

**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 2, 2014, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen  
Councilmember Randy Backous  
Councilmember Jill Johns  
Councilmember Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember John LeTourneau  
Councilmember Chris Riley  
Councilmember Jason Tossey (arrived at 6:06 p.m.)

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Finance Director Diana Lund  
Police Chief James Way  
Police Captain Jeff Katers  
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
Human Resources Manager Colleen Lasher  
City Clerk Jo Ann Thieling  
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill  
City Engineer Bruce Westby  
Assistant to the City Administrator Patrick Brama

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 6:00 p.m.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Further Discussion of 2015 Proposed Budget and Levy**

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report, noting the revisions made based on Council direction at its August 11, 2014, Work Session to reduce the levy: Fund Capital Equipment via 50% Equipment Fund and 50% debt; and, offset the road debt with funds remaining from the 2013 Street Maintenance Program. She stated additional revisions were made based on Council direction at its August 26, 2014, meeting to reflect the restructuring of staff in relation to the resignation of the Economic Development Director. Finance Director Lund noted these revisions result in a tax rate of 42.67% and a levy increase of 9.88%. She stated the HRA fund balance would be \$222,000 and while it can still be used, she would recommend waiting for the final numbers before deciding whether to use that fund balance. She provided details on the line item revisions made to date, noting that since the first budget discussion, there has been

\$266,000 in budget reductions and \$891,000 in levy reductions. Finance Director Lund presented the tax impact to a median priced house in Ramsey of \$175,000 (now \$202,000), noting it would experience an increase in taxes (Ramsey's portion) of \$342. She requested Council direction whether it supported this revised preliminary budget with the understanding that it can be reduced prior to adoption. In addition, the Council will be asked at a future meeting what percentage it supported for assessments, which would reduce the City's debt levy.

Councilmember Kuzma asked how this levy increase compared with surrounding communities.

Finance Director Lund reviewed a comparison of Ramsey's levy increase of last year with surrounding communities, noting it was in line. She explained that due to what is happening with the market value, she expects there will be some increases.

Councilmember Backous stated it is nice to know whether Ramsey's levy increase is in line with surrounding communities; however, communities are in different stages of growth and level of tax base, and some have instituted franchise fees so it is not always valuable to consider such a comparison. He felt the current revised budget was a good settling point as long as residents are educated that road reconstruction costs have been incorporated into the levy.

Councilmember Kuzma suggested an article explaining this in an upcoming *Ramsey Resident*.

Mayor Strommen noted that Finance Director Lund does make a public presentation of the budget prior to adoption that includes an explanation of the valuation process and how costs relate to the City's budget.

Finance Director Lund stated a Truth in Taxation meeting is required to discuss those issues and that will be on December 9, 2014, prior to adoption.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the next *Ramsey Resident* will not be sent until mid-October but an article could be posted to the City's website.

Councilmember Backous stated the budget changes made to reflect Strategic Plan initiatives should also be explained, such as the shift with the EDA budget and that the HRA is not being budgeted for 2015.

Councilmember Riley asked for an update on the Economic Development Manager position.

City Administrator Ulrich explained at the last meeting, it had been the Council's decision to promote the Assistant to the City Administrator to the Economic Development Manager/Assistant City Administrator and then hire an entry level Public Information Event Specialist. He noted this shift in staffing will result in a budget savings.

Councilmember Riley stated he understands the promotion of the Assistant to the City Administrator to the Economic Development Manager/Assistant City Administrator and adding the entry-level communication person but he noted that under Planning and Zoning, it still shows adding an Economic Development Manager.

Finance Director Lund explained including that position was an error and should be removed. She stated the numbers listed under reductions are correct.

Councilmember Riley suggested a discussion to evaluate how the newly hired City Attorney was being used and whether it was efficient for him to attend every Council meeting.

