

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, June 9, 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 Kristine Williams

Members Absent: Councilmember Melody Shryock

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
City Clerk Jo Ann Thieling
Police Office Supervisor Joleen Wiemann
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 5:34 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Receive Legislative Update

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Elwyn Tinklenberg, The Tinklenberg Group, presented an update on the recent activity of the legislature regarding transportation and stated that while there was an understanding of the need for improvement there was a breakdown when it came to the budget and funding sources. He stated that in the end an agreement could not be made in regard to a funding strategy. He noted that a lot of transportation proposals were heard, including a number of different projects for

Highway 10 with different funding sources. He stated that the leadership has been adamant in their assessment that next year will be different and that there will be a transportation bill next year. He stated that while he has not seen a lot of large transportation bills passed in an election year, it could be possible. He noted that transportation projects could also be passed as a part of a bonding bill, similar to what had been done with the Armstrong project. He noted that those attending the D.C. trip will be leaving tomorrow to meet with delegation for Ramsey as well as Representative Nolan who is a representative to the Transportation Infrastructure Committee. He stated that Congress has just passed a two month extension of the current transportation bill which will expire in July.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that awareness was raised for Highway 10 through this past legislative session, noting the proposals were brought forward from not only Ramsey but other neighboring cities such as Coon Rapids, Anoka and Elk River.

Councilmember Riley referenced a statement from Governor Dayton that he would be discussing rail safety, specifically in St. Paul, during the special session and questioned if Ramsey would be included in that discussion.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that the Governor has been working hard to get additional funding for rail safety and noted that it is possible that something could emerge for Ramsey during that discussion.

Mayor Strommen stated that while the goal may not have been accomplished, at least Ramsey is in the mix and the need has been made clear. She added that while the goal may not be accomplished during the special session, the City is well positioned going into the next legislative session.

2.02: Review Revised Draft Strategic Planning Documents and Vision Statement

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the draft Strategic Plan and Vision Statement, highlighting the changes that had been made since the last review.

Councilmember Riley referenced a comment the Council had made regarding promoting efficiency and cost cutting that he did not see in the document.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that item is reflected under the budget preparation section.

Mayor Strommen questioned if it would be realistic to complete a project in each of those corridors within two years, noting the process that a project must go through beginning with a study and all the steps needed to reach completion. She stated that she did not want to see the City set itself up with a goal that could not be accomplished.

City Administrator Ulrich recognized that goal is aggressive and agreed that perhaps the goal could be pushed from two years to three years.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he likes the aggressive nature of the engineering department and agreed that although the timeframe is constrained he would be okay leaving that item as proposed.

Councilmember Riley stated that perhaps the language should be to identify projects rather than completion of the projects, or to perhaps change the goal from two projects in two years to one project within two years.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that perhaps the goal could be to identify and commence projects in the corridors.

Councilmember Kuzma also liked the aggressive nature of the goal and asked for input from City Engineer Westby.

City Engineer Westby stated that staff will be meeting with the County in July and will know more information after that meeting. He stated that if assistance from the County could be gained, that would help push projects forward. He stated that staff is committed to moving forward as fast as possible.

Mayor Strommen confirmed the consensus of the Council that the language should be changed to identify projects and for one high priority project to commence within the specified timeframe.

City Administrator Ulrich continued to highlight the changes to the draft documents.

Councilmember Riley referenced the item which refers to a volunteer coordinator staff position and questioned if the City would hire someone to coordinate volunteers.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that had originally been discussed but agreed that the Work Session consensus had been that a new staff member would not be necessary.

Mayor Strommen noted that staff position should be deleted and coordinator should be changed to coordination, as that item could be completed by existing staff.

Councilmember Riley referenced language regarding a commitment to a regional solution and stated that perhaps that should be changed to consider a regional solution, as the City cannot control the other municipalities involved.

Mayor Strommen stated that the goal would be to receive a commitment to a regional solution and confirmed the consensus of the Council to leave the language as proposed.

Councilmember Riley referenced an item with a proposed completion date of 2016 and it was confirmed that date would be changed to 2017.

Mayor Strommen stated that she has additional notes from the last discussion that did not seem to appear in the changes. She provided an example referencing the item that states review existing events and consider reducing and noted that the suggestion had been to change the

language to review existing events and consider the value to the City. She stated that she could provide her notes from the meeting to staff to ensure the changes are included.

