

**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 23, 2015, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen (arrived at 5:37 p.m.)  
Councilmember Jill Johns  
Councilmember Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember John LeTourneau  
Councilmember Chris Riley  
Councilmember Melody Shryock  
Councilmember Kristine Williams

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
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**

Acting Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:36 p.m.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Discussion Regarding the Crime Prevention Specialist Position in the Police Department**

Mayor Strommen arrived at 5:37 p.m.

Police Chief Katers reviewed the staff report.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that another benefit to filling the position with a sworn officer would be that the employee could fill gaps when other officers are sick or on leave.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that there had been a non-sworn officer filling the position and questioned how that was working.

Police Chief Katers replied that it is currently working and necessary files are passed on to a sworn officer.

Councilmember Riley stated that the position is temporarily being filled with a sworn officer and did not think that makes sense for the short or long term. He likened it to hiring a doctor for a nurse's position.

Mayor Strommen stated that the question is really what the City wants out of the position. She agreed that as the position currently exists it would be unnecessary to hire a sworn officer but explained that if the position were to be redesigned it could not only handle the current duties but also provide maximum efficiency and additional flexibility for the department.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he agrees with Councilmember Riley and noted that there are additional costs with improvements and the fire station construction and would agree that perhaps this could be an area where additional funds would not be spent. He also acknowledged overtime hours in the police department and agreed that this position could provide flexibility and assist in avoiding some overtime costs.

Police Chief Katers stated that having a sworn officer in this position would provide flexibility in staffing for the police department.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that this position was created 15 years ago and the discussion at that time most likely focused on the fact that this position could handle non-sworn duties for the department. He stated that the person leaving the position was at the top of the pay scale and noted that this does present an opportunity to hire a sworn officer at a lesser cost. He stated that filling the position would provide another officer and would provide flexibility to the police department while the department would still remain under budget. He stated that this vacancy is an opportunity to re-evaluate the needs of the position and the department.

Police Chief Katers stated that the position has changed in the past 15 years, including the amount of services provided, and will continue to evolve over time. He stated that other municipalities have moved towards hiring a sworn officer for the position in order to provide continuity, among other benefits.

Councilmember Kuzma referenced the proposed 2016 budget information that reflected an additional \$12,000 and questioned if that would be balanced or whether that would be an overage.

Police Chief Katers explained that there would actually be a cost savings in the first year hiring a new officer compared to the current salary of the position.

Councilmember Riley questioned how likely it would be that the City would be able to hire someone for this desk job that would be able to transition to patrol.

Police Chief Katers stated that he would want someone with prior street experience to fill the position that way they could easily transition between the two duties.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced the amount of time the fire department puts into their fire prevention and education services and stated that he could see this position evolving into a larger scale as well. He stated that he could support putting a sworn officer into the position but would like to see the three to five year plan for the position.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that it would be helpful to have additional information on how the position will be molded over time. She stated that perhaps the decision could be made at that time.

Mayor Strommen stated that she would want to know the type of pressure the police department would face if that decision to fill the position is delayed. She stated that the department runs lean as it is and she would like to see the sworn officer filling the position, as it would provide flexibility as that employee could “wear multiple hats”. She agreed that a longer term plan could be developed for discussion but did not think that the decision would need to be delayed.

Police Chief Katers explained that the hiring process does take time, noting that if the posting process begins in July that person would probably not be hired until December. He stated that in the meantime he had to pull an officer from patrol to temporarily fill the position. He stated that it would be important to have that additional flexibility because it is a small department. He believed that any additional opportunities that can be created in the department would be beneficial for those employees interested in a lateral position change.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she would agree with filling the position with a sworn officer but questioned if the job position had been updated appropriately to describe the full scope of job duties. She stated that perhaps the decision could be delayed until the next Council meeting when the job duties could be better defined in order to accurately describe the position.

Police Chief Katers stated that he would recommend that the position to be posted would be for a police officer patrol position. He explained that a current patrol officer could then be moved laterally into this position.

Councilmember Riley questioned if the officer chosen for the position would also be pulled for patrol duties.

