alarm response sometime in October of 2013. This will replace the current Auto-Aid system that is in place. With Box Alarms there are resources pre-planned for the different types of incidents such as structure fires, wild land fires, large scale EMS incidents, etc. This has taken considerable time to develop as County Dispatch plays a key role in the new system and the dispatching portion has to be modified to accommodate this new system.

An Effective Organization. *Shared Fire Services*

Efforts continue to work towards a potential consolidation. The cities moving ahead are Ramsey, Nowthen, St Francis and Bethel. Oak Grove has dropped out from formal consolidation but would like to participate in non-formal things such as group purchasing and joint training efforts. The Study Group has prioritized key issues and is working within sub-groups to conduct research. Those high priority issues are: Cost Share Models, ISO impacts, and Relief (Retirement) issues with consolidation.

Police Department

An Effective Organization. *Implemented Survey for Local Businesses.*

The Police Department will be surveying all of the businesses within the City of Ramsey. The survey will be part of the Business Registration for 2014. The goal is to have an officer make contact at each business to see how we can better serve the business community and build a relationship with them. The plan is to have the survey done by mid to late December.

A Connected Community. *Staying Connected through Facebook.*

In an effort to provide residents and our local businesses with timely, accurate police related information, the Ramsey Police Department will begin posting information on the Ramsey City Facebook page. Some of the topics you will see are crime alerts (and updates as we get them), lost and contained dog postings, safety reminders, and answers to the burning police related questions that we often get.

Smart, Citizen-Focused Government. *Crime Mapping for Local Residents.*

Within the next 4-6 weeks, citizens will be have access to Ramsey crime data through a new (free) system that works with our existing records system. In about 18 months, the County will be ready to roll out the new records management system along with the upgrade to the County computer aided dispatch center. When that takes place, a new crime mapping system will be available for public consumption. The new system is being created by the same vendor that we currently have but it will be much more robust. It will take our existing information and put it on steroids.

Public Works

A Connected Community. *Enhancing the Trail Way System.*

The Public Works Department continues to advance several areas of the Strategic Action Plan, including one initiative - enhancing the trail way system. Notable projects within the last six months include: Delivery of the bids to City Council for the Mississippi River Trail and construction of the west segment (from Ramsey Boulevard to Traprock Street), expected to begin November 2013. Plans and specifications for the Central Park to Alpine Trail will be brought to Council for bid authorization in Fall of 2013. The Development Agreement for the proposed Brookfield 4th Addition is crafted to include a significant extension of the Trott Brook Trail and a connection from Variolite Street to Nowthen Boulevard.

Smart, Citizen-Focused Government. *Insuring Timely Core Services.*

The Public Works Department has submitted budget requests for additional plow equipment and a lift truck for the Utility Department. With these purchases, we will be better able to accommodate our residents by reducing plowing times and contracted maintenance costs on our sanitary sewer maintenance. The Utility Department has also been busy updating the control systems and pumps on our lift stations. The new controls provide improved performance and the ability to change settings from anywhere with the use of a smartphone. The new lift stations' pumps are designed with recessed impellers which improves their pumping ability, resulting in reduced clogging and lower maintenance costs.