Councilmember Riley referenced the items regarding staff recognition and stated that while those are important he was unsure whether those items would be considered as strategic action.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that she remembered there was discussion of the Council that it would be important to include that item so that residents can see that the City is working to retain staff members.

Mayor Strommen confirmed the consensus of the Council to leave that item included.

Councilmember Riley stated that there had been recent discussion readdressing The COR and zoning, which does not appear in the document.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that the Comprehensive Plan could be an indicator for that item as that would include the land use vision.

Mayor Strommen stated that could also be addressed under the sale of City owned properties, noting that the item should be reflected somewhere.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that this document is starting to age because it has not been implemented and that will continue over the course of the document, noting that a review can be done from time to time. He stated that his fear would be that the City attempts to do everything and in that accomplishes nothing.

Mayor Strommen stated that through the review process the City will be able to gauge whether some of the goals were too specific. She confirmed that the item suggested by Councilmember Riley should be added somewhere in the document.

City Administrator Ulrich questioned where the idea of a community center falls on the radar of the Council as he does receive questions from residents. He stated that the position at this point has been that the City is not in the position to pursue that at this time but would consider a partnership opportunity should that arise. He also referenced the old town hall building and questioned if there should be a plan for that as it continues to deteriorate.

Mayor Strommen stated that there is an item which specifies a diverse and robust offer of community activities and believed that a community center would fall under that item. She stated that not everything that the City does will be included in the document and believed that the old town center would fall into that category. She recognized that eventually the Council will need to do something with the old town hall building.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that perhaps the old town hall building could be discussed in a future case.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the Vision Statement will still need to be discussed at a future time.

The consensus of the Council was that the Vision Statement be left out of the Plan at this time and therefore the remainder of the Plan could continue to move forward.

2.03: Review 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), Management Report and Special Purpose Audit Reports

Finance Director Lund stated that Aaron Nielsen is in attendance to present the 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), Management Report and Special Purpose Audit Reports.

Aaron Nielsen, MMKR, reviewed the 2014 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), Management Report and Special Purpose Audit Reports. He stated that there were two findings, explaining that one contract tested did not have the required withholding data and one employee did not have the declaration required.

Councilmember Riley referenced the categories of general government, which overspent, and public safety, which underspent and questioned if there is a link between those two categories.

Mr. Nielsen stated that each City is unique in how they categorize items, noting that there is a challenge as there are some differences and some items end up being placed in general government. He noted that he did have that item highlighted to mention.

Councilmember Riley stated that the water utility and storm water utility funds have a healthy balance because of the plans for the future infrastructure and questioned if that is comparable to other cities.

Mr. Nielsen stated that is common for cities planning for future investment. He noted that there will be a change to the reporting process the following year regarding pension plans.

Finance Director Lund stated that this item will be on the agenda for the Council meeting under the Consent Agenda.

2.04: Discussion Regarding Public Safety Administrative Support

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the staff report and explained that as a result of two recent staffing changes in the Police Department, both the Police and Fire Departments currently have reduced administrative support capacity.

Councilmember Kuzma questioned how that would impact the budget for the next year.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that there would be a savings this year because of the changes and noted that in 2016 the increase would be the benefits with a slightly higher pay increment for the lead records position.

Councilmember Riley referenced the full-time position and confirmed that the figure proposed would include the benefits. He stated that he is not certain that the Fire Department would need more than five hours per week as that is what they have been using for the past few years.

Fire Chief Kapler stated that currently the additional clerical work is being absorbed by himself and another staff person.

Mayor Strommen explained that cutback had been done during the budget cuts and commended the Chiefs for their dedication to make things work during a time of limited funding.

The consensus of the Council was to direct staff to conduct recruitment as requested in order to fulfill the City's staffing needs.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that this item will come before the Council as a case at the August 11th meeting, titled authorization to hire.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he has received noise complaints regarding the Armstrong/Highway 10 project and questioned if the City could speak with the County in attempt to lower the speed in attempt to lower road noise.

Councilmember Johns stated that she has also received noise complaints regarding Alpine and County Road 5.

Mayor Strommen stated that she also received complaints about both roadways. She agreed that one part of the solution would be a discussion with the County and another would be for the City to review available enforcement tools.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the item can be added to a future Work Session agenda.

5. ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Strommen adjourned the Work Session of the City Council at 7:01 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Jo Ann M. Thieling
City Clerk

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.