

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, May 9, 2017, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Sarah Strommen
Councilmember Jill Johns
Councilmember Mark Kuzma
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Melody Shryock
Councilmember Kristine Williams (arrived at 5:42 p.m.)

Members Absent: Councilmember John LeTourneau

Park Commissioner
Members Present: Chair Shane Bennett
Commissioner Russell Bayer
Commissioner Andrew Fyten
Commissioner Jennifer Leistico
Commissioner Brandon Sis
Commissioner Jon Trappen

ARAA Members
Present: President Dustin Reeder
Secretary Sarah Deutschman

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama
City Planner Chris Anderson
Police Chief Jeff Katers

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:33 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Joint Meeting – City Council and Park and Recreation Commission

Mayor Strommen invited everyone present to introduce themselves.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood provided a brief update on the progress at Central Park and the Mississippi River Trail. He noted that staff is investigating potential dates for a ribbon cutting for the MRT in June.

It was the consensus for staff to do an email poll to determine the date for the MRT ribbon cutting.

2.02: Joint Discussion with Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association (ARAA)

Dustin Reeder, ARAA, stated that the organization has been working hard on fundraising and has contributed about \$150,000 towards improvements at Alpine Park. He stated that the organization currently has charitable gambling at 201 in Anoka and potentially at Northfork. He stated that the Board has been discussing what they would like to see and a dream item would be for a miracle field, which would be a softball type field for people in wheelchairs. He stated that the Board has had discussions with where that could possibly be located. He noted that it is a long-term goal because the cost is about \$350,000. He stated that they would like to see a possible collaboration building a special needs park around the miracle field. He noted that the organization has discussed creating a special organization that would focus on sports for people with special needs.

Commissioner Sis asked the other members of the miracle league.

Mr. Reeder replied that there are fields in Blaine, Brooklyn Park and Saint Cloud. He explained that league would be set up similar to a house league, where people only play at that field rather than travel to other cities. He stated that they appreciate the work that the City does in collaboration with the organization and at the parks.

Councilmember Williams arrived at 5:42 p.m.

Mr. Reeder stated that the organization would like to have a shed at Alpine Park, where equipment could be stored and a concession stand could possibly be located. He explained that the organization often mows in addition to the City mowing and therefore it would be helpful to be able to store equipment.

Mayor Strommen stated that these meetings are a great way to discuss items on the wish list and things that the organization would like to see in order to possibly collaborate and determine what fits within the priorities and resources.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that cost worksheets are helpful for those elements, as that is useful in prioritizing with the capital improvement plan.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if that would be part of the plan with the consultant.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that it will be helpful to have that information as the consultant is developing the 20-year master plan for the parks. He explained that the plan would need to be achievable and not just a wish list. He explained that

elements like a miracle field would also need handicap accessible restrooms and so costs of that nature would need to be considered.

Mr. Reeder stated that he has heard rumblings of a new park.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that there are always talks of things in the community. He stated that later tonight the Council will have a policy discussion regarding the need for balance between funding and resources and whether the City should provide more smaller pocket parks or save funds for a big-ticket item such as a splash pad.

Mr. Reeder stated that ARAA will also be talking to the School District in their planning discussions on what would be needed in a new school, such as indoor courts.

Parks Commission Chair Bennett commended the organization for the level of fundraising that they contribute. He stated that it is hard for the City to do everything they would like to do with the limited funding they have available and therefore he fully supports collaborative efforts with ARAA. He stated that the upgrades that they have seen at Alpine and Central Parks have been great.

Mr. Reeder noted that kids were not excited to sell pizzas for fundraising but once they have seen the results of the improvements made at the parks they are excited to fundraise.

Sarah Deutschman, ARAA, stated that other cities are noticing the collaborative efforts and she is happy that the City and organization have this partnership.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that ARAA has a hardship program where they are able to provide financing for sports for families that cannot afford to pay the fees. He stated that the organization is an outstanding example in the community.

Mr. Reeder stated that the organization does not like to turn anyone away that wants to get out and play sports and is happy to help families.

