

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, July 14, 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 (arrived at 5:37 p.m.)
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Melody Shryock

Members Absent: Councilmember Kristine Williams

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Finance Director Diana Lund
Fire Chief Dean Kapler
Police Chief Jeff Katers
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

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: 2016 Preliminary Budget/Levy Review

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember LeTourneau arrived at 5:37 p.m.

City Administrator Ulrich provided budget and levy comparison information for the years 2007 through 2016.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the preliminary budget information attached to the staff report. She reviewed the preliminary proposed levies and the proposed increases under personnel. She reviewed the preliminary budget numbers highlighting added items and increases and/or decreases for specific line items. She reviewed the proposed tax capacity rate and preliminary

levy. She stated that the final budget document will include additional items as previously discussed including the Strategic Plan and CIP. She reviewed the proposed 2016 general fund budget noting that the strategic planning items are included as well.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that this was something new this year in attempt to link the budget to the Strategic Plan.

Finance Director Lund briefly highlighted the preliminary EDA budget and the capital equipment requests which were composed by staff. She stated that the purpose of tonight's meeting is to determine if the Council is comfortable with a levy rate of 44 percent. She stated that perhaps additional discussion may be needed in the areas of personnel and charitable gambling.

Mayor Strommen stated that it would be hard to determine the comfort level of the tax rate without knowing specifically what that would mean to the specific budget items.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the City has made a commitment to road reconstruction and the message has been made clear that the item will affect taxes. He suggested that perhaps the issue of roads be pulled aside so the Council is better able to see the impact that item has alone.

Finance Director Lund stated that the sealcoat item has remained constant and noted that Garnet Street is the only additional item with a cost of \$40,606 in 2016. She noted that there will be additional roadway costs in 2017.

Mayor Strommen stated that the personnel changes that may occur in 2016 would continue to have an impact in 2017 when the additional road costs come into play.

Councilmember Kuzma asked for additional information regarding the personnel change proposed for the budget.

Police Chief Katers provided the job description for the position of records technician. He stated that the department is in the process of hiring a lead records technician which would be a part-time position as well as the approved position. He noted that the department is short 1.5 FTE this year which will assist in offsetting some of the personnel changes.

Councilmember Riley stated that the City had decreased staffing during the recession and it appears that the majority of the increase for 2016 is staffing. He stressed that the City should not aim to rehire all of the previous staff positions.

Mayor Strommen stated that she would like to see the five year staffing plan. She noted that the structuring of staff had also changed and believed it would be beneficial to see an updated organizational chart.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that although he has concerns regarding growth of staff, he also recognized that there has been a population growth as well. He stated that the City has already grown the staff and would not want to see a large increase to the staff.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he would also like to determine an appropriate staffing increase comparative to the 12 percent increase in population.

Councilmember Riley stated that there has been a 12 percent increase to the population while the staffing would have grown by 22 percent.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that staff can bring additional information to provide comparison between the staff and population increases in order for the Council to make an informed decision.

Finance Director Lund stated that she will also present a five year proposed budget for the Council to review further along in the budget process.

Councilmember Kuzma referenced the area of roads and questioned if there would be a way to make a partial increase in 2016 that could be reserved for roads so the increase would not be so high in 2017.

Finance Director Lund stated that could be done and simply requires a bit more bookkeeping.

Mayor Strommen referenced the preliminary EDA budget and levy and noted that the budget is largely staffing, as the purpose of the EDA has shifted. She questioned if there is a benefit to placing some of those staffing costs under the EDA levy rather than placing all of the staffing costs in the general fund.

Finance Director Lund stated that there is no difference and noted that she can place the salaries in the general fund.

Councilmember Johns stated that she likes the idea of placing the staffing costs in the general fund rather than splitting the item into two places.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that perhaps the EDA should have further discussion regarding the challenges and changes.

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the staffing levels before the recession and when the staffing cuts had been made, noting that there is no desire to go back to the bare bones approach as there was significant staff burnout. She stated that if you compare the staffing levels 11 years ago to what is proposed in 2016 that would only be an increase of 1.19 and noted all of the increased services the City provides.

Mayor Strommen recognized the initial reaction of the Council in regard to the staffing chart and stated that is why the additional context is needed regarding the staff levels in order to ensure that the staffing level is sustainable in regard to workload and financially.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that staff will bring back the additional information at the next meeting which will also show the correlation between staff positions and Strategic Plan items.

Councilmember Kuzma referenced the area of donations and stated that he would like to link together the Draw Park Summer Series in with Happy Days. He stated that additional funds could be designated to the Happy Days item but believed that perhaps the Happy Days Committee could gain sponsors for the summer series events.

Mayor Strommen stated that perhaps the events the City sponsors should be reviewed as well to determine if the events are worthwhile and whether the desired outcome is being gained.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he would amicable to talking about the issue from different perspectives as he believes that the Draw Park Summer Series is a valuable event for the community. He stated that at first glance he does not see a problem with the proposed tax rate level, noting that it is a great place to start as the Council can now review more in depth information with staff.

City Administrator Ulrich questioned if the Council would like to see a flat tax rate scenario as an additional exercise as that would show the impact that would have on staffing and function.

Mayor Strommen stated that perhaps it would be enough to simply see the additional information on personnel and a prioritization of the positions. She stated that her biggest concern is not 2016 but what will happen in 2017 and 2018 with the increased debt and road costs. She stated that she would like to see how the impact in 2017 could be lessened.

Finance Director Lund referenced a \$30,000 line item relating to the public works building.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the initial Feasibility Study has not been completed and, therefore, that item was left in order to gain additional information.

Finance Director Lund stated that staff will prepare a preliminary five year budget which will come before the Council at a future meeting before the September adoption.

Mayor Strommen stated that she would find it helpful to have two additional discussions prior to the adoption.

Councilmember Riley stated that he appreciated the early start for the budget process which allowed a larger scale discussion before decisions need to be made.

Mayor Strommen agreed that this is a better format for the budget discussions.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/Calendar:

Mayor Strommen stated that the legislative strategy will come before the Council in August along with some other items.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the noise issue along Armstrong Boulevard is slated for the Work Session agenda on July 28th.

Mayor Strommen referenced a review of The COR and the vision and questioned where that will fall on the schedule.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that the Planning Commission held a discussion recently and noted that once the notes are formalized that item could come before the Council as a joint meeting with the Planning Commission in August.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that joint meetings with Commissions and neighboring communities were not included on the schedule and noted that, if desired, those meetings could be scheduled.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that it could be beneficial to have a joint meeting with Elk River and the Council agreed. He stated that he received a phone call from another Councilmember today regarding activity on Facebook. He suggested that a discussion should occur regarding the social media strategy of the City, specifically how/if negative comments should be addressed.

Councilmember Shryock stated sometimes she receives calls from residents on the rivers and suggested that some background on the waterways, regulations and the City's role could be provided.

City Administrator Ulrich asked, and received confirmation, that the Council would be interested in a tour which features and provides information on certain items and aspects of the City.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he spoke with Police Chief Katers regarding a safe zone created in St. Paul for exchanges on Craigslist.

Police Chief Katers stated that the department has an informal item which suggests that transactions occur in a public place. He noted that the lobby of the Police Department can be used during daytime hours and the parking lot could be used as well, although noted that the lot is not currently under camera surveillance. He stated that something more formal could be developed.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that staff spoke with the owner of the Game Fair property regarding puppy sales outside of the fences. He stated that notice will be listed on the licensing for vendors and advised of other activity which will occur including inspection of the animal sale areas. He stated that Game Fair also has a veterinarian onsite and has their own regulations.

5. ADJOURNMENT

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 Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.