

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, September 22, 2015, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen
Councilmember Mark Kuzma
Councilmember John LeTourneau
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Melody Shryock
Councilmember Kristine Williams (arrived at 5:36 p.m.)

Members Absent: Councilmember Jill Johns

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Finance Director Diana Lund
Police Patrol Captain Tim Frankfurth
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Mike Berge Parks Lead Maintenance Worker
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
Lacrosse Commissioner Jeremy Zahler
Baseball Commissioner Dan Franzwa
Anoka Ramsey Athletic Assoc. Treasurer Dean Meyer
Anoka Ramsey Athletic Assoc. Communications Director Dustin Reeder
Elwyn Tinklenberg of the Tinklenberg Group

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Joint Discussion with Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association

Mayor Strommen welcomed the guests present tonight and stated that the Council has wanted to have this joint meeting for some time in order to communicate and better plan for the future.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood asked everyone in the group to introduce themselves and began review of the staff report.

Mr. Meyer presented some of the current demographics for Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association (ARAA) reporting that there are currently 4,300 children enrolled and 10,112 people registered in the data base. He stated that between 2009 and 2015 ARAA donated \$19,000 in registration fees to struggling families. He explained that there is an application process and the names are kept confidential. He stated that if qualified, participants can receive 50 percent of their registration fees donated, noting that in extreme situations the full registration cost can be donated by ARAA.

Councilmember Williams arrived.

Mr. Meyer reviewed the updates and improvements to infrastructure that ARAA has funded in the past six years at different Ramsey park locations including a storage building, batting cages, fencing, portable fencing, water lines and creation of an additional football field for a total amount of \$163,000.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood asked the annual operating budget for ARAA, noting that the majority of funds that come into the organization go right back out.

Mr. Meyer stated that the typical annual budget is around \$750,000 noting that this year that amount will push over \$800,000 as there was a lot of fundraising completed through the baseball program for the Central Park improvements.

Mr. Franzwa stated that while ARAA can donate half of the registration costs, the individual sport may also donate the remaining half of the registration fees for a child. He stated that the family can donate their time to make up for some of those funds but noted that the goal of the association is to make it possible for any child in the community to play sports.

Mr. Reeder stated that sports are a great way to keep kids out of trouble. He noted that the goal is to get the kids onto the sports fields and not worry about the money.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the vision of the association aligns with the vision of the City.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced the \$40,000 worth of grant aid that ARAA gives on an annual basis and asked if that covers the equipment costs or only the registration fees.

Mr. Meyers noted that is simply registration fees.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that it is incredible that the organization is able to do that and has that type of demand.

Mr. Reeder stated that members also assist in passing down equipment to families that need it.

Mr. Franzwa stated that there is a community effort where everyone donates what they can across the board.

Mayor Strommen stated that the Council has spoken about their desire to assist in things that promotes a sense of community and noted that this aligns quite well with that goal.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood asked if there are trends for sports, noting that would be useful information for future park planning.

Mr. Zahler stated that lacrosse continues to grow as the trend for that sport continues to increase. He noted that for the past four years the sport has increased by at least 25 percent each year. He stated that they are running out of playing space. He noted that winter, summer, and fall sessions are available and they are gaining children from other communities because those cities do not offer the same seasons for the sport.

Mr. Franzwa stated that baseball continues to struggle for space as well and noted that it would be nice to have a few more fields. He stated that softball continues to maintain steady. He referenced basketball and stated that they rent space from community schools most nights of the week.

Mr. Reeder estimated that basketball pays almost \$80,000 annually just for the rented space at Lord of Life. He referenced soccer and stated that about 1,000 of the children registered belong to soccer. He advised that there are also children registered for volleyball and tennis.

Mr. Meyer stated that volleyball continues to become more popular.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted that the community fields are also being shared with PACT Charter School and St. Stephen's Church on occasion. He noted that the City has streamlined the communication between staff, ARAA and the other groups in order to better schedule the use of the fields and facilities. He provided a handout which lists the daily park maintenance duties and the scheduling of the City facilities. He stated that in October there is not an evening available at Elmcrest, which demonstrates how well the park is working and how efficient and in demand ARAA is in terms of scheduling.

Mr. Zahler stated that part of the trends is the growth in the sports programs, noting that through ARAA, Anoka and Ramsey are the hub of the northern metro for lacrosse. He provided information on the end of the summer season tournament which took place during the last week in July on the field at Anoka High School, noting that there was very high attendance and participation.

Mr. Franzwa stated that ARAA is asked to host additional tournaments, which brings in teams from across the state that would not otherwise be at the Ramsey parks and Ramsey area.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood referenced an upcoming tournament at Elmcrest which had 5,000 persons on a single day during the event last year, noting the benefit to Ramsey businesses.

Community Development Director Gladhill presented the development update which was included in the staff report highlighting recent and upcoming development and trends in population. He provided an overview of the upcoming Comprehensive Plan process that will begin and the input that the City would like to gather from the community and ARAA as well.

Mr. Reeder stated that as the Communications Director for ARAA, he can pass on information to the data base of 10,000 people.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the Comprehensive Plan process is a long multi-year planning process, providing additional information on the mater park and trail plans. He stated that there are some plans that need to have their costs reevaluated, specifically those features planned for The COR area, to determine if the features are feasible and if the item can be financially sustained.

