

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, February 28, 2017, 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 (arrived at 6:35 p.m.)
Councilmember Melody Shryock
Councilmember Kristine Williams

EPB Members
Present: Chairperson Thomas Stodola
Board Member Colleen Anderson
Board Member Jane Covart
Board Member Michael Hiatt
Board Member Michael Valentine

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
City Planner Chris Anderson
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama
Information Technology Manager Jason Fredrickson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:35 p.m.

Members of the City Council and Environmental Policy Board and staff introduced themselves.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: EPB Work Plan

City Planner Anderson reviewed the staff report.

Chairperson Stodola stated that the comments summarized by City Planner Anderson provide the position of the Board and the conversations that have recently occurred.

Board Member Valentine noted that the EPB has evolved over the past few years and is excited to be at the point of creating a work plan. He stated that he attended the Steering Committee meeting the previous night and it appeared that the majority would like to keep the rural feeling of the community and reserve the trend of lawn irrigation to better conserve water.

Chairperson Stodola noted that in the past year the Board has been involved in reviewed aspects of certain applications and welcomed any input the Council had on that process.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that it seems that the Council is not receiving a lot of feedback directly but noted that the feedback from staff has been good.

Mayor Strommen noted that although the information is passed to the Planning Commission, the Council does receive the input as well and also receives draft minutes from the EPB meetings.

Councilmember Johns stated that she has enjoyed the involvement of the EPB and has appreciated that additional viewpoint.

City Planner Anderson noted that the recommendation of the EPB is forwarded in the case to the Planning Commission and advised that the Commission has appreciated having that additional input when reviewing the case.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he was not in attendance at the last meeting when the brainstorming occurred. He stated that the statement of purpose was developed last year and asked if that changed at all through the discussion. It was confirmed that the statement of purpose has not changed and this would simply be in addition to that work. He stated that as the group matures he appreciates that they are self-directed. He stated that he is in agreement with the items proposed for a work plan, noting that he is excited to see how some of the vaguer items evolve. He suggested that some of the items become measurable.

Board Member Valentine stated that the Board struggled with being able to balance the typical work of the Board, such as reviewing the applications, and wanted to ensure that the workload can be balanced.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he appreciated that the Board was more cautious and recognized the need to balance with the typical workload.

Councilmember Kuzma noted that there were grant funds received by the Lower Rum River Water Management Organization the previous year through the Anoka Conservation District (ACD) and advised that perhaps additional funds would be available this year.

Mayor Strommen stated that she likes that the group is looking to be more aspirational. She stated that she has appreciated the involvement of the EPB when reviewing applications as that provides yet another viewpoint and helps the Council to reach the best answer.

City Planner Anderson stated that the funds from the ACD prompted the work on the shoreline inventory, noting that the ACD felt more confident that with that shoreline inventory the City

and the ACD would be more successful in obtaining grant funds. He stated that this work plan is not fully complete and is simply the results of the brainstorming session in order to gauge the input of the City Council. He noted that staff would take the work plan ideas and input from tonight in order to craft a more specific work plan.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the City has considered the use of gray water tanks in the parks to use for irrigating.

City Planner Anderson stated that is, in essence, what the pond at The Draw currently does.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood further explained how the system at The Draw works as well as a similar system at Elm Crest Park. He noted that the City hopes to do more of that with future park development.

Mayor Strommen noted that she is excited to see the item regarding water resources and the shoreline inventory because of the importance of the rivers within Ramsey. She stated that she is also excited to see the pollinator item as there has been a decrease in pollinators and monarchs.

Councilmember LeTourneau encouraged the Board to be open to the input that comes out of the Steering Committee meetings.

Mayor Strommen confirmed the consensus of the Council to support the work plan ideas brought forward by the EPB for further development into a work plan.

City Planner Anderson stated that he would take the input from tonight to develop a more formal work plan that will be reviewed by the EPB at their March meeting and will then come back before the Council.

2.02: Website RFP Update

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if a custom HTML would be created or whether a template would be used.

Information Technology Manager Fredrickson provided input on the process that he has researched thus far. He provided examples of websites created for other municipalities and highlighted features that could be used by the City.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if staff has prepared a detailed schematic to provide to the website developer.

Information Technology Manager Fredrickson replied that he does not want to restrict the creativity of the developers but noted that he would have some type of structure to provide.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would want to ensure that staff has enough specific information to provide to the developer so that there are not multiple change orders that the developer was not able to plan for.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that it appears the bulk of this redesign will be a “reskin” to provide a new look, with functionality following that. He noted that the current site was state of the art for the time it was created, while the new websites the Council just viewed are state of the art for today. He stated that the costs vary so much from vendor to vendor but noted that he does not seem to know enough about the entire process to understand that variation in cost. He noted that he was involved with the redesign of two websites recently for other organizations that appeared to be similar in the end result but had very different costs. He asked how the City could avoid overspending on items that would not be needed and could be done in house by staff. He stated that he is interested in how the website looks and the functionality but would want to ensure that the cost is not too high for the design and monthly maintenance.

