

**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 10, 2015, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen  
Councilmember Jill Johns  
Councilmember Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember John LeTourneau  
Councilmember Chris Riley  
Councilmember Melody Shryock  
Councilmember Kristine Williams

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Finance Director Diana Lund  
Police Chief Jeff Katers  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
City Clerk Jo Ann Thieling  
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill  
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama  
City Attorney Joe Langel

**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: Review Charitable Gambling Contributions to Non-Profit Organizations**

City Administrator Ulrich stated the current policy is reflected in the staff report and says 70% of the fund balance needs to be contributed to recreation, community, and athletic facilities, leaving 30% for other activities. Last year, the City funded Youth First at \$3,000 and Juvenile Diversion at \$5,000. The cash flow of the fund shows Ramsey annually takes in about \$40,000 from lawful charitable gambling so 70% would be \$28,000 and 30% would be \$12,000 for non-park purposes. Last year, Ramsey gave out \$8,000 and could give additional monies from the fund to requesting agencies, if desired. The projected fund balance in 2019 is \$50,699. City Administrator Ulrich stated the Park Fund balance is not very healthy given needed park improvements and capital improvements.

City Administrator Ulrich noted the City had been approached by Family of Promise and Ramsey Heart Safe to also make a donation to their organizations. Heart Safe is asking for funding to purchase equipment.

Mayor Strommen stated the Family of Promise day care is located at the Lord of Life Church in Ramsey.

Finance Director Lund stated the City is allowed to collect 10% of lawful gambling funds and those funds are provided from the Anoka Area Ice Arena, Climb Theater, and Ramsey Lions. There is a Policy in place that they are to be a Ramsey organization but Climb Theater is not located in Ramsey so it was grandfathered. She reviewed how the funds can be used and stated when the reports are filed, they do check to make sure the City is spending those funds down.

City Administrator Ulrich asked if there is interest in funding Family of Promise or Ramsey Heart Safe.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he is on the Ramsey Foundation and Heart Safe is becoming part of the Ramsey Foundation. He stated he has some troubling thoughts in that the concert series commits \$12,000 but there is only \$4,000 in the bank. He preferred to have a backup plan to meet those expenses prior to funding Heart Safe.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the Council could consider providing funding to the Ramsey Foundation who can then decide if the funds should go to the concert series or if that need is met, to then fund Heart Safe.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if charitable gambling funds could go to the Foundation's concerts.

Mayor Strommen stated the Policy is more restrictive in that 70% has to go to park expenditures and asked if the 30% can be used for any purpose.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the policy is kind of open on the use of the 30%.

Mayor Strommen suggested amending the Policy to provide more clear guidance on use of funds. She stated she did not want the Council to fall into a grant making entity and having to determine which were and were not worthy requests. Rather, she supported a stronger policy.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated he thought the Policy was restrictive, noting the items listed do not fit the needs of Heart Safe so it appears they could not draw from the charitable gambling funds.

Finance Director Lund explained that the City currently funds Youth First from both the General Fund and the Charitable Gambling Fund. She stated other organizations that say 'General Fund' are currently included in the budget.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the Policy is not well defined in how General Funds are used to support civic organizations but the City tried to gear it towards things like the Alexander House and Juvenile Diversion as it results in saving Police resources in spending less time on those items. He stated the current Policy limits use of funds to youth oriented programs but if the Council agrees, staff can broaden the language to consider other agencies requesting funds.

Councilmember Riley stated there are three restrictions, Statute, focus on under 21, and the 70% towards recreation and athletic facilities. He asked if anyone has a concern with the 70% restriction.

Councilmember LeTourneau felt this Policy was restrictive for a reason, to not open funds to a broad number of users. In addition, it is not a well-funded account because of the high needs on the park side. He felt that opening the restrictions will dwindle the effectiveness of the fund from its original intention so he supported leaving the Policy and to look for other funding sources.

