

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a Special Joint City Council Work Session with the City of Anoka on Tuesday, April 13, 2015, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, Lake Itasca Room, 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
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
City Engineer Bruce Westby
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama

Anoka Members Present: Mayor Phil Rice
Councilmember Carl Anderson
Councilmember Mark Freeburg
Councilmember Steve Schmidt
Councilmember Jeff Weaver

Also Present: City Manager Tim Cruikshank
Economic Development Coordinator/Planner Erik Thorvig
Director of Public Services/City Engineer Greg Lee

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. INTRODUCTIONS

At the invitation of Mayor Strommen, all present introduced themselves.

3. DISCUSSION & UPDATES

3.01: Highway 10

City Administrator Ulrich shared an update on the latest legislature action, adding while the \$222 million request is an unrealistic ask, it gets the message out regarding the need. He said the first \$17 million bill is to fund engineering and planning, the second bill is for frontage road projects for both cities, and the third request is for the Ramsey Boulevard/Sunfish Lake Boulevard road grade separation for rail safety, which is eligible for CTIB funding.

Anoka City Manager Cruikshank said the legislature held a productive session last week, stating we were one of many cities and counties requesting funds. He noted the amount of total need far exceeds what is available, adding it is possible nothing will be received. Anoka City Manager Cruikshank said Anoka County did a nice job representing all of us, including Coon Rapids with the Highway 10 third lane project and grade separation at Hanson Boulevard. He said Anoka continues to work with Bolton & Menk with regard to frontage roads, adding Anoka is closer than ever to a grander solution from Main Street west to the Ramsey border. Anoka City Manager Cruikshank said these projects continue to show how two communities are partnering on this corridor.

Anoka Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee said there are funds to initiate a first project from Fairoak to Thurston, with a grant program through Mn/DOT's Municipal Agreement Program that may occur early next year with projects such as additional trailways along Highway 10 and some type of barrier.

Anoka Councilmember Freeburg asked if Highway 47 was discussed.

Anoka City Manager Cruikshank said Highway 47 was not discussed, stating the County took the lead on Hanson Boulevard, Ramsey Boulevard, and Sunfish Lake Boulevard because they are County roads and while they still could, they have not discussed this particular project. Anoka City Manager Cruikshank said Representative Whalen has introduced a bill for \$250,000 to study the area by Highway 47 and the railroad tracks, stating this is a very critical junction and most are heavily used and needs attention.

City Engineer Westby said since completion of the access planning study we sought funding for further extension of Riverdale Drive to Ramsey Boulevard but were notified of denial so we will be applying for a cooperative agreement now instead and looking at properties for purchase as they become available.

Mayor Strommen said we have not always had a history of working together on this but now are more collaborative with the County taking lead, first with the Armstrong interchange and then whatever is next. She said the reason for the success was the partnership and coordinated strategy, stating we figured out how to prioritize projects while respecting each community's priorities.

City Administrator Ulrich said it is important to know that Highway 10 was half the bills being presented the day he attended the hearings, stating Highway 10 is clearly front and visible as a Statewide issue.

Mayor Strommen said no matter the outcome of the session, next year will be the bigger bonding year and we should get their tour lists and invite key members of the transportation committee to see the powerful images of trains, traffic, etc. and outline how important the corridor is to the communities and the state as a whole.

Councilmember Shryock said she attended Governor Dayton's press conference regarding rail safety and noted no one there answered the questions about safety and the north/south rail crossings. She encouraged everyone to present whatever information they can to show the importance of this corridor.

Councilmember LeTourneau said a collaborative process is respected and the innovative should continue to build. He said the \$17 million shovel-ready project status is good and Chair Dibble spoke regarding the multiple funding partners and had asked about pieces of the project and assembling the package for a complete project.

3.02: General City/Development Update

Community Development Director Gladhill shared a general City and development update for Ramsey, including issuing 66 new household starts for 2014, with 32 households plus 12 more in queue for 2015. He reviewed vacant residential lot inventory, stating they are now entering the next phase of the land use plan. Community Development Director Gladhill shared the Ridgepoint final construction plat is going to the April 28 Council meeting which will include seven planned lots and that Harvest Estates is proposed at the former municipal center area for redevelopment. He shared an update on Stoney River Assisted Living Memory Care facility, Casey's General Store south of Allina Medical Clinic beginning this spring, the former municipal center site that will include 44 single-family residential lots, GS Land LLC phased in 2015 and 2016 with a relocation of Fire Station #2 first. Community Development Director Gladhill spoke about Sunwood Village, a 47-unit apartment building, and CommonBond Communities' Parkview East project south of the Draw Park with 120 market rate units later in 2015. He said McDonalds will begin construction when Armstrong Boulevard is complete. Community Development Director Gladhill said future business park considerations are being done surrounding sizing, etc. and that work is being done on cost benefit analysis of traffic feasibility studies and policy and getting projects shovel ready. He said the former grocery store site on Highway 47 now contains an operating gun range which had caused a lot of concern, adding they have resolved sound issues and concerns from the nearby daycare, which has recently requested an increase in capacity so they seem to be coexisting well,

Anoka Councilmember Schmidt asked if anything being planned will increase traffic on Highway 10.