Mayor Strommen stated that there are recreation fads and the City should evaluate those items to ensure that items with a longer shelf life are being invested in.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood used the example of tennis in the 1980's, noting that while that trend has decreased those courts can now be repurposed for pickle ball which continues to increase in popularity and demand. He stated that the City maintains a Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which includes park features and other City items planned within the next five years. He noted that some of the items included on the list are placeholders and would not move forward without partnership opportunities. He referenced the idea of a community center and stated that input from ARAA would be beneficial in determining the amount of space they would need for sports and the cost that would be paid in rent to recoup project costs.

Mayor Strommen stated that she looks forward to the City working with ARAA in order to better plan for future needs in the area of parks. She noted that there will be a lot more time for these conversations during the Comprehensive Plan process.

Mr. Franzwa stated that it would be great to have these joint meetings on an annual basis in order to keep the lines of communication open between the City and ARAA.

Councilmember Kuzma thanked the ARAA for the things that they do and the time they volunteer towards their vision.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she appreciates the dialogue that ARAA provides and continues to provide to the City, noting that not all associations and cities have such great partnerships.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that in the role he has he is trying to create a better community but does not have the same perspective that ARAA can provide, which he finds helpful in terms of planning for the future.

Mr. Franzwa stated that there is always a need for multipurpose fields, noting that he is asked to host many tournaments that the City cannot currently accommodate.

Mr. Reeder stated that his teams played a tournament in Eden Prairie this summer with eight fields which draws in so many people. He noted that if a field system of that size is built in The COR, it would draw businesses in because of all the people that those tournaments draw in.

Mr. Franzwa stated that they may be looking at a referendum which could be used to fund an improvement of that nature.

Mr. Reeder noted that they are all members of the community and want to see the community flourish. He stated that Central Park is a distance from The COR but if something of that size is built in The COR it would bring in a lot of business.

Mr. Franzwa stated that they were able to fundraise a large amount of money in order to invest those funds into park infrastructure. He stated that he could not do it without the help of other such as the Ramsey Lions and softball.

Councilmember Williams acknowledged that tournaments bring in huge crowds and she would love to see Ramsey become a destination of that type. She stated that it is important to have the facilities available for sports and families but it is very important to have the facilities to hold tournaments.

Mr. Zahler stated that the tournament that is hosted at Anoka High School in the summer for the lacrosse has been acknowledged as the best tournament and he noted that he has been invited to host three additional fall tournaments but had to deny those requests because he loses those fields to soccer in the fall.

Mr. Reeder stated that Ramsey has a great location because they are halfway between Minneapolis and the northern communities, such as St. Cloud.

Mayor Strommen expressed her appreciation for the members of ARAA that attended and provided their input tonight. She agreed that it would be beneficial to have these joint meetings on an annual basis and to have open lines of communication, rather than simply communicating when there is a problem. She thanked ARAA for their support and the benefit they provide to the community.

2.02: Update Regarding Nuisance Code Enforcement Activities at 6545 Highway 10 NW

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report.

Mayor Strommen appreciated the characterization on the proactive code enforcement efforts but noted that it is still reactive in her opinion. She stated that she has real concerns with the health and welfare of the people that live there. She noted that perhaps there is a source of funding that could be identified to make the necessary updates. She did not think this was solely an issue of code enforcement and believed that there should be a long-term plan for the issues.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he attended a ride along and there were quite a few spots where garbage was piled up and there were some issues that need to be corrected to make the area better.

Councilmember Riley asked if the septic system there is now working.

Community Development Director Gladhill reported that site is now on City sanitary sewer and septic. He stated that there may be one unit that is on a tank system but noted that the system is well monitored. He agreed that staff does not want this simply to be a code enforcement issue and would like to have a long-term plan for the property identified during the corridor planning process.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that staff will continue to report back on this issue noting that the health and safety issues continue to be the number one priority for the City to ensure that a healthy living environment is provided. He noted that this property will be a part of the Highway 10 corridor plans as the frontage road will interfere with the property.

Councilmember Shryock noted that Youth First may be a resource for this discussion as well.

2.03: Receive Highway 10 Update

Mr. Tinklenberg provided an update on the recent discussions regarding Highway 10. He referenced MnDOT and noted that there is one project on Highway 10 identified between now and 2024 on their plans, which is the Armstrong project. He stated that reinforces what the City is doing, because funding is what drives those plans. He stated also found on the MnDOT website is the priority grade separation recommendations, which includes both Ramsey Boulevard and Sunfish Lake Boulevard. He stated that he has a meeting set up with Representative Uglem on October 1st to talk about the next session, noting that Representative Uglem has been very active with transportation plans. He noted that the Bonding Committee will meet in Ramsey on December 1st to tour the grade separation proposals at Ramsey Boulevard and Sunfish Lake Boulevard. He stated that he is working with the Representatives from this area in order to develop the best plan to present in order to make the best of the time Ramsey will have in front of that group. He provided an update on the transportation bill, noting that the House and Senate continue to disagree on the terms of the bill. He stated that Congressman Nolan will be in Ramsey on October 2nd, noting that he is committed to working with Ramsey to identify possible federal funds for transportation. He referenced a recent article that was printed in a newspaper about Highway 10 and the unique character and importance of the roadway.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the City was just alerted that they have received a grant for the frontage road on the south side of Highway 10. He stated that the grant would cover roughly 50 percent of the construction costs and staff will work to develop the funding details.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/Calendar

Noted.

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.