

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, March 24, 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
Fire Chief Dean Kapler
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Human Resources Manager Colleen Lasher
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby
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 5:35 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Review Strategic Planning Session Documents

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report, noting an updated and reorganized version of the Strategic Action Plan has been distributed. He stated staff incorporated comments from the Council's two Work Sessions. He asked the Council for comments on the following vision statement: 'Ramsey will be a leader in municipal services, a vibrant rural and suburban community with well-connected destinations.'

Councilmember LeTourneau asked for an explanation of the words 'well-connected destinations.'

City Administrator Ulrich stated it addresses infrastructure and transportation modes such as roads, trails, and bike paths that are safe and provide connectivity through a system of destinations such as parks, commercial, and residential areas.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked whether that is too broad.

Councilmember Shryock stated it also includes rail transportation and addresses being well connected to those around us.

Mayor Strommen stated she thinks the vision statement is a fair distillation of the Council's comments but it could relate to any city and is not uniquely Ramsey. She stated she does not have an answer but wanted to challenge staff and the Council to find a way for the vision statement to set Ramsey apart from others.

City Administrator Ulrich suggested the vision statement be discussed again at a future Work Session when additional comments can be offered to address the uniqueness of Ramsey.

Councilmember Riley stated he liked the old vision statement better but would not object to it being further discussed at another Work Session.

City Administrator Ulrich provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Recruit New Businesses to Ramsey and related Tactics 1 and 2 that dealt with recruitment of new business to Ramsey.

Councilmember Riley stated he supports Tactic 2 and that goal and asked how the City controls it as the wording makes it appear the City is not currently trying to recruit new business. He also asked what else Ramsey can do and if it should consider incentive packages.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the objective is to be shovel ready so the parcels are cleared of legal issues and ready to be sold to a private property owner. The end result is issuing building permits to retail and business users so the tactic should address what needs to occur to gain that end result.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if this is in addition to the study the Council approved last week for the business park.

City Administrator Ulrich stated it could be inclusive of that study and suggested taking this one off and relying on a business park being developed.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated he can see Tactic 2 as a placeholder to elevate it strategically to keep this tactic on the 'radar.' He stated there may be future discussions on how to execute it to address adjustments such as subsidies or eliminating it.

Mayor Strommen noted it is listed as both a tactic and an outcome and if the goal is to recruit new businesses, issuing building permits is the outcome rather than a tactic. Mayor Strommen

stated the last time the Council discussed the Strategic Plan, the Council was clear it wanted to use a market-based approach and the question of Councilmember Riley is if that is at all costs.

City Administrator Ulrich stated it focuses efforts on larger-scale retail and industrial users as opposed to smaller-sized tenants.

Councilmember Williams stated she would not advocate removing a tactic related to attracting businesses as it is an important part of Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama's effort, which is a time-consuming effort, so she thinks those efforts need to be channeled through the Strategic Plan.

The Council agreed with the suggestion of City Administrator Ulrich to revise Tactic 2 as follows: "To seek to secure major market-ready major retailers and additional industrial users."

City Administrator Ulrich read Tactic 3 relating to attaining State of Minnesota Shovel-Ready Status for the future business park. The Council offered no suggested changes to Tactic 3.

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the next Strategic Initiative to Develop and Plan for Key Infrastructure Improvements, estimated costs for those improvements, and explained the intent of Tactics 4 and 5. The Council offered no suggested changes to Tactics 4 and 5.

City Administrator Ulrich read Strategic Initiative to Leverage Outside Funding Sources and revised Tactic 6 indicating "Evaluate staffing deployment and process improvement for grant administration." He stated staff will refine the wording of this tactic.

Mayor Strommen stated she struggles with the organization of the Strategic Initiatives, noting it goes from broad-based initiatives to almost project-specific initiatives. She suggested that if TIF management is addressed, it should then go to the highest TIF priority. Mayor Strommen stated the Plan's organization does not feel like a cohesive strategy and instead picked out what is on the horizon rather than what the City wants on the horizon. In addition, it does not address financial stability as grants sometimes only pay some up-front costs leaving the City responsible for the rest of the costs including overhead and maintenance.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the Strategic Initiative to Implement the Highway 10 Study is probably the number one economic factor and is currently within the Connected Communities initiative. The Council reviewed Tactics 7 to 11.

Mayor Strommen stated her question is whether this is about management of TIF or putting infrastructure in place to aid with economic development.

The Council discussed how the Strategic Plan can be better organized to create a more cohesive document and clearer direction.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated the Public Works building will also increase efficiencies, which will add value back to the community.

Mayor Strommen stated that may not be a financial stability or economic development piece but, perhaps, should be under Citizen Focused Government, of which Public Works is a huge part.

