

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, July 11, 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
Councilmember Melody Shryock
Councilmember Kristine Williams

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Finance Director Diana Lund
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Human Resources Manager Colleen Lasher
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby
City Planner Chris Anderson
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: 2018 Preliminary Budget/Levy Review

City Administrator Ulrich introduced the topic of tonight's discussion and the purpose of the budget. He reviewed the purpose of the discussion tonight in regard to the budget and the desired outcomes. He highlighted the increase in population and household growth the City has seen in the past ten years and also displayed the tax capacity and annual levy amounts for the past ten years. He highlighted items which have increased in the past ten years including the miles of streets and trails within the City and the corresponding maintenance. He also reviewed the number of police and fire calls for service in the past ten years as well as the total levy amounts and tax capacity rate comparison, not only for the past ten years but also against other cities in Anoka County. He stated that the budget is based upon the Strategic Plan and the 14

key strategic initiatives within the Plan. He highlighted some of the concerns and ideas expressed through the 2016 resident survey.

Councilmember Kuzma asked the population growth for the past year.

Community Development Director Gladhill replied that the population growth is about 150 households per year, with 2.9 people per household.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report, specifically the budget note summary, noting that this preliminary budget includes everything. She noted that as proposed the tax rate would remain constant as the increase in the budget would match the increase in tax capacity. She continued to review the elements of the proposed budget, providing details on the specific line item increase/decrease per department.

Councilmember Riley asked the road debt that would be added in 2018.

Finance Director Lund replied that in 2018 there will be \$98,000 in road debt.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that each department head will review their personnel requests.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama reviewed the functions that fall under administration. He stated that the City Clerk will be moving from a full-time position to a half-time position and therefore they will need to fill that gap. He stated that the Strategic Plan includes items that they would like to focus on that were also identified on the resident survey including communications, website and the image of the City. He stated that they would also like to continue to meet expectations with increased growth. He stated that with the decreased hours of the City Clerk, they reviewed the department as a whole to better deploy existing resources to meet objectives and avoid just doing what has been done. He reviewed the requests from the administration department, decreasing hours in some positions and increasing hours in other positions for a net change of +.27 FTE with an estimated cost of \$20,731.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the intern would be a brand new person or whether they would have experience.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama provided additional information on how the admin intern currently is used at half-time and noted that this would increase that position to full-time.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the City Clerk is going to do the phased retirement, reducing her hours to half-time for the next one to two years and would be able to transfer her knowledge during that transition time.

Councilmember Riley stated that this would mean that eventually a full-time City Clerk would be hired.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama confirmed that would be a need in the future.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that there would still be a decrease in that cost because the new employee would come in at a lower step than the current City Clerk.

Mayor Strommen stated that her concern would be that the City is going to a half-time position during an election year.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the phased retirement has flexibility which would allow the City Clerk to work extra hours as long as it doesn't exceed 30 hours in a week during the election season, as long as her time was better managed to prepare for that. He noted that certain functions will be transferred to other employees during this phased time.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama provided additional details on how these positions would back each other up to fill voids.

Mayor Strommen stated that it would be helpful to see where the other .5 of the City Clerk duties would go to and the implications that these changes in position would have on future budgets.

Councilmember Riley stated that he does not understand how there is a person engaged full-time on events and communications and therefore does not understand how that person would need an assistant.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that the current employee spends 90 percent of her time on events.

Councilmember Shryock asked if these employees would be cross-trained with each other to fill gaps rather than assigning specific duties to specific employees.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that the employees would be cross-trained to act as a team. He stated that he can bring in additional information to a future meeting showing how the duties of the City Clerk would be split between employees when the phased retirement begins.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that it appears that with the phased retirement approach, it appears that the department is attempting to reorganize and split some of those duties between existing employees to even out the load.

Councilmember Williams asked if there are specific duties that the Charter says the City Clerk must do and whether it would be okay to split those duties.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that he could verify with the Charter. He noted that currently data practices and storage, elections and licenses are handled by the City Clerk.

Councilmember Kuzma mentioned that with the Ramsey Foundation, the organization, is moving the responsibility for planning the concerts to the City. He noted that would be part of the event planning for the City employee.