Mayor Strommen noted that part of the purpose of this case is for the Council to weigh in on the reasons for the web update and whether some elements are more important than others, to ensure that the goals desired are met and then allowing staff to manage the RFP process in the best method possible using their expertise.

Councilmember Shryock stated that it takes a lot of time to redesign an entire website from scratch and recognized that staff could not make that level of commitment but asked whether staff would be able to complete the maintenance themselves.

Information Technology Manager Fredrickson explained that currently the City does not pay for hosting. He stated that the City currently also does not have control over the backend with the exception of updates, and cannot make updates to the software. He stated that if the City chooses a third-party host, they would probably have an annual cost but would also have updated software each year and would also have a support team available if major problems arise. He stated concerning ADA compliance, that process is currently the responsibility of staff to enter the information but noted that with a new vendor the process could be more automated and “staff friendly”.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the cost would be higher if the City relies on the developer to tell them what they need, versus providing more information to the potential developer. He noted that the City might have the option to have the site hosted by the telephone company vendor for a low cost.

Information Technology Manager Fredrickson stated that the hosting is not a requirement of the RFP.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood asked if there would be an option to sign up for text alerts.

Information Technology Manager Fredrickson stated that would depend upon the vendor and could be an option to contract out.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that while he likes the option to share information with residents through a text, he did not understand why that would need to be linked specifically to the website. He stated that perhaps there could be a different database used for that service.

Mayor Strommen stated that the item is linked back to the goals, whether the desire is for people to be able to read the information they desire on the website in a static format or whether the website should be more dynamic as well to include that up to date higher priority information and be more interactive. She agreed that there may be other vehicles for texting residents, but noted that the website could be one option to review.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would think that the website is a place to provide that static information, with the ability for staff to enter in additional information, and did not see the need to be dynamic to the point where additional work would be created for staff to monitor the website, using the example of a chat box.

Mayor Strommen agreed that she did not see the dynamic portion of the website tilted to the point of a chat box but noted that she would like to see more up to date and dynamic information provided for residents. She noted that the website could link to other social media tools.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that typically through the RFP process vendors will find a way to do whatever the Council desires, although he noted that some vendors do things better than others. He stated that is why staff suggests the RFP process, which will provide an array of options that staff can review and then choose a few vendors to interview more in depth.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he likes that strategy, as it will allow the City to review some of the information on a broader scale and then dive deeper to get more of those details and determine the components that would be necessary to gain the desired results. He agreed that it would be helpful to be able to link the social media accounts to the website in order to create a more effective communications plan.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that in terms of functionality it will be nice to add features such as the ability to reserve park shelters and other City facilities, as that will save a lot of staff time going forward and would be more convenient for residents as they would be able to make reservations 24 hours per day, seven days per week.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the snowplow routes could be made available to residents.

Public Works Director Reimer confirmed that he would be able to put some of that information on the website but would not be able to make it live, instead noting that perhaps hourly updates could be provided. He noted that there might be some confusion though as residents do not know the routes and might think a snowplow is close to them because of its location, but in actuality, the plow would not reach them for a bit longer because of the route the driver follows.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that he would work with Information Technology Manager Fredrickson to update the RFP to ensure the priorities of the Council are highlighted.

Mayor Strommen stated that she likes this approach but would like City Attorney Langel consulted as well because of the strategy to submit a broader RFP and then develop further details further along in the process.

Councilmember Riley arrived.

Councilmember Williams noted that there was a gentleman that attended a Council meeting and offered to help in the process, asking if that would be a possibility for the resident to volunteer and assist in the process.

Mayor Strommen noted that her interpretation of the comments from the resident was that he could do it cheaper and not necessarily an offer to volunteer.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

City Administrator Ulrich noted that a March worksession would be devoted to Commission interviews.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would like information on drones, specifically who owns the airspace above your home.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she had a communication with staff a few days prior regarding signage and asked if perhaps one of the Commissions/Boards should discuss lighted signs. She referenced a lit sign that flashes that was recently installed on Bunker Lake Boulevard and noted that she has received comments from residents. She noted that the ordinance currently does not address the flashing and how that interacts with residential areas.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the business sign ordinance was recently updated to allow that type of signage and could be reviewed to determine if tweaks are necessary.

City Planner Anderson noted that he recently visited that business and the business owner was very open to working with the City and was confident that the owner would be cooperative.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

City Administrator Ulrich noted that he recently sent out a development update regarding Platinum Properties.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:45 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.