Councilmember Shryock suggested it be moved or taken out as it is contained in the CIP. She also suggested revising the initiatives in this section to set a broader base/foundation for things that will occur.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed with the suggestion to move the Public Works facility to Citizen Focused Government. He noted that the Strategic Initiative to Develop and Plan for Key Infrastructure Improvements could be broadened to include areas beyond The COR and TIF District #14. City Administrator Ulrich stated staff will do an analysis of where economic development can occur as a result of infrastructure improvements.

The Council offered no additional suggestions on that section of the Strategic Action Plan.

Councilmember Riley referenced Tactic 7 and asked if other agencies are also showing it as a top priority.

City Administrator Ulrich stated it is a top priority for Anoka County.

Councilmember Riley asked if the Strategic Action Plan should mention that Ramsey is working with Anoka County, noting three of the projects mentioned are County initiatives. He also asked if the City needs its own communication plan if it is working with Anoka County and the City of Anoka.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the City will have a communication plan regardless of working with Anoka County and Mn/DOT. With regard to the Thurston Avenue interchange, it is included in Tactic 10 so it may not need to be individually named in Tactic 7. He supported retaining the rail separation project as a separate tactic.

The Council agreed with the suggestion of Mayor Strommen to reorganize the initiatives to show Tactic 10 as the main tactic with Tactics 8 and 9 listed as sub-bullets.

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the Strategic Initiative to Develop a Comprehensive Recreation Plan and related Tactics 12, 13, and 14.

Mayor Strommen stated the initiative is to Develop a Comprehensive Recreation Plan and asked what is the Recreation Plan.

City Administrator Ulrich explained that Plan includes physical facilities as well as programming offerings.

Mayor Strommen asked where it states the City creates the Recreation Plan. She felt staffing was part of the Recreation Plan so it did not need to be listed separately.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated under the context of the Comprehensive Recreation Plan, there is a Master Park and Trail Plan as well as a Master Park and Trail Map. Staff is looking to list the capital improvements in a document that is also resource based. The Recreation Plan would capture the services within that Comprehensive Plan. He explained the City already has those components and the intent is to bring them into a Comprehensive Plan.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the community survey will ask residents the type of recreational services they would like and the City will then determine how to best provide those services and fill gaps in services by the City or other organizations.

Councilmember Shryock stated her concern was having the Master Park and Trail Plan as a separate item but she now thinks that staffing will be an outcome from all of the research done and creation of the Master Park and Trail Plan.

City Administrator Ulrich suggested a modification to Tactic 12 and moving Tactic 13 to put it under present findings and recommendations.

Councilmember Johns suggested to also include the capital piece by district.

Councilmember Riley asked if it relates to the general survey.

City Administrator Ulrich stated it does and would be an every other year community survey.

Councilmember Riley stated it is a good idea for the City to create an overall staffing plan to address current and future needs along with justification and he felt it should be a larger goal.

Mayor Strommen agreed and asked if the staffing plan should be within the effective organization. She suggested that Developing a Comprehensive Recreation Plan is the tactic and the Strategic Initiative is evaluating a diverse and robust offering of recreational opportunities. The Comprehensive Recreation Plan is the tactic of how you get there.

The Council agreed and asked staff to make that revision.

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the next Strategic Initiative to Develop a Plan for Congestion and Safety Improvements Along the County Highway 5 Corridor and related Tactics 15 and 16.

Councilmember Williams stated she does not disagree with the focus on County Road 5 but thought County Road 47 was a higher priority.

Mayor Strommen stated at a recent meeting, the Council talked about working with Anoka County on a County Road 5 study but the Council has also addressed the priority of County Road 47.

Councilmember Shryock suggested making this strategic initiative broader, leaving out the County Road 5 comment, and just indicating: 'Develop a Plan for Congestion and Safety Improvements' and then using County Roads 5 and 47 as bullet points.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the Council had requested staff address the County Road 5 issues with Anoka County.

City Administrator Ulrich answered in the affirmative and noted that County Road 5 does funnel into County Road 47.

Bill Kingston, 15760 Andrie Street NW, suggested focusing on the issues of congestion and safety, creating consistent initiatives, and not zeroing in on County Roads 5 or 47.

The Council agreed to keep Tactic 15 relating to County Road 5 separate and asked staff to determine if there is a tactic related to County 47 that can be accomplished within this time period.

Councilmember Johns stated the issues with County Road 47 relate to aesthetics and also congestion.

City Administrative provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Maintain the Safety of the Community and related Tactics 17, 18, 19, and 20.

Councilmember Johns asked about the Residential Rental Licensing Program.

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the current City requirement for rental licensing if there is a shared hallway.