Community Development Director Gladhill said the Harvest Estates project will add traffic, which they are trying to resolve, stating a corridor study may be needed for Highway 5.

City Administrator Ulrich said one solution is to analyze the Highway 5 corridor and divert traffic but they need to rely on good functioning interchanges on Highway 10 first. He said growth projections for Ramsey by 2030 are 30,000, with 2040 around 38,000, which is good measured growth. He added Ramsey has lots of wetland area and constraints with transportation.

Mayor Strommen said they are speaking with the Met Council stating our growth will be limited due to water supply and transportation issues.

Anoka Economic Development Coordinator/Planner Thorvig shared a general City and development update for Anoka, including the Rum River Shores project of 44 single family homes ranging from \$400,000-\$800,000; Homestead at Anoka – Phase II consisting of 65 senior apartments and 24 memory care beds with a ghost plan for future units totaling a \$25 million+ project; Main Motors' new express lube, service facility and expanded showroom and parking; Anoka Townhomes with two 8-unit buildings; Round Lake Commons, a 1800-square foot retail building and car wash; rehab of both interior and exterior of the Mad Hatter Tea Room which enhances one of the gateways into Anoka; relocation of a historic house at 210 Monroe Street to 314 Monroe Street; industrial expansions resulting in 98% full, including Pentair, Poly-Cam, RMS Surgical, and Federal Premium; significant public improvement projects including Castle Field Boulevard, River Front Park Trail Way, Castle Field, and Kings Island. Anoka Economic Development Coordinator/Planner Thorvig said 2015 will include Rum River Shores North for 67 single family lots ranging from \$335-\$500,000; Gladstone Cooperative for a 59-unit senior cooperative in the Historic Rum River District; Walker Plaza II consisting of 70 units of senior housing with a mix of assisted, memory care and care suites, skyway and an upgrade to the current building; Madison/Jefferson Street Residential project of single family homes; and the historic cottages project that will provide veteran housing in vacant Buildings 2, 3, and 4. Anoka Economic Development Coordinator/Planner Thorvig reviewed construction and public improvement values, which will increase with 300 housing units planned for 2015.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood noted there is a lot of investment in parks.

Anoka Councilmember Schmidt said Phase II of the Rum River Shores project will include a trailhead, tot lot, and more work with the conservation district. He shared that he attended a recent development lunch event and spoke with a realtor who said buyers are people from Anoka who want to come back.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver said the area where the housing will be is the conservation area and was once part of the State hospital grounds and farms.

City Administrator Ulrich identified that planning includes gathering communities and recreational opportunities with Dayton, Anoka, and others and trying to formalize an effort with projects such as the Mississippi River Trail (MRT), Rum River and Mississippi River as potential destinations to market regionally, which will drive everyone's restaurants, hotels, and other development into the future.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver complimented Mayor Strommen on the great job she did at a recent waterfowl event about what is going on in Ramsey and focusing on the amazing resources in this area.

3.03: Mississippi River Trail

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood said the Mississippi River Trail (MRT) is a 3,000-mile trail that goes all the way to New Orleans and has economic development potential for tourism. He said 2016 is the centennial of the national park service and could be used to promote and market the area, hotels, bicycle repair facilities, etc.

Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee updated the Councils on the Anoka/Ramsey project of the MRT and congratulated Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood for his work on obtaining the grant. He said the project started in 2015, with 2/3 of the project on Kings Island being substantially complete in June and will be finished in July.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood shared that Anoka residents will be able to access the Mississippi West Regional Park and will consist of five phases in total with the fifth phase being a skyway with a goal to jump-start the regional park. He said they received \$1,120,000 in 2012 for a grant award and will receive reimbursement in 2017 and hope to collaborate with Sherburne County on the Oliver Kelly Farm.

Anoka Councilmember Freeburg asked if the MRT will be in the right-of-way.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood said it will be, adding they have received approval and it will function as a neighborhood trail and link to the MRT and be a safe trail to use along Highway 10. He said they are looking at the first skyway that will provide safe crossing when the regional park is completed which will increase the market value of apartments and other development surrounding the area. Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood said they received \$490,000 from the National Park Service plus \$100,000 from TOD so this is a shovel-ready project where they will try to integrate services and amenities. He shared about the wayside area on the MRT route that will have kiosks with information on history and wayfinding instruments, adding they have applied for \$2.2 million from the National Parks Service and should hear sometime mid-summer.

