

**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 9, 2014, 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

Planning Commission

Members Present: Commissioner Randy Bauer  
Commissioner Ralph Brauer  
Commissioner Gary VanScoy

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Finance Director Diana Lund  
Police Chief James Way  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
Human Resources Manager Colleen Lasher  
City Clerk Jo Ann Thieling  
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill  
City Engineer Bruce Westby  
City Planner Chris Anderson  
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama  
City Attorney Joe Langel  
Councilmember Elect Kristine Williams

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Discussion with Metropolitan Council Representative Ed Reynoso and Sector Representative Annalee Garletz**

Mayor Strommen welcomed Metropolitan Council Representative Ed Reynoso and Sector Representative Annalee Garletz. It was noted that Ramsey is located within Metropolitan Council District #9 represented by Ed Reynoso and Ramsey's primary staff contact for regional planning at the Metropolitan Council is Sector Representative Annalee Garletz.

Following introductions, Community Development Director Gladhill explained the purpose of this Case is to provide an opportunity to open a dialog relating to regional planning issues with Metropolitan Council policy makers and staff. He provided a presentation on Ramsey's organizational strategic plan, mission, vision, four broad goals/imperatives, and referenced the City's 70 initiatives and balanced scorecard that will be represented in the next Comprehensive Plan update.

Community Development Director Gladhill addressed the City's two key issues: transportation (US Highway 10, Trunk Highway 47, bicycle and pedestrian connections); and, ground water supply (regional balance of surface water and ground water supply). He referenced other regional planning documents, as well as policies and plans that had been provided for tonight's discussion.

Community Development Director Gladhill commented on the Highway 10 Access Planning Study that was recently updated and can accomplish 90% of the safety objectives with one-third of the cost; the Regional Parks and Trails Plan; success in employment growth; future Comprehensive Plan Amendment to change land use to create a new business park; residential growth and survey giving Ramsey high remarks on its housing; and, resulting benefit of the Livable Community Grants that was received from the Metropolitan Council.

Annalee Garletz, Metropolitan Council Sector Representative, reviewed her professional background and provided a brief update of the Metropolitan Council's activities relating to regional policymaking, regional planning, and provider of services for the metropolitan region. Ms. Garletz displayed a map of Metropolitan Council's sectors and described its 10-year planning cycle activities from 2010 to 2020.

Ed Reynoso, Metropolitan Council Representative, explained this cycle is triggered by the census every ten years.

Ms. Garletz reviewed a list of items that need to be addressed within local comprehensive plans and explained that as the result of a directive from the Legislature, the Metropolitan Council developed Thrive MSP 2040. She then presented next steps going forward, noting the dates that various plans were adopted ranging from December of 2014 to 2018 when local comprehensive plan updates are due.

Mr. Reynoso stated the goal of tonight's discussion is to introduce the Metropolitan Council's functions and enlighten new Councilmembers relating to its processes.

Mayor Strommen stated there has been some preparation for the City's upcoming Comprehensive Plan update to provide a baseline of knowledge about its purpose and importance.

Mr. Reynoso stated in looking at it from a regional view, it is fantastic to ‘bring things home’ for this district but the whole goal of putting long-term plans together is to assure growth at the right pace and to not make mistakes while looking at the regional picture.

Mayor Strommen opened the floor to comments and questions.

City Administrator Ulrich asked for an opinion on the opportunities presented with the new Comprehensive Plan for a suburban community like Ramsey and issues that may be of concern to the Metropolitan Council.

Mr. Reynoso stated Ramsey, as a suburban community, is doing a fantastic job in creating the ratio of number of units per acre, even with the Comprehensive Plan amendments. He felt there had been aggressive goals at first that may be pulled back a bit, but Ramsey is at 21 units per acre, which is phenomenal. He stated the City has a vision for growing the area in the right manner and he thinks there are opportunities with a different approach at Highway 10, as detailed in the Access Study, to take project sections step-by-step to address raising capital. He stated this will be beneficial for Ramsey and he looks forward to working with the City.

Planning Commissioner Bauer stated the recent community survey showed the City was average on most categories but employment opportunities scored low. He noted that a large demographic lives in Ramsey but does not work here so transportation is important. He asked how the Metropolitan Council looks at the inner city and suburbs as far as jobs, transportation, and public transportation.

Mr. Reynoso stated as long as there is a problem with Highway 10, it will be difficult to attract big business (manufacturing) as they want good and quick highway access and will not want to move to an area that is congested. With regard to net loss of jobs going to the cities, ways need to be found to transport people to jobs. Mr. Reynoso stated the reality is that the way Northstar is set up, it’s not good even though it has improved the past several months. He stated if the consistency of Northstar is not resolved, it will be difficult to ‘sell,’ but he thinks they can get to that point eventually. He felt no one had foreseen that as a problem five to six years ago when it first started but the Metropolitan Council is optimistic in working with BNSF to minimize delays. He stated he spoke with some riders of the Blaine express bus who stopped using Northstar because they need consistent and regular service. Mr. Reynoso stated providing flow both ways is important and the Metropolitan Council needs to be more conscientious to find ways to balance public transit with roads while looking at the big picture to plan ahead.