Councilmember Riley asked about Tactic 17, Consider Cameras Around the City and Parks to Enhance Safety and Security, and asked whether it was a real problem.

Police Chief Katers stated there are currently two cameras in the Elmcrest tunnel as a result of repeated vandalism in the same location. The question is whether to expand that to other areas of repeated vandalism, such as in parks to aid with prosecution and restitution. In addition, the cameras create a sense of security.

Councilmember Riley referenced Tactic 19 and asked if other cities have a Drug Task Force.

Police Chief Katers reviewed the membership of the joint Task Force and stated Ramsey is one of the only cities of its size without a Drug Task Force. He stated this was listed in last year's budget but had been cut so he would ask that it be included for consideration in the next budget. He stated support to maximize collaboration with the Drug Task Force by allocating staff.

Mayor Strommen supported re-characterizing that collaboration from a reactive approach to a proactive approach, which would be one of the outcomes and describe the difference in service.

Mr. Kingston stated with Northfork Park, there is vandalism each year of \$2,000 to \$3,000 so there has been discussion to consider cameras. He stated from a City initiative, he supports it and the Northfork neighborhood would like to partner with the City.

City Administrator Ulrich provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Maintain a Positive Image and Safety of Neighborhoods and Business Districts and related Tactic 21. He then provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Enhance Community Engagement and related Tactics 22 and 23.

Mr. Kingston stated he does not think the City is serious about maintaining time on code complaints as there is currently not a police officer or staff person assigned to handle code complaints.

City Administrator Ulrich explained the City is in the midst of re-staffing that responsibility.

Police Chief Katers agreed there is a staffing issue so in the interim, the Police Department is hiring two community service officers and has assigned a police technician to take initial complaints. He described the collaboration between the Police Department and Community Development Department to address code complaints.

Community Development Director Gladhill explained the Police Department would have an active role with enforcement and Community Development would be taking on the management of case files.

Councilmember Shryock suggested rewording Tactic 21 to not address 'maintain' and instead address improvement in the process to meet the needs of the community.

Councilmember Riley asked whether the City still uses the Customer Response Management Program.

City Administrator Ulrich explained that Program has been found to be effective internally but not effective externally as it is not customer friendly and will be considered by Community Development as to how it can better interface with the public.

Councilmember Kuzma stated support for that reorganization as the public prefers to speak to a staff person instead of filling out a form. In addition, the caller may want to indicate how serious the violation is and have suggestions on how it can be resolved.

Councilmember Shryock asked staff to reword some of the Strategic Initiative and Tactics to remove reference to 'maintain' and instead address striving to benefit.

City Administrator Ulrich provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Maintain and Improve Customer Response Time in Community Development and related Tactics 24 and 25. He also provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Enhance and Promoting Ramsey Brand and related Tactics 26 and 27.

The Council asked no questions related to those Strategic Initiatives or Tactics.

City Administrator Ulrich provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Improve the Image of Key Corridors (Highway 10 and Highway 47) and related Tactics 28 and 29.

Mayor Strommen stated she does not see citizen engagement addressed which should be the hallmark of this initiative

Councilmember Riley stated there needs to be more 'do' and less 'creating of statements' and felt having a goal of cleaning one property per year was not adequate.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated staff will add clarity to that wording, noting if there are financial incentives, additional properties can be accommodated.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the issue of enhancements is not addressed (i.e., landscaping, colored concrete) and asked if the Council would like the City's role included as it impacts the City image.

The Council discussed how to broaden the language.

Mayor Strommen noted that Tactic 27, Create a Communitywide Sign Plan is listed as both a tactic and an outcome so it needs to be decided if it is metric or tactic.

City Administrator Ulrich stated staff will incorporate these suggestions. He provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Develop a Communication Plan and related Tactics 30, 31, 32, and 33.

City Administrator Ulrich provided an explanation of the Strategic Initiative to Continue to Implement Process Improvement Initiatives and related Tactic 34.

The Council discussed how to better organize the Initiatives.

Councilmember Riley suggested that under Financial Stability, to include something to identify efficiencies and cost savings opportunities and then have bullet points under that broader initiative.

Mayor Strommen stated that may fit also under process improvement.

City Administrator Ulrich stated staff will incorporate these revisions in the Strategic Action Plan for discussion at a future Work Session. He stated the next Work Session is in three weeks and will be a joint meeting with the EDA. He asked whether the Council would like to schedule a special Work Session to address the Strategic Action Plan.

Mayor Strommen noted the Council is also holding a joint meeting with the City of Anoka.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he would like staff to provide the Council with a revised draft in advance so there is time for review.

The consensus of the Council was to address the Strategic Action Plan at a regularly scheduled Work 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 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Drafted by Carla Wirth
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.