City Administrator Ulrich stated he had that discussion and City Attorney Langel will look at hours spent and contract impact. He stated City Attorney Langel has indicated that more hours have been used than expected so there will be a future discussion relating to efficient use of those hours.

Councilmember Riley stated his other suggestions had already been incorporated into the budget revisions.

Councilmember Riley asked what the total levy is.

Finance Director Lund stated the levy is \$9,410,498, a reduction of \$891,073 from the original budget. She explained how roads were budgeted and proposed reductions.

Councilmember Riley asked about the projected reduction in building permit fees.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated staff took a conservative approach to establish a base and while it is hoped that some of the projects will move forward, they are not yet final.

Mayor Strommen stated as the Council looks at this in six months, there may be a better understanding whether that revenue projection is accurate or may be better than hoped. She stated adjustments can be made at that time, if needed, and she appreciates staff taking a conservative approach to building revenue projections.

Councilmember Riley pointed out this is 25% of the increase, which is a large portion. He asked if those fees are on track in 2014.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated staff had hoped to see stronger numbers in single family and manufacturing and retail that were anticipated for 2014 but that may not occur. He explained that should those projects not occur, there would also be a corresponding reduction in expenses.

Councilmember Riley asked what would the estimated percentage be should those larger projects occur.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated if the Council is interested in that information, he would have to calculate those specific numbers.

City Administrator Ulrich asked what would be the percentage drop in revenue from 2014 actual to projected.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated he does not have that information available tonight but he could provide it to the Council.

Mayor Strommen suggested providing that number at next week's meeting as well as a listing of projects on the horizon.

Councilmember Tossey asked whether the entire \$226,000 increase in personnel costs was for COLA.

Finance Director Lund explained it is a combination of COLA, step increases, insurance premium increases, PERA rate adjustments, and new position changes.

Mayor Strommen asked the Council whether it was comfortable with the proposed budget.

Councilmember Tossey stated he was not comfortable and would like more information on position changes. He stated he has no suggestions for reductions other than eliminating the EDA.

Mayor Strommen stated the road costs are a big piece of the increase, noting one goal was financial stability to keep the rate close to the same as last year while also adding money to cover some of the road costs.

Councilmember Tossey stated a home valued in 2014 at \$100,000 will be valued at \$115,000 in 2015. For that 15% increase in home value, that property owner will pay \$196 in taxes (Ramsey's portion) and receive all services plus road reconstruction. He felt that was a better deal than if franchise fees had been instituted because in that case, the same property owner would have paid \$192 in franchise fees plus property taxes.

Councilmember Kuzma noted if that property owner was assessed at 20% for a road improvement, the cost would be more than \$192.

Councilmember Tossey stated it will still be lower than with franchise fees.

Finance Director Lund stated with eliminating the HRA, those personnel costs are being absorbed into the EDA and General Fund, which is also part of the increase.

Councilmember Backous suggested that also be highlighted during the public presentation.

Mayor Strommen agreed, noting it is a significant increase and will explain the numbers.

Councilmember Tossey asked if last year's tax capacity rate is shown on the notice that property owners receive.

Finance Director Lund stated it is not.

Councilmember Backous stated that will be another opportunity to educate property owners.

The consensus of the Council was to support the 2015 Budget and Levy, as revised and presented tonight.

## **2.02: Discuss Continuum of Action as it Pertains to Meeting Disruptions**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report, noting that from time-to-time, there have been disruptions at public meetings so it was suggested it would be beneficial to have a process in place with progressive steps to deal with such disruptions. It was noted that the authority to enact measures to deal with disruptions comes from Minnesota State Statutes 624.72 Interference with Use of Public Property, Subd. 4. Rule Violation, which reads: "Violation of a rule or regulation which has been published, posted, or announced in a reasonable manner at the time of such conduct shall be prima facie evidence of intent to violate this section." The Council had been provided with an example of Continuum of Action language that could be used as a template for posting on or near the door of the Council Chambers. City Administrator Ulrich explained that because this is in State Statutes, it is not necessary for Council to formally adopt a policy. However, it is important that all Council members are aware of the policy, procedures, and postings that are proposed.