Ms. Deutschman stated that the organization is also reaching out to families that they know have suffered hardship or loss to let them know about the program.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she has been fortunate to serve on the Park Commission and work collaboratively with ARAA on Elm Crest Park. She noted that many communities do not have a collaborative working partnership with athletic associations and appreciates the relationship with ARAA.

Mayor Strommen referenced the long-term master parks plan and asked how the ideas from ARAA and the needs the City has are put into the planning process.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that as part of the master parks plan process they will invite ARAA membership to attend a workshop where they can envision the future of the organization and dream big and then look at the associated timelines.

Mr. Reeder stated that currently the organization serves nine sports and are in discussion to add four more sports. He stated that the most pressing sport is youth fishing. He stated that the organization will host a fishing tournament this summer. He noted that they have also talked about adding golf and track and field.

Ms. Deutschman stated that in regard to track and field they would need a track as the high school tracks are very busy. She noted that even in regard to fishing they would need information from staff as to the permits that would be needed and the locations that would be available.

Mayor Strommen stated that her son recently joined the Junior Bass Masters fishing team and the closest location available was New Brighton.

Mr. Reeder stated that they are going to send out an interest email soon and are looking at different options, such as competitive and learning general skills.

Mr. Reeder thanked the Council for allowing them to be part of the discussion tonight.

2.03: Update on Recreation Programing for 2017

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the staff report and provided a summary of the diverse range of programming available through partnerships the City has obtained. He reviewed some of the potential program partnerships that are in process for the summer. He stated that he is looking for any feedback from the Commission, Council or that may have been passed on from residents regarding programing in preparation for budgeting and planning for the future.

Parks Commissioner Bayer stated that he attended the movie in the park event and there was a great turnout. He noted that people were wondering why the next event was not until September as they really enjoyed the event.

Parks Commission Chair Bennett stated that people continually want more programming and they want that programming to be as flexible as possible to meet a lot of audiences. He stated that staff has done a great job of providing a flexible array of programing options.

Councilmember Williams stated that she has received very great feedback on all the programing. She stated that it is really important in terms of budgeting to consider consistency. She stated that she would also like to see information that shows the benefit provided comparing the costs to the revenue generated and the attendance of the events.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood agreed that is important and believes that staff has done a great job of tracking the real costs and obtaining feedback from participants. He noted that if you offer something free, people often sign up and do not show up, but if you charge a small fee such as \$5, people are more apt to attend after they sign up. He noted that generally recreational programming is not a cost generating item. He noted the cost

for movie in the park. He stated that is why staff has investigated possible partnerships to help reimburse some of those costs. He noted that he would supply the data to the Council prior to the budgeting discussions.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if staff has considered pickleball courts.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that there is a serious group of pickleball players that wanted to have courts in the City. He noted that staff was able to provide courts by simply restriping some courts. He noted that one of the skilled players was willing to donate his services as an instructor and therefore can offer free classes for the sport.

Mayor Strommen asked if there are any ideas for the future.

Councilmember Shryock stated that consistency is important. She noted that there is a wide range of programs available and if they continue with that scope it will help to provide a base for the program which can expand as it goes forward. She believed that it is important to keep the programming consistent.

Councilmember Johns stated that trails should remain a priority to provide that connectivity for people to access the activities in the parks. She stated that as a longtime member of the Park Commission before joining the Council it has been nice to see the parks and programming evolving over the years.

Parks Commission Chair Bennett stated that through the Comprehensive Plan update process there has been a lot of discussion on trails and the desire for connectivity. He agreed that consistency is important and could make the programming more sustainable. He stated that often people are not aware of the programming that is available.

Councilmember Kuzma noted that the City is updating its website and that is an opportunity to build in better publication of the programming.

2.04: Status of City of Ramsey Foundation's Support of The Draw Summer Events Series

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the staff report. He explained that during the recession the Ramsey Foundation stepped up and took over the funding for The Draw Summer Events Series. He stated that the Ramsey Foundation may wish for the City to be more involved in the funding for the concert series.

Dwayne Larson, Ramsey Foundation, stated that the Ramsey Foundation has ten Board members and they have worked hard to raise funds for The Draw Summer Events Series. He stated that the cost for bands has increased and as the events have become more popular there is demand for bands with higher costs. He stated that the cost for the band is about \$16,500 for the 11 events. He stated that funding needs will remain around that level for the future. He stated that the members of the Ramsey Foundation are getting older and are not able to go out and raise funds and contribute the time needed to gain those funds. He stated that now that the events are more popular they would like to request the City to contribute a higher level of funding for the events.

