

**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 28, 2015, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen (left the meeting at 6:30 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 Officer Jim Bonnie
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama
City Attorney Joe Langel
Community Development Intern Geoff Solomonson
Administrative Intern Oksana Carlier

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:35 p.m. She noted that she will be leaving the meeting at 6:30 p.m. and at that time Councilmember LeTourneau as Acting Mayor will preside over the rest of the meeting and the regular Council meeting.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Discuss Legislative Strategy Plan and Contract with The Tinklenberg Group for Work Regarding Improvements to US Trunk Highway 10 and Related Rail Crossings

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Elwyn Tinklenberg, The Tinklenberg Group, provided an update on the activity which occurred during the most recent legislative session and stated that while success was not obtained in regard to the Highway 10 components requested and the rail crossing improvements, he believed that those issues were well positioned for the next legislative session. He stated that cooperation and coordination with neighboring communities assisted in presenting the issue well, noting that

Anoka has now adopted a plan for the intersections of Highway 10 at Thurston and Fair oak. He noted that the City was able to build on the momentum of rail safety in regard to improved crossings and the relationship to Highway 10. He stated that while the bills were not passed, the City received a great opportunity to present their case and position themselves for the next legislative session. He believed that there would be transportation funds available through the next legislative session, and believed that Ramsey and Highway 10 would be well positioned. He commended Congressman Emmer for his support and continued cooperation with the City. He reported that the Senate is moving ahead with the six-year long-term plan, noting that only three years are funded as proposed. He stated that the current bill runs out in July and believed it to be highly likely that a short-term extension would be passed. He believed that the City was well positioned in regard to MnDOT, specifically with rail crossing safety, noting that all the crossings identified by the City were included on the priority list. He stated that while he was disappointed that the City did not gain the funding requested, he believed that the City is well positioned for the next legislative session.

Mayor Strommen stated that the Subcommittee felt that it would be important for Mr. Tinklenberg to provide an update on the work that was completed during his last contract and the legislative session as well as review the focus of his work included in his proposal. She noted that the focus of his work has shifted from the five items included in the last contract to the three items proposed in this plan.

Councilmember Kuzma referenced the Anoka plan and questioned how that would equate to working with Ramsey.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that the legislature can now see evidence that Anoka is on board with a plan. He stated that it appears that Anoka spent the time internally preparing their plan to get their portion in order and has now joined the team and provided testimony as well.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that there is a working group setup through the County that is composed of members from the Cities of Anoka, Ramsey, Andover and Anoka County. He stated that the working group provides the message that the cities are not working against each other but together to solve the problem.

Councilmember Riley questioned what the benefit of continuing this work now rather than pausing this until January 1st.

Mr. Tinklenberg believed that there would be a short-term bill that the City could possibly be included on. He noted that it would be important for the City to be on the tour with Congressman Nolan and to continue work with Congressman Emmer's staff. He noted that the legislative staff is not on pause and is continuing their planning, noting that Committees will be doing tours this fall of potential projects. He believed that being on that tour and following up to work with those individuals after the tour would be necessary. He stated that the City can also continue to coordinate efforts with neighboring communities.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he asked a similar question during the Subcommittee meeting, questioning what would be lost if the City were not to continue with this work right now.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that the City would be missing out on critical opportunities to coordinate efforts that could be aimed at a large transportation bill. He explained that there are funding items within larger bills and rail safety could be a part of that. He believed that opportunities would be lost to ensure that Highway 10 would continue to be a part of that discussion. He stated that preparing for the bonding and capital improvement bills would be critical and would not continue if the work were paused.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the City has put so much energy into this and has momentum going into the next legislative session; energy and momentum. He stated that the consensus of the Subcommittee was that if the City were to pull away now they would lose that momentum.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that the City would also miss out on events that are held during the legislative break which would provide the City with the opportunity to have beneficial discussions.

Councilmember Shryock stated that the Subcommittee did review the contract at length and made amendments which were incorporated into the document. She stated that the Subcommittee recommended approval of the contract as they had amended.

The consensus of the Council was to move ahead with the contract proposed by The Tinklenberg Group.

2.02: Armstrong Boulevard/Baugh Street (County Road 83) Traffic Noise Concerns

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Police Chief Katers stated that he did review this information and believed there to be an ordinance and State Statute which would be enforceable in regard to noise. He stated that it is difficult for law enforcement to do the enforcement for that because they do not have noise meters on the sides of the roads. He stated that by the time they receive a complaint they are being reactive. He stated that they have issued warnings and/or citations for loud muffler, no muffler and missing equipment.

City Engineer Westby stressed that the volumes of Armstrong are typical to the type of roadway but agreed that there were changes to the volume because of the detours and construction.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the case notes that the increased speeds are causing noise and asked for additional information.

Officer Bonnie stated that he does not see that the trucks are speeding, but noted that speeding is the easiest method to pull over a vehicle. He believed that the issue was the typical noise that

you would get from increased traffic. He referenced the Jake brake which was mentioned and noted that the Jake brake is being transitioned out and therefore would only belong to a truck from the early 1990's or before.

Mayor Strommen stated that because of the increased speeds the route becomes more efficient for some people to take and therefore has become a more popular route for some drivers.

Patrick Surma stated that he lives on 161st Avenue and thanked the Council for their support. He stated that most of the noise is coming from the road surface itself, especially during the morning and evening rush hours. He stated that although it is not proposed for the roadway to be improved until 2020 or 2022, he noted that there is a material that can be laid on the road that makes it 50 percent quieter.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he did not believe that rebuilding the road would be an option at this time, the City could request that the speed be lowered. He noted that the backside of that request is that the speed could again be increased.