Police Chief Way indicated he had nothing additional to offer.

Councilmember Tossey stated he had asked staff to include this Case on tonight's Work Session agenda. He stated in his profession, he sometimes has to play this role and knows it is important to give direction to the responding officer. He explained that it often involves a delicate balance of respecting First Amendment Rights while allowing the business of the meeting to proceed. In addition, direction needs to be given so the officer does not respond too quickly. Councilmember Tossey stated it is important to adjourn the meeting to allow the officer an opportunity to respond. He referenced the last Council meeting that involved an awkward situation during Citizen Input during which Police Captain Katers responded to a speaker who had been declared out of order.

Mayor Strommen stated she appreciates that Councilmember Tossey brought this issue forward and agreed that it will provide another tool.

City Administrator Ulrich recommended the Council consider all public meeting rooms at the Municipal Center under this policy as well as all City Boards and Commissions that conduct public meetings. If supported by the Council, staff recommends a document and/or training for all Commission/Board Chairs. He asked whether the Council supported limits on the length of Open Forum comments by a single speaker, noting it could be abused without having a policy in place.

Mayor Strommen stated the informal policy of limiting comment has worked well but there are situations where exceptions need to be made.

Councilmember Backous stated some issues may take ten minutes so he does not want to limit time given to an Open Forum speaker. He stated he does support the suggested process and asked how it would be implemented and audience members notified. Councilmember Backous noted there is a sign-in sheet that could contain some of this information. He stated the comments being made during Citizen Input should be relevant to City Council business so it does not become a weekly forum for someone to have a television audience. In addition, if called out of order, the speaker must know and agree to step down.

Councilmember Kuzma stated he appreciates those comments but thinks the Council should have the ability to limit speech if the speaker is being repetitive so the meeting can move along. Because of that, he supports a tool that allows the Council to close the discussion. Councilmember Kuzma noted there is not a Police presence at other Commission/Board meetings.

Police Chief Way suggested that rather than having an officer in attendance, the Chair call a recess, and then call the officer so the officer can enter the meeting to address the need.

Councilmember Tossey stated he thinks it is important to not have an arbitrary time limit on Citizen Input speakers but agreed it is good to limit redundancy and eliminate personal attacks. He stated the Continuum of Action relies on the presence of a strong chair that is educated in how to be effective in directing the meeting.

Mayor Strommen recalled that at a previous meeting, public comment time was limited during the gun range issue because there were many audience members to be heard and comments had become repetitive.

Councilmember Tossey stated this process will provide protection to all.

Mayor Strommen stated the issue is more related to meetings with large agendas, large audiences, repetitive comments, and/or personnel attacks.

Councilmember Backous agreed that time limits should be set in those situations.

Councilmember Johns supported having a plan of action and taking it off camera.

Police Chief Way stated he was addressing Citizen Input that is held at the beginning of the meeting because if warranted, the issue raised can be moved to a future agenda, and allows the Council/Commission/Board to get on with its work. He stated at School Board meetings, there is a limit placed on the length that one person can speak.

Mayor Strommen stated most people have respected the time limit with Citizen Input.

Councilmember Backous agreed and recalled that during the gun range consideration, Mayor Strommen had asked the audience members to not be repetitive and welcomed them to speak if they had a new topic to raise.

Mayor Strommen stated the Council is in agreement to put this process in place and provide education/training for the Chairs. She asked whether that information should be added to the sign-in sheet to educate people who intend to speak.

Police Chief Way advised that State Statute indicated the information should be published, posted, or announced. He suggested it also be included on the City's website, posted, and announced by Mayor Strommen at the start of the meeting.

Councilmember Backous stated he thinks the more locations it can be posted, the better.

