

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, August 25, 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
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: Further Discussion of 2016 Proposed Budget and Levies and Review of 5-Year Budget (2016-2020)

City Administrator Ulrich noted that this is the second meeting for review of the budget and briefly advised of the information that was included in the Council packet. He stated that after Finance Director Lund reviews the staff report there will be a general presentation on personnel and trends in that area.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report noting that she would be reviewing the attachments in the order they are displayed in the packet. She noted that the majority of the

increase to the budget is in regard to personnel, specifically new positions added and additional hours added to certain positions.

Mayor Strommen noted that the Comprehensive Trail Plan should be listed as the Recreation Plan.

Finance Director Lund continued to review the proposed budget information providing comparison information for the proposed 2016 budget to the 2015 budget, noting that the debt service is increasing by approximately \$290,000. She also briefly reviewed highlights in regard to donations for certain programs.

Mayor Strommen stated that perhaps a work session topic could be scheduled to discuss some of the programs the City supports through donations to review the services that are available and have a more policy-based discussion to better determine the role of the City.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that typically the City provides support to those organizations with a direct link to services, such as Alexandria House and Youth First, which help the police staff to better do their job.

Finance Director Lund highlighted the five-year staffing plan that staff developed in response to the Council comments that begins in 2016, noting that three positions are proposed to be added and two additional positions are proposed to have additional hours.

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the additional positions proposed to be added to the budget each year for the next five-year period.

City Administrator Ulrich referenced specifically the three positions proposed to be added to the budget in 2016 and asked the appropriate staff member to provide detail on the position proposed to be added to their department.

Community Development Director Gladhill provided information on the Code Enforcement Coordinator, which is a new position for the department, and would handle duties such as public nuisance, building and property maintenance, and zoning code items.

Councilmember Riley asked if this position would change the system from complaint driven or whether staff would still wait for issues to be reported.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that the system would remain as a complaint based system, as a different staffing level would be needed to move to a proactive based system. He stated that as the position moves along there could be more proactive efforts on certain corridors.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that while this position will help staff keep up with the complaint-based issues reported, it will also be critical in identifying issues in certain corridors, such as the highways, helping the City to address image issues. He stated that this position will also help other staff in that department to more appropriately use their skills.

Mayor Strommen noted that code enforcement is not the only tool the City is using to address issues in certain corridors.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer provided additional information on the new staffing position proposed for the Public Works Department, noting that this will be the first addition to the department in the past ten years. He stated that he presently contracts out street sweeping and parking ramp snow removal services in the amount of \$58,000 and noted that while this position would not totally remove those costs he believed that cost would be reduced. He explained that one of the current staff members has been moved to the mechanics bay to keep up with that demand, noting that the Public Works Department services all the City equipment and vehicles, and; therefore, another worker is needed on the street crew.

Councilmember Riley stated that it seems that work would be needed for snow removal but noted that the position is not slated to begin until April 1st.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer explained that postponement was done in attempt to save funds and noted that he would hire on a seasonal staff member to address the snow removal needed in the winter months.

Police Chief Katers provided additional information on the Drug Task Force position proposed to be added for the Police Department in 2016. He stated that the City is currently reactive and not proactive in the area of drugs. He stated that the Task Force currently has members from 11 cities in Anoka County and explained that the group is hesitant to spend their time in a city that does not contribute to membership. He stated that he would like to see this position as it would provide a benefit to the City and would also provide opportunities to the current members of the department as the position would be equivalent to an investigator. He noted that typically there is a two-year rotation on the task force and provided additional information on the administrative services provided by the Sheriff's Department, including interviewing and recommendations for whom in the department should fill the position.

Councilmember Kuzma confirmed that this would be an added position.

Police Chief Katers stated that the position would be filled by an officer or investigator with experience within the department and; therefore, he would be backfilling the position vacated with a new officer.

Councilmember Riley asked if drugs are considered a big problem in the City and whether the Drug Task Force position is a better fit than simply adding an additional patrol officer.

Police Chief Katers replied yes to both questions noting that a lot of the calls do involve drinking or drugs, which is not different than any other city. He stated that while patrol would add another body to the street, he believes that patrol is adequately staffed and this would be a better use of resources.

Councilmember Riley asked if two or three smaller cities could pool together to share a task force member.

Police Chief Katers stated that has not been done, explaining that it could be difficult to share that resource because the staff member would be reporting under two or three Police Chiefs.

Councilmember Johns stated that while rotating the position would provide additional opportunity to members of the department would also provide additional training and knowledge to the officers that rotate through the position.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if a patrol car would be needed for this position.

Police Chief Katers noted that there are forfeiture funds that would be available, noting that the funds are very specific as to what they can be used for. He noted that there are also some forfeiture vehicles that could possibly be used, as the position would not use a marked patrol car.

Finance Director Lund provided additional information regarding capital equipment and five-year budget document.

Councilmember Riley stated that he agrees with almost everything he has heard tonight except that the 11 percent increase is acceptable. He noted that inflation has been very low over the past few years, sometimes even negative, and believed the City to be out of sync with the general economy and income of the residents. He did not believe that, as proposed, the budget would be responsible to the residents.

Councilmember Kuzma agreed to some degree but noted that the City is also growing as there have been 13 miles of new roads added and new homes, which require additional staff and services. He stated that it would be counterproductive if the City were not to manage resources adequately for its growth.

Councilmember Riley stated that the population has not grown 20 percent in the past two years.

Mayor Strommen stated that two years ago there was an extensive discussion regarding payment for roads and the City chose not to look at the franchise fee and instead use property taxes. She stated that the road reconstruction projects cannot be paid in the existing budget. She noted that the budget had been artificially low for many years because the road problem was not being dealt with and stated that the core functions, such as road, need to be funded. She stated that the Strategic Plan goals will need to be prioritized in order to match with the growth of the City and that is why the five-year budget is important.

Councilmember LeTourneau agreed that the City has a responsibility to the residents, but noted that costs in only one portion of that as commitments were made regarding the artificially low budget that was in place. He stated that roads, investment in the community, adequate growth and management of resources are also important and; therefore, cost is not the only aspect of the budget. He stated that because of the way this has been set up, he believes that this is being handled appropriately and would be difficult to simply cut items from the budget to reduce costs.

He referenced the Drug Task Force position and noted that the City has been discussing that position for years and stated that in not having that position the City could become a target for that type of activity.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would like to see an increase in line with the increase in income, as that is how most households work, you spend what you make.

Mayor Strommen agreed with the comments of Councilmember LeTourneau that there are investments in the community and returns in service being provided with the increased cost. She stated that perhaps staff can provide scenarios that address Councilmember Riley's comments and also list the benefit that is being provided with the increased costs.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that staff can prepare that information for the next meeting. He noted that approximately \$300,000 to \$360,000 would need to be cut from the budget in order to match the increase in revenue.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that perhaps specific information on the roads could also be provided.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/Calendar

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would like to have discussion regarding the trailer park along Highway 10, as he attended a ride along the previous weekend and believed that there are several issues that need to be addressed.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:57 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.*