Mr. Surma stated that he believed the only option would be to rebuild the roadway.

Mayor Strommen stated that with the increased traffic perhaps the 55 mile per hour speed limit is no longer appropriate.

Officer Bonnie stated that he has noticed that commercial vehicle traffic does increase when the scale on Highway 10 is open.

Betty Johnston, 17501 Baugh Street NW, stated that she does notice Jake breaks and noted that one semi honks its horn. She stated that they hear road noise in their home and have even refinanced their home to install triple panel windows. She stated that it is difficult to have road noise coming into your home 24 hours per day. She stated that she had spoken with the County and legislative representatives for the City and the response she received was that as development increases they would continue to review the issue. She stated that with the increased development in Elk River there has been a correlated increase in traffic, noting that there is also a mix because of the rural residents that use ATV's on County Roads.

Councilmember LeTourneau mentioned the possibility of additional landscaping such as landscaping berms and trees.

Ms. Johnston stated that when Armstrong was widened, they lost 20 feet from their front yard and advised that when that happened, they contacted Bachman's to determine the cost of a landscaping berm. She stated that because it is a County road, the berm would need to be designed to specifics and she did not have enough room in her front yard to fit that type of berm.

Councilmember Shryock stated that perhaps alternatives could be looked at including additional signage. She noted that Baugh is a straightaway with no stops and that is probably why that roadway sees additional traffic. She questioned if Councilmembers are receiving complaints from other areas or just this area.

Mayor Strommen confirmed that the Council have heard complaints from this area specifically.

Councilmember Riley stated that regardless of the position that the Council takes, they can only make the request because it is a County Road.

Ms. Johnston stated that she has seen signs in Big Lake that states noise decibels enforced and questioned how Big Lake enforces that.

Mayor Strommen left the meeting.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the City does have an Ordinance that can be applied for enforcement. He noted that the City would need permission to install signs of that nature.

Councilmember Shryock stated that there are three major corridors that go through the City, and noted that she would like to see Armstrong added to the discussion with the County regarding CR 5 and State Highway 47.

Councilmember Kuzma asked for additional information on the length of a speed study.

City Engineer Westby replied that a speed study takes six to 12 months to complete.

Councilmember Williams stated that she was surprised to hear that additional truck traffic occurs because the scale is open and believed that a dialogue should be opened with the County/State to address the issue of those trying to avoid the scales.

Police Chief Katers stated that a citation was issued the previous week for a driver trying to avoid the scale. He stated that they are aware of that issue.

Officer Bonnie stated that there is signage for the eastbound traffic alerting them that the scales are open. He stated that MnDOT does have a system for tracking trucks that go through the scale. He stated that the level of truck traffic will increase because of activity in neighboring communities such as Maple Grove. He stated that the fine for passing the scale when open is \$1,000.

Councilmember Shryock stated that Nowthen runs a “sting” when their scale is open to catch trucks that are avoiding the scale.

Officer Bonnie stated that he tried to setup a “sting” with the State Patrol but explained that because of the district lines he would have to work with two districts of State Patrol which can be difficult to coordinate.

Ms. Johnston questioned, and received confirmation that CR 5 and Highway 47 were considered collector roads. She stated she would appreciate it if Armstrong could also be placed on the discussion list with the County.

Mr. Surma stated that perhaps a weight limit could be put on the roadway. He noted that he would be willing to assist in creating a petition for Armstrong as well but stated that ultimately the issue is the road surface.

The consensus of the Council was to continue to work with the neighboring communities and enforcement in regard to road noise, to add Armstrong to the list of roadways being discussed with the County, and to investigate alternative options as well.

2.03: Update on Consulting Land Use Planning and Zoning Administration Services Utilized by the City and Review New Quotes from Qualified Firms

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report. He reviewed the three options and highlighted the staff recommendation to utilize WSB for the planning consultant services.

Councilmember Riley questioned if the consultant the City had been working with moved to WSB.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that the consultant actually took a job with a municipality. He stated that the City has worked with WSB on projects in the past and provided additional information on the WSB staff. He stated that the proposals were similar in price but WSB provided a lower price for entry-level positions, which is the area that the City would most utilize.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that this position would backfill some of the more mundane tasks that can be handled while staff is able to focus on the more important items, such as planning for the Comprehensive Plan.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that he appreciates that this is within the budget for 2015 and believed that the request is well within the means of their assignment.

The consensus of the Council was to move ahead with the recommendation of staff to select WSB to provide as-needed support to the Community Development Department.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/Calendar

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he had mentioned the possibility of moving the Draw Summer Series to the Happy Days Committee. He stated that there are fundraising needs and believed that is a lot to put on the volunteers for that group. He stated that it appears to some residents that the City is funding the event.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that he was planning to bring that forward in the budget discussion because the City could possibly make a contribution to the event.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the City may find it easier to secure a sponsor compared to a volunteer.

Councilmember Johns noted that additional review should be done as the Ramsey Foundation is currently handling the event and although the City is a non-profit it is not the same.

Councilmember Riley stated that he has been happy with the relationship and process thus far because it could put the City in an awkward position asking for sponsorship.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that while the event has gone great, the group cannot go back to the same sponsors each year for money. He noted that the bands provided a discount the first year but then the prices are raised in future years.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau confirmed the consensus of the Council to further review the Foundation's contribution and alternative funding sources.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the original budget work session scheduled for August 11th will be changed to August 25th with additional meetings to occur on September 8th and final adoption on September 22nd.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau noted that if additional discussion is needed on the budget, a special meeting may be necessary as well.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None

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.*