

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, November 14, 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 Melody Shryock

Members Absent: Councilmember Chris Riley

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Finance Director Diana Lund  
Fire Chief Matt Kohner  
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 Clerk Jo Ann Thieling  
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: Discussion and Review of 2018 Proposed General/EDA Budgets and Levies**

City Administrator Ulrich noted that this is the last planned discussion of the budget prior to the final adoption in December.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report.

Mark Lenz, Bearance Management Group, provided additional information on the suggestion to add \$1,000,000 of excess liability coverage, noting that this would enhance the existing liability coverage. He referenced current events and noted that excess liability coverage is beneficial to have if that type of situation arises. He stated that nationally he believes that liability costs will increase in the near future.

Councilmember Kuzma asked the typical award on a major claim.

Mr. Lenz replied that it would depend on the type of claim. He stated that the best indication for the private sector can be found in the newspaper. He stated that private businesses look at the issue very differently because public entities have the ability to levy for the funds to pay a judgement.

City Administrator Ulrich provided additional information on the insurance fund that the City has that assists with paying premiums and can be used for judgement if needed. He noted that the insurance fund is outside of the general fund and therefore taxes do not have to be raised. He recommended this additional coverage.

Councilmember Kuzma asked the cost for the additional coverage.

Finance Director Lund provided cost information on the different levels from the previous year.

It was the consensus of the Council to increase the current liability cover by \$1,000,000 for a total of \$3,000,000 in liability coverage.

Finance Director Lund continued to review elements and line items of the proposed 2018 budget.

City Administrator Ulrich provided additional information on the Metro Cities organization. He recommended a one-year membership, noting that the cost would be reduced by 50 percent for the first year.

Mayor Strommen noted that there are a lot of Anoka County communities in the organization and stated that Ramsey is notably missing. She stated that the interests in this group may be better tuned to the needs of the City than the generality of the League of Minnesota Cities. She echoed support for joining the organization.

Councilmember LeTourneau agreed that it would be nice to “have a seat at the table”, noting that perhaps someone would be able to get on a Board or Committee.

Mayor Strommen agreed that would be helpful. She stated that perhaps staff can pass on the opportunities to the Council when they arise to provide a more strategic participation. She stated that while Family Promise provides a great service in the community, there are a variety of organizations that serve the community and the issue of homelessness and therefore she would agree with staff to remove that fund.

Councilmember Kuzma asked for