He noted that going forward it would be nice to have City staff pick up the concert series as part of their programming.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he has been a Board member of the Ramsey Foundation since 2012 and noted that it is perhaps four or five Board members that work hard on the event. He stated that the membership on the Board is weak and the program is growing. He stated that as a volunteer he finds it a struggle to continue to be part of the fundraising and programming as the event continues to grow.

Mayor Strommen stated that she appreciates the work the Ramsey Foundation has done to grow the event, noting that the attendance continues to grow and every concert is well attended. She stated that it is consistent with the goal to create the sense of community. She stated that it would be a matter of the City determining where this would fit into the workload for staff and the funding. She stated that perhaps this could be added to the Happy Days Committee.

Mr. Larson noted that organizations, such as the Ramsey Lions, would most likely continue to support the event.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood agreed that the staffing and budget items could be a part of the continued discussions. He noted that there is a request to increase the lawful gambling improvement fund contribution by \$3,000, which would make whole the contribution a total of \$8,000 for the event. He asked if the Ramsey Foundation would continue to be available to continue to receive donations for programming. He stated that Mr. Larson has been the sole person that has obtained the \$5,000 annual donation from the Ramsey Lions.

Mr. Larson stated that he does not see the Ramsey Foundation going away as an organization and they would continue to receive and disburse funds in the same manner they have.

Councilmember Williams stated that she is a part of the Happy Days Committee and agreed that it would make sense to determine if that group could add that event to their planning.

It was the consensus of the Council to direct staff to work with the Ramsey Foundation on a transition plan for The Draw Summer Events Series.

Parks Commissioner Sis asked if there is a place in Ramsey where the City could advertise The Draw programming, such as a reader board.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that currently the City uses the *Ramsey Resident*, the reader board on Highway 10, the Ramsey Foundation, the City website, and word of mouth for advertising. He noted that there has been discussion about creating a monument at The Draw that could advertise programming.

Parks Commissioner Sis noted that he has never driven past The Draw and would find it helpful to have some type of advertising along Highway 47 as well.

Mayor Strommen thanked the Ramsey Foundation for the amazing work they have done to establish The Draw Summer Event Series.

2.05: Consider Master Parks Plan Guiding Policy on Balance of Community and Neighborhood Parks and Smaller Pocket/Mini Parks

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the staff report. He stated that the City often gets requests for new park equipment but there are limited funds. He provided examples of some smaller parks with limited or outdated park equipment and also of larger community parks that are connected to nearby developments through trail corridors. He stated that the policy question for the Council and Commission would be how to spend the park dedication funds, whether smaller parks should continue or whether focus should be given to larger community parks with connectivity to developments. He also provided examples of developments which have paid park dedication funds and also have greenspace areas and smaller parks within their developments that were fully funded and maintained by the developer/association.

Parks Commissioner Trappen stated that he has lived in Ramsey for six years and really enjoys the trails. He stated that rather than building a small park they could build a trail that would reach a larger park and thus would create a better trail system and less park equipment to maintain.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that it is not just the initial cost for a small playground but also the operating costs which include ongoing maintenance and replacement of damaged equipment.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would like to know more about Outlot C on the Capstone project, specifically what the developer is proposed to contribute.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that it is a moving target as discussions continue. He noted that the total development costs including land would be around \$300,000. He stated that the total park dedication credit the developer is requesting is \$482,000 which would include those development costs as well as the greenway contribution. He stated that the total for park and trail dedication for all the lots would be \$1,100,000 in today's dollars.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that once built out there will be over 1,000 people living in that development and they will need a park. He stated that he would support the reduction in park dedication.

Councilmember Shryock stated that the long-term policy on parks planning has been community parks and noted that Itasca Park has been on the radar for a long time. She stated that the community parks are used more and differently than the traditional parks that people grew up with. She noted that people often have some play equipment in their yard and therefore the smaller parks are not often used as much. She stated that she also would not want to set precedent for the future.