Mayor Strommen asked how the Metropolitan Council can reconcile the regional perspective while recognizing within that, there are sub-regional differences (north metro versus south metro). She noted staff’s drafted Comprehensive Plan responses relating to traffic and water resource issues will drive the Comprehensive Plan Update and how things play out.

Mr. Reynoso stated they struggle with those issues all the time and the reality is that each community is a little different so it is difficult to create a ‘flat rule’ that can apply to all. He stated the Metropolitan Council needs to recognize those differences.

Ms. Garletz explained that as the Metropolitan Council Sector Representatives look at local plans, they hope to consider things that can be addressed in the plan and offer that flexibility, assistance and guidance. She noted that geographic planning areas have been added to allow more flexibility and ability for cities to find a better way to identify with community designation and show what is going on in each area.

Mr. Reynoso agreed that no community within the entire region is identical so coming down to specific guidelines and rules is difficult for all to maneuver identically.

Ms. Garletz stated as the handbook is developed, she hopes it can include resources for each community type as some things are not pertinent to all. She stated they will also develop sample policy positions in like size communities with like development.

Mr. Reynoso commented on the importance of receiving input and stated he will admit they are not perfect, will make mistakes, and that there is not a set of rules and guidelines that will make everybody happy but they clearly got the message relating to the Transportation Policy Plan (TPP) and will modify that language while maintaining the same goals.

Planning Commissioner Brauer stated they ran some data on the weigh station traffic counter and determined that for the last nine years, there is an extremely strong correlation between that traffic and the growth in Ramsey. He stated he wonders, looking at plans for growth, how the Metropolitan Council sees the issues of Highway 10 and growth as fitting together.

Mr. Reynoso stated he is glad the Highway 10 Access Planning Study determined palatable solutions as there are problems with finding funding. He stated that he hopes within the next five to six years or even sooner, they can take pragmatic steps to accomplish safe roads and access for emergency vehicles. He stated as the projects come forward, he thinks there will be growth in business and the Metropolitan Council is optimistic they can assist communities such as Ramsey to grow.

Mayor Strommen stated the City has heard from many businesses that there is a severe challenge in recruiting and retaining employees in Ramsey, which causes difficulties for its companies and businesses.

Mr. Reynoso stated in looking back at what has been done in the last four years, a lot of projects have come a long ways through collaboration and cooperation.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he has been on the Ramsey Council for two years and is glad to hear the Metropolitan Council is 'on board' with the importance of Highway 10. He noted the traffic counts on I-35W (an interstate) to Highway 10 are three-to-one so what was mentioned about it being a problem, is clear.

Mr. Reynoso offered to lobby at the Capitol on behalf of Ramsey to raise funds to improve Highway 10, noting that one life lost is one too many. He commented on the difficulty of getting transportation dollars and hope that the Legislature develops an adequate and robust

transportation bonding bill. Mr. Reynoso agreed that bigger investments are needed, noting \$20 billion in the next 20 years is needed to just stay on pace with growth and maintaining the State's highway system.

Councilmember Riley noted that all of the questions have been on transportation, showing that it is the highest priority. He stated the next issue relates to water, a regional problem, and asked what is being done on that issue without adding red tape and government bureaucracy.

Mr. Reynoso stated coming forward with an approach that includes everybody's input is important and if specific areas have to take measures, it should be borne by the entire region. Also, local communities have to be invested. He commented on the importance of preserving the aquifers, taking precautionary measures that are responsible, and not impacting communities that results in stop of growth. He stated this is already under discussion and he supports taking a pragmatic approach that includes discussion from all communities. Mr. Reynoso stated Ramsey is taking more action on this front (protection and preservation of the City aquifer) than other communities.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated City Engineer Westby attends meetings of the Northwest Metro Water Supply Study Group, which is discussing this issue. He noted that the 2018 deadline may seem a long ways out but the Comprehensive Plan Update takes time to complete and includes a public comment period so the City needs to start working on the Plan update soon so it can be submitted on time.

Mayor Strommen asked if there were further questions or comments.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated the purpose of this Case was to open the discussion and during the Plan Update, staff will be taking the Council through a methodical step-by-step process, which will lead with citizen engagement so that input is received up front.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the City is fortunate to have a good relationship with the Metropolitan Council, noting it had worked in partnership for the rail station, on transportation policy issues, land use issues, livable communities, and received a number of grants through the Metropolitan Council. He stated his hope that good relationship will continue.

Ms. Garletz thanked the Council for the invitation and stated Metropolitan Council staff is available to provide input as the City moves forward with its Plan update.

Mr. Reynoso announced there is an opening on the Metropolitan Council's Parks and Open Space Commission should someone from Ramsey wish to serve in that capacity.

Mayor Strommen thanked Mr. Reynoso and Ms. Garletz for attending tonight's Work Session to provide input.

## **2.02: Discuss 2015 Legislative Platform**

It was noted due to time constraints, this item will be considered during the Regular Session.

**3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION**

Noted.

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

None

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Strommen declared the Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:16 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.*