Mayor Strommen agreed, noting that broadening the fund use will make the Council's job harder, not easier. She stated what is funded by other dollars or the General Fund, needs a critical nexus to City function and perhaps those criteria need to be fleshed out. She stated those decisions can be part of the budgeting process. Mayor Strommen stated once a request is received, its merit has to be determined in what is important for the City to fund.

Councilmember John suggested defining how the funds are to be used so that information can be sent to requestors. Then the requestor can decide if their request fits that criteria.

Councilmember Shryock agreed and stated that addresses the 30%. She supported fine tuning how to disseminate the funding.

Finance Director Lund noted the intent is not to build a balance but to spend the money annually. She asked if the Council wanted to consider and set parameters on other programs that can be included in the General Fund.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated he is not implying that Family Services or Heart Safe are not important but that maybe they are not appropriate for these funds and the Council should research other funding sources.

Councilmember Williams noted the Policy indicates the requests are to go through the Park & Recreation Commission and asked if that is for all requests.

Finance Director Lund explained that is for Park CIP projects. She stated Juvenile Diversion and Youth First have been funded for several years.

Mayor Strommen noted the Policy also references the Finance Committee, which should be removed.

City Administrator Ulrich stated staff will refine the Policy for discussion at a future Work Session.

## **2.02: Discuss City Charter Language Related to Land Sale Process**

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama reviewed the staff report and Charter regulations for disposal of City-owned property. He explained that currently, the City is required to pass an ordinance each time a piece of City-owned property is sold, which can take 60 days to over 60 days to complete. Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated there is a different interpretation of this Charter provision that would allow passage of a blanket ordinance to address more than one property sale. He stated the recommendation of staff and the City Attorney are included in the staff report. Staff's interpretation of the intent of the language is to pass individual ordinances at the time of sale of individual properties. However, a blanket ordinance would create efficiencies for the City and a cleaner process. He asked for direction whether the Council would be comfortable deviating from past practice of doing one ordinance per sale.

City Attorney Langel stated the Charter requires an ordinance to dispose of property and the question is, at what point is the property 'disposed of.' He asked if that occurs when there is a purchase agreement or when the land is listed for sale. He stated it comes down to what 'dispose of' means in this context and raises the broader issue of the purpose of the Charter provision. City Attorney Langel stated there is no question it is more efficient to do a blanket ordinance, as buyers do not want to wait for the time it takes an ordinance to become effective. But, if the point of the Charter provision is to give the public an opportunity to voice comment on a particular sale, then an individual ordinance makes more sense. City Attorney Langel stated he expects that when this Charter provision was put into place, the thought was not that the City would ever own dozens of pieces of land.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he likes the current policy because he wants the City to be transparent. He stated he understands this is not efficient but as a public entity, he wants the public to have the opportunity to provide comment and he does not want to waiver from it.

Councilmember Riley stated he does not think it is a transparency issue. He stated efficiency is important and he thinks that by saying well in advance the City intends to sell this land, it gives the public more notice and ability to voice an opinion. Councilmember Riley stated the City never intended to own The COR and all agree it is surplus property, it is to be sold, and a broker has been hired to facilitate that sale. Councilmember Riley stated with The COR and the lot on Highway 10, all know they were never intended for public uses.

Councilmember Williams agreed the intent is to declare property surplus and it becomes an administrative step when the property has already been marketed and every action taken that the intent is to sell the property. She felt it would benefit constituents to make the notice in advance.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he agrees that is the case with The COR but should the City purchase a property in the middle of a residential area, he wants residents to have the ability to make comment.

Mayor Strommen stated there may be cases that do not preclude an individual ordinance but the blanket ordinance option gives advanced notice over waiting for the sale of an individual property. This would declare the intent to sell the parcels well in advance of a sale. She agreed with Councilmembers Riley and Williams this will provide better public notice.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated one set of variables is around a blanket ordinance, another is around a single ordinance, and another variable is the point the property is for sale, whether when it is placed on the market or when it sells. He stated he sees the value of passing an ordinance at the point the property is deemed salable. But, he also supports the concern of Councilmember Kuzma based on transparency of individual ordinances and allowing residents to weigh in on the validity of the sale. He stated he supports an ordinance when the property is placed on the market, prior to the sale.