Councilmember Johns echoed and agreed with the comments from Councilmember Shryock. She stated that the policy as drafted benefits the community as a whole and therefore the dollars from development should continue to be focused on community parks and trail connection rather than small pocket parks.

Councilmember Williams stated that Snake Park is the only park accessible to her home and the only way she can access the park is by walking ¼ mile along Highway 47. She stated that it is essential that the entire community has access to the facilities without driving. She stated that there are parks without safe crossings to community parks. She stated that while the far north portion of the community is more developed, the rest of the community should not be left out. She stated that it is time as the community grows to review how traffic patterns have changed and identify areas that can bring the community together as there are large portions of the community that are not being served by the resources today.

Parks Commissioner Sis noted that his development did not receive a pocket park and he felt conflicted as he felt he would value a park in his neighborhood. He stated that now that he has joined the Commission he can see the value in focusing efforts on community parks. He stated that he would not let his children walk alone to nearby parks and therefore he can see the benefit in larger community parks with more amenities.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he understands the big picture but noted that there are two separate issues. He recognized that there is limited funding on the big picture. He noted that the developer is willing to contribute a third of the funds necessary for a park and this is an opportunity to get this small park built. He believed that each opportunity should be reviewed on its own merits.

Mayor Strommen appreciated the separation of the two issues. She noted that sometimes there are things that do not fit into the mold. She noted that this development is on another magnitude because of its size. She stated that she agreed with the comments of Councilmember Williams that people need to have access to parks and she values that. She stated that there is a balance somewhere because there is a value to the large regional parks but there is also need sometimes for smaller parks.

Councilmember Riley stated that he has received a number of emails asking why a park is not being built in the development near the old municipal center. He agreed that this is a much larger development that needs a park. He stated that he would support a reduction in park dedication but perhaps not a dollar to dollar match. He stated that as Ramsey continues to be developed the needs of the City will change, noting that this development is different than any other development in Ramsey.

Parks Commission Chair Bennett stated that this is a different issue because the developer wants this park in their development because it is an amenity. He questioned whether the overall community would have good access to the park within this development. He stated that he won't argue that this would be a great spot for a park but he was unsure that going against the policy would set the City up for the future. He noted that if these parks need to be maintained by the City there would be additional operations costs as well. He stated that if the funds are used in

this manner that takes away from addressing issues at other existing parks in the City that serve other neighborhoods.

Councilmember Shryock asked the density of this development compared to other developments that have constructed and maintain their own playgrounds at their own costs.

Mayor Strommen noted that the market has changed since the older plats were approved and therefore the economics should also be considered.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that there are just a few weeks to sort out this issue with the developer and therefore he was hoping for a strong consensus to help guide this. He asked if the City would be responsible for this in terms of park dedication credit or future maintenance. He stated that if the park was going to be park dedication credit funded then perhaps the park should be made more unique. He stated that if the park is on the greenway corridor that could bring other people in from other neighborhoods. He stated that people are not going to travel to reach a neighborhood park that looks just like theirs.

Parks Commission Chair Bennett stated that he has heard over and over the comment that people want the parks to have every amenity and that cannot occur if the City continues to pursue pocket parks. He stated that while this looks great, the City has to be careful to go against its own policy.

Mayor Strommen stated that the policy is important and maybe if there is a unique opportunity, such as a homeowners' association with a dense development, perhaps there is an opportunity to carve something out that would not give dollar to dollar credit towards park dedication but would give credit for unique options.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that perhaps the City could offer half the development costs of the park with park dedication credit and the homeowners association would provide long-term maintenance for a nature based park. He noted that could be an interim policy until the long-term policy is reviewed.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the City does give credit for trails and if the park area is open and accessible to trail users, perhaps a credit could be negotiated. He stated that bathrooms would be reserved for large community programs.

Parks Commissioner Trappen stated that he lives in a neighborhood where the lots vary in size from one acre to three acres and therefore it could take a lot of space to service a large number of homes compared to this denser development that would serve a lot of people. He stated that perhaps the idea of density could be considered in a long-term policy discussion.

It was the consensus of the Council to create an interim exception that would allow for negotiations on this development case for a trail system and trail wayside park area that would be accessible and inviting.

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 7:00 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.