City Administrator Ulrich said the MRT will provide opportunities to think regionally and we will need to think about how we can cooperate as this trail will be a conduit for residents to go to Anoka for shopping and visiting restaurants and vice versa.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted he met a couple who used to attend the concert series at the Coon Rapids Regional Dam and are now using the trail to bike to see the Ramsey concerts instead. He suggested when the trail is complete that both cities plan a dedication ceremony as a symbol of collaboration.

Councilmember Kuzma referred to navigating the oxbow around King's Island, which is very interesting and will be a nice addition.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver said the oxbow has been designed to allow pontoons to pass with their tops up, which will be a good feature.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood said they have applied for more National Park Service money and are confident they will receive some for the canoe and bike system for the Mississippi West Park, Peninsula Point Park, and the Coon Rapids Dam Park. He said the \$90,000 grant should be good fit at this regional park and that GPS units will be installed on the canoes so we can see where the boats go.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver inquired about any fears regarding the boat wakes in the recreational pool.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood said the National Park Service have their own boats and understand the concern. He said he does not feel the National Park Service will be a problem as part of this collaboration.

Mayor Strommen said we need to market diversity of opportunities, balancing the interest in both canoes and motorboats.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver agreed we need to communicate right from the beginning that there will be all sorts of water activities.

Parks & Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood said the National Parks Service co-partners with the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources on trails and waterways so they understand the need for all water activities.

Mayor Strommen said there are many activities in parks that will focus on the region and use the centennial as an opportunity for diversity of activities. She said while the event is ours we can get the word out.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver suggested a resolution be adopted by both cities stating what a unique corridor this is.

Mayor Strommen said we should devise a joint marketing plan and outline opportunities to attract bicycling groups.

Anoka Councilmember Freeburg agreed, stating the Mississippi River contains many different types of water activities that can be done all the way to Elk River.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver noted the area includes a world-class fishery that should be marketed as well.

City Administrator Ulrich said a resolution may be an outcome as joint efforts continue with Dayton and Champlin.

Councilmember Shryock said while she does not have the knowledge of rivers, a potential buyer on the Rum River had referred to limitations on speed enforcement, chose not to buy because of it, and went to Elk River instead. She said we should talk about opportunities to publicize for prospective residents too.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver shared about the County-regulated no wake zone and the frustrations and why some areas are not more open.

Director of Public Services/City Engineer Lee said the areas are consistent with the Wild and Scenic Rules from Madison Street north to 167th Street.

Anoka Councilmember Schmidt asked if there are any hotel plans on the far northwest end of Highway 10. Mayor Strommen said there are plans for a hotel in the COR.

The consensus of both Councils was to work on hosting a joint ribbon-cutting event for the Mississippi River Trail.

4. OTHER ITEMS / COUNCILMEMBERS COMMENTS

4.01: Slow No Wake Ordinance

Anoka Councilmember Weaver referred to implementing a slow, no-wake ordinance when the water level is high, stating Anoka and Champlin are interested and asked if Ramsey is interested as well. He said the intent is to help reduce damage to riverbank property, stating the worst happens on public property. Mayor Strommen said they reviewed this ordinance last year and consensus was not to implement anything until Champlin and Dayton did, stating any ordinance should be Countywide.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver shared about a recent study conducted by an engineering firm with GPS equipment where they found elevation differences ranging from 834 at the Coon Rapids Dam to 839 feet at the bridge at Ramsey, resulting in 9 feet higher. He asked staff to share the study with Ramsey and explained how the slow, no-wake zone would help protect banks, water quality, and reduce silt.

Community Development Director Gladhill said there is a need for Anoka County enforcement in order for this to work, stating the cities do not have the tools to enforce. He said they will see what the City of Dayton is doing; adding while staff is open to considering this there is no firm commitment.

City Administrator Ulrich said the damage is not that big of an issue in Ramsey, stating they could support it but noted they do not receive a lot of complaints or damage.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver assured the group that damage is occurring and said they will forward the report for more information.

Mayor Strommen said while Ramsey does not receive the magnitude of damage that other communities do, they do get some and should consider this further.

Anoka Councilmember Weaver said the study was also shared with the City of Dayton in hopes they may understand as well.

Anoka Councilmember Anderson said the Lower Rum River Water Management Organization will be doing a tour with Councilmember Kuzma and invited anyone else to join to view the damage.

Anoka Mayor Rice thanked the City of Ramsey for hosting the meeting, stating Highway 10 means a lot of money and in the spirit of cooperation and respecting each other's priorities as we compete for dollars, it is good to know that we all have our passions, desires, and priorities.

Mayor Strommen thanked the City of Anoka for attending, stating these meetings provide good opportunities for conversation on mutual items. She said it was exciting to hear the development updates from both cities, stating while we may have competing priorities, our differences have sometimes been highlighted more and the ribbon cutting will be a good event.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Strommen adjourned the Special Joint City Council Session at 7:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Drafted by Cathy Sorensen
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.