Mayor Strommen asked whether the Council supported limiting time for speakers during Citizen Input.

The Council indicated it did not support limiting time.

Councilmember Backous noted that some cities do not televise Citizen Input, which would prevent a person from using it as a platform to promote their view.

Mayor Strommen agreed that while this can occur, it has not been a problem in Ramsey.

The consensus of the Council was to support a Continuum of Action Policy pertaining to meeting disruptions and direct staff to post this information as appropriate.

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

#### **3.01: Stormwater Drainage Issue / Public Works Committee Meeting Agenda**

Councilmember Johns reported on a resident call relating to a stormwater issue by Woodland Green Park.

Mayor Strommen suggested that she, as Mayor, and the Ward Councilmembers tour this site and that this Case be incorporated into a Public Works Committee meeting so it is properly noticed.

City Administrator Ulrich stated staff will schedule such a site visit that is incorporated with the Public Works Committee meeting.

Mayor Strommen asked staff to inform the interested resident when the site visit is scheduled.

Councilmember Riley stated none on the Council are drainage experts so he would ask what the value of a Council tour is.

Councilmember Backous stated the resident wants the Councilmembers to see the situation so they better understand his concern.

Councilmember Riley suggested City Engineer Westby and Public Works Superintendent Riemer take such a tour because they are the City's drainage experts.

The Council discussed the benefit of viewing drainage issues so an understanding is gained.

Councilmember Backous stated he will be talking with Public Works Superintendent Riemer about topics for the next Public Works meeting.

### **3.02: Televising Work Sessions**

Councilmember Backous stated he has received multiple requests to televise Work Sessions.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that topic is on the list for a future Work Session.

### **3.03: Officer Involved Shooting**

Police Chief Way reported on a recent officer involved shooting while responding to a call from the Learning Lodge Daycare Center relating to a suspicious vehicle during which the gentleman in the passenger seat ran and then turned towards the officers with a gun. The officers responded to end that deadly threat. Police Chief Way stated a video from the Lodge has been viewed and shows the officers acted properly. The Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) is investigating this case. He explained what will be occurring in the next week relating to this case.

Police Captain Katers thanked all who have supported the officers involved, both internally and from the community.

Mayor Strommen asked for comment on the importance of the video.

Police Chief Way explained that the camera on the front caught part of what occurred but when the new squad cameras are received/installed, it will catch everything. He stated the video caught by the Learning Lodge is a huge deal in this case.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated his initial reaction was to stay out of the way and asked how the Council can recognize or support what is going on.

Police Chief Way stated this is a great Council to work with because none called him, Police Captain Katers, or City Administrator Ulrich, which is what should occur. He described the chain of command and how information is provided to City Administrator Ulrich who can then inform the Council.

Councilmember Backous thanked Police Chief Way and Police Captain Katers for hiring and training well. He asked whether the Police Department had prior contact with the three individuals involved.

Police Chief Way stated the three individuals are not from Ramsey so the Department never had contact before this incident.

Councilmember Backous noted this occurred in a random parking lot and had nothing to do with the Learning Lodge.

Councilmember Tossey stated a lot of children of police officers attend the Learning Lodge so that was considered but found not to be the case. He stated he appreciated the clear information provided to City Administrator Ulrich who could then inform the Council.

Mayor Strommen stated she was out of town during this incident and agreed it was correctly and properly handled. She thanked Police Chief Way, Police Captain Katers, and City Administrator Ulrich.

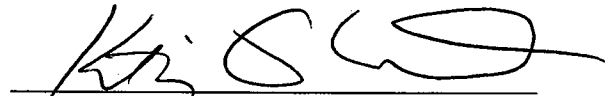
**4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT**

None

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

Mayor Strommen declared the Work Session of the City Council adjourned at 7:14 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Kurtis G. Ulrich  
City Administrator

ATTEST:



Jo Ann M. Thieling  
City Clerk

Drafted by Carla Wirth  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*