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the Strategic Plan initiatives specific to the community development department. He noted that they would like to be more collaborative in improving the image and aesthetic of Highway 10 and Highway 47. He stated that they are in the midst of updating the Comprehensive Plan. He stated that community development would assume the licensing duty from the City Clerk, because the department is already involved in that aspect. He reviewed the desired customer service metrics for the community development department, noting that the department is doing well. He reviewed the staffing plan metrics for the next few years and the variables that can impact those staffing levels. He stated that there is a high level of new developments and a desire to review proposals quicker. He stated that in the next 20 years the City is expected to continue to grow in households, population and staffing needs. He reviewed some of the duties that the community development department is currently involved in.

Councilmember Riley stated that there is a need right now while the City is in the growth phase, noting that the need has been mitigated in the past few years with the use of consultants.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that he anticipates the rapid growth rate for the next decade or two. He agreed that the gap could be filled with the use of consultants but noted that it is then difficult to pair that use of consultants with the ability to provide rapid response to questions. He noted that consultants also have a higher hourly rate. He stated that clients are often not pleased to wait one to two weeks for a response from the consultant and therefore believes it would be helpful to have a full-time position added that would be able to help address the workload and be able to provide customer service.

Councilmember Riley asked if the permit revenue is already budgeted into the projection.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that they attempted to better estimate the permit revenue but noted that there was a large swing that occurred. He stated that he would prefer to err on the side of caution rather than attempting to forecast too high and scramble to cut items during the budget year.

Councilmember Shryock asked why a senior planner would be needed rather than a lower level planner.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that there would be a high rate of turnover for a lower level planner. He stated that the Council has made the statement that they would like to create a collaborative effort to address code enforcement rather than through violations. He stated that the experience that a senior planner would bring would assist in that environment and would help to prevent that turnover that an assistant planner would bring.

City Engineer Westby stated that the position classified as new in the budget, but noted that there currently is an employee that splits time between engineering/public works/parks. He noted that

the employee has taken on the duty of parks reservation and therefore the ability for that employee to assist engineering has decreased while the workload for the engineering department has increased. He stated that he has taken on most of the administrative duties for engineering himself which keeps him from completing the higher-level duties. He stated that he is asking for this position in order to assist with those administrative duties and handle the duties of coverage not only for engineering but also for other departments. He stated that in the short term he could have an employee working 40 hours per week but could also get by with less. He noted that he could bring additional details if the Council desires.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the position he is requesting would benefit the department and the City as a whole. He stated that there currently is no backup when he or the Fire Marshal is out, noting that the last full-time firefighter position was added 17 years ago in 2000. He noted that during this time there has been an increase in calls corresponding to the increase in development. He noted that a number of the calls are received during the day and this increased position would help to provide that daytime coverage. He stated that the new position would also assist with building inspections, noting that currently there are two paid on-call firefighters that are assisting with inspections. He stated that fire prevention would also be a great benefit of this position. He reviewed some of the fire prevention activities and educational presentations that the department collaborates to provide to residents. He stated that the new position would align with five of the key strategic initiatives outlined in the Strategic Plan.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood discussed the desire to add a part-time recreational assistant. He provided some of the resident feedback that they have received regarding the course offerings the parks department has offered. He stated that the parks staff sends a survey to each participant of park programming to receive input on the program. He noted that the data they receive on the programming is then used to analyze the offerings by different elements, such as cost, popularity, and categorically for the types of offerings. He noted that the intern also emails out the offerings for the next month, to keep interested residents aware of the programs being offered. He stated that the trend for parks programming is following the same path as the summer concert series at the Draw, gaining participation at a rate of about 30 percent each year. He confirmed that this new position would handle the duties of the summer concert series as that transitions back from the Ramsey Foundation.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the public works/parks department, noting that the current slate of staff is one less than what the department had in 2011. He described the duties of the parks department staff and how their seasonal employees assist in filling the gaps from the full-time staff. He stated that they are managing at the lowest capacity for employees currently. He stated that they feel the added position is justified because of the impacts the parks have on the City, as the park system might be the only contact point for some visitors.

Mayor Strommen stated that she was visiting Sunfish Lake Park and met two out of state visitors that were enjoying the park.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that this is the third or fourth year in a row that they have tried for this position.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated that was a street maintenance worker, which was awarded the previous year.

Mayor Strommen stated that this was a good overview and the Council will have more in depth discussion at the next meeting. She stated the information requests should be sent to City Administrator Ulrich prior to the next meeting in preparation.

Councilmember Riley asked the staff to prioritize the items proposed in the budget.

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 6:58 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.