Councilmember Riley stated any parcels of controversy could be listed separately. He also suggested consideration of an expiration date to re-identify what is being sold.

Councilmember Johns stated support for doing something on an annual basis.

Councilmember Shryock stated putting that information out at the time the property is up for sale is good. She stated she has no problem with a blanket ordinance as long as it is fine-tuned and asked if the Council should restrict the boundaries of what properties can be included. She stated if a parcel is outside The COR, she thinks it may be too large of an area to include.

Councilmember Johns stated if a blanket ordinance, it will identify all of the pieces so residents will know if there are any in their area they want to provide comment on or get more information on.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked how many times in the past few years this policy has encumbered the City's ability to sell a piece of property. He asked if anyone has said it has prevented their ability to close on a property. Councilmember LeTourneau stated the EDA has not run into situations where this ordinance process has been a problem.

City Administrator Ulrich stated in another community, they had a similar provision and it became a point of contention because it gave residents a chance to petition against and control a development. He explained how this can become problematic should residents not petition against an actual sale or the terms of the deal but to petition against a specific development/project.

Councilmember Shryock asked how many communities have this type of ordinance requirement.

City Attorney Langel stated he does not have any statistics but many Charters came about at roughly the same time, about three decades ago, and contain similar language so he would not be surprised to see this same language in dozens of Charters across the State.

Mayor Strommen stated what is unique is that Ramsey has a larger than normal portfolio of land for sale and that was not factored in when the Charter language was drafted.

Councilmember Kuzma stated the public did provide input on the data center use and indicated they did not want it. He stated the average person is not always paying attention to what is going on so it is important to have that extra time for them to react and provide comment. He asked if the language allows to pool several parcels but still single out other parcels for a separate ordinance.

Mayor Strommen asked about setting a geographic area within the same ordinance, such as The COR.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he could support allowing the blanket ordinance option when it makes sense, such as in The COR.

Councilmember Johns stated the most controversial property sales are when zoning is being changed, which requires another planning process.

City Attorney Langel asked when the property is considered to be for sale, at the time it is listed for sale or when the purchase agreement is being negotiated.

The Council agreed that it is when the property is listed for sale.

City Administrator Ulrich stated an annual review may cause some problems if a parcel is under negotiation or if there is a shift in Council.

Mayor Strommen suggested trying this as an option to see if it works and then if it becomes cumbersome it can be reviewed.

City Administrator Ulrich stated currently, adjoining property owners are not notified and asked if they should be notified.

The consensus of the Council was to support notifying adjacent property owners.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama reviewed the properties under City ownership and available for sale that would be included in the ordinance.

The Council supported the suggestion of Councilmember Riley that the ordinance should specifically identify the property with a name in addition to the PID.

### **2.03: Consider Tinklenberg Group Proposal for Professional Services Contract Extension**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report and proposal from The Tinklenberg Group for an extension to an existing professional services contract to advance and promote the construction of improvements within the Trunk Highway 10 corridor at a cost of \$30,000.

Elwyn Tinklenberg, The Tinklenberg Group, stated as part of the first 30 days, he was asked to look at opportunities to demonstrate a real promise for additional Highway 10 improvements and if there was opportunity to work with other communities in terms of pursuing those improvements. He reported there was interest in Andover and Coon Rapids to work jointly but he was not successful in attracting interest in that kind of structure with Anoka. He stated in terms of opportunity for additional improvements on Highway 10 and to support broader activities on Highway 10, he thinks those are certainly there including the momentum created by the Armstrong Boulevard interchange. In addition, due to the anticipated doubling of crude oil traffic on rail, the Legislature and Governor are looking at significant funding increases to improve rail crossings.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated there are activities taking place related to broader improvements along Highway 10 that bring increased attention to the corridor. Anoka County is proposing a bonding initiative to cover improvements within Mn/DOT's Access Management Plan, which will create opportunity. He explained how that initiative would be funded without competing for rail improvement dollars, allowing both to move forward.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated there is renewed momentum for a long-term transportation funding bill in the Congress to bring additional dollars to the table. He stated there will be a hearing tomorrow in the House of Representatives and they are optimistic they will be able to put a bill together that does not rely on an increase in gas tax at the federal level.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated there will be additional grant programs available to Ramsey for rail crossings and rail safety. He stated the Governor's transportation budget and proposals will be presented to the House tomorrow and the Chairs of the committees will be part of a panel discussion of House and Senate proposals.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated he thinks there is justification for the City to move forward and for an independent bill related to Ramsey Boulevard to have that in place as well. He stated it is important to get that bill moving very soon because deadlines are shortly after the end of February.