Police Chief Katers replied that this would be a rotating position and confirmed that the officer could also provide patrol duties. He stated the feedback he has received is that officers do not want to be stagnant in one position or shift time for too long and that is why there are some rotating positions, such as an investigation position in the department. He explained that this position would actually become a rotating community resource position.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that there would be a benefit to providing this opportunity within a small department, which would allow officers to try a different way to serve the community.

Councilmember LeTourneau noted that a benefit to having a rotating position is that you are providing a new set of eyes to the position as well.

Human Resources Manager Lasher added that she has received input from multiple channels that the department believed that this position should be filled with a sworn officer. She referenced the 2016 position that will be hired for the department and noted that she could post this position at the same time in order to have a dual recruitment, which would provide a cost savings.

The consensus of the Council was to authorize staff to hire a sworn officer to fill the position.

## **2.02: Discussion Regarding the Employee Sick Leave for Wellness Policy**

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the staff report.

City Administrator Ulrich clarified that the City has a sick leave for wellness policy and this would simply be an amendment to include vacation for eligible employees. He stated that there have not been a lot of employees who have taken advantage of the sick leave conversion.

Councilmember Kuzma noted that he thought that the contracts were already in place.

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the contracts, which have been agreed upon and noted that this would be included as a memorandum of understanding.

Councilmember Riley stated that this time is meant to allow employees time away from work and believes that it should be used for that purpose.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that it appears this update would be made more current to match what is being offered in the marketplace today. He questioned what kind of impact this would have on the budget.

Human Resources Manager Lasher provided a statement of clarification she received from Finance Director Lund who commented that this would be a good thing for the budget.

Mayor Strommen stated that she agrees with the statement that vacation time should be used for vacation but noted that the ultimate purpose of the benefit is to increase productivity and agreed that wellness activity could serve the same purpose.

Councilmember Riley stated that there were items in the policy he believes should be reviewed including a reference to Weight Watchers, as he believed that should be generalized as a weight loss program; he did not think purchasing a piece of equipment should be allowed; and he noted that "other expenses can be reimbursed as approved by human resources" seems very subjective.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that she will be meeting with the Labor Management Committee the following week and could discuss those suggestions at that time.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that this seems low risk and high reward in terms of employee morale.

The consensus of the Council was to direct staff to review the discussed amendments with the Labor Management Committee.

### **2.03: Consideration of Scope of Timing for Sunwood Drive Roundabout Landscaping Improvements**

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she has been thinking about this for the past few weeks and had considered a veteran's memorial for this location because of the amount of space available. She stated that there could be an opportunity for the City to create an RFP, which would allow local artists to create a project that represents the City.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would be fine with grass, as long as it is adequately mowed. He stated that his concern is regarding the area around that and the long-term development plan for that area.

Councilmember Williams agreed that grass would be adequate for the time being and the decision could be made in the future when there is a lovely development in that area.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the City will be resurrecting the study to look at that site in order to determine what would be needed to bring the site to a development standard.

Councilmember Riley questioned if the old city hall could be moved to that location.

Mayor Strommen agreed that timing would need to be considered, specifically when the time would be appropriate to do something in that area. She agreed that the decision is not urgent at this time.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he likes the idea of timing the roundabout landscaping with the development but noted that the current situation is not adequate. He stated that people looking at that site would see an unimproved element and believed that it would be appropriate to have a low cost alternative in the interim. He stated that the garden club could install flowers or staff could install interim landscaping in order to add aesthetic value at a low cost.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided input and stated that the City should be mindful not to spend \$4,000 installing something that will be taken out in another four years. He also thought the City should be mindful to avoid bringing in additional pedestrian traffic, noting that an artistic element could draw pedestrians, which could be a safety element.

The consensus of the Council was to direct staff to prepare a list of interim options while the Council continues to discuss long-term landscaping for the roundabout.

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

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would like to follow up on the traffic, noise and speed along Armstrong.

Councilmember Riley stated that in the past there was a work session calendar, or list of future agenda discussion items, and asked if something of that nature could be developed.

Mayor Strommen stated that staff does have a list of that nature and could bring that to the next work session for Council review.

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

City Administrator Ulrich provided a flyer regarding an upcoming legislative visit to Ramsey and asked that available Councilmembers respond for planning purposes.

### **5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:51 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 Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*