Mayor Strommen stated the Highway 10 Subcommittee met with Mr. Tinklenberg to discuss the information just shared in the context of the State and Federal levels. A two-pronged strategy continues to make sense and to be an advocate for improvements along the entire corridor. She stated it is important to keep everyone aware of the full need and to take advantage of all opportunities including rail safety and rail crossings as it puts Ramsey Boulevard in a different category than intersections in Anoka. She noted that Item 5 in the proposal may even be considered for the top of the list.

Mr. Tinklenberg commented on his conversation with Senator Hoffman and Representative Uglem and proposal to pull a group together so there is better coordination. It was noted that last year, Representative Abeler presented a larger bill to keep everyone aware of needs in the whole corridor as well as a smaller bill relating to Armstrong Boulevard.

Mayor Strommen supported adding #3, conversations with legislative delegation in strong coordination with Anoka County and other agencies so all are advocating as a group, laying out a whole strategy, and pieces that make up the whole. She stated she wants it clear that Ramsey is not doing that independently at the federal level.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he is bothered that Anoka does not want to be part of this and concern it will result in Ramsey competing against Anoka for funding.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated he had hoped that with Representative Abeler talking with Anoka, it would open the door but they felt confident they could move their own strategy forward with the help of Anoka County so it was not necessary to do more than that.

Mayor Strommen noted Ramsey has employed a different strategy than Anoka but it has not prevented the two cities from working together on the Armstrong Boulevard project.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated the next pieces will involve frontage roads along the corridor and access improvements. In Anoka, a median barrier is going to be put in place, Fairoak Avenue improved, and connection of a frontage road system. He stated he believes Anoka understands and is comfortable with all of the improvements moving forward and does not see it as a competition.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated the Access Planning Study identified the strategy and priority in how things would move. To some degree, it was planned in a vacuum relating to funding but now there is rail funding available so that changes the priority in another direction. He stated the overall strategy is corridor improvement and however it is done is yet to be determined but he does not see it as competition.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that bringing in additional dollars means more can be done in other places so that is still a benefit.

Mayor Strommen asked if there are concerns with this proposal.

Hearing none, City Administrator Ulrich recommended adding this item to tonight's agenda.

The consensus of the Council was to support a five-month extension to the consulting services proposal with The Tinklenberg Group through the 2015 legislative session and to add this item to tonight's meeting agenda.

Mr. Tinklenberg announced an upcoming meeting with Congressman Emmer to address corridor and rail crossing improvements.

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

City Administrator Ulrich stated the introduction of a Home Occupation Ordinance had been on tonight's Consent Agenda as it was recommended by the Planning Commission. However, there

was a request to move it to the regular Agenda. He stated ordinance introductions will now be placed on the regular Agenda to allow opportunity to provide a staff report.

Councilmember LeTourneau supported staff's judgment on what should be placed on the Consent Agenda.

City Administrator Ulrich asked about the Council's availability to meet with the City of Anoka on a Monday.

Councilmember Shryock stated she is not available the first Monday.

City Administrator Ulrich reported on This Old House legislation and asked if Ramsey should express their support.

Mayor Strommen noted the Council has already weighed in on legislation it supported and asked staff to provide a summary of this legislation in the update.

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

None

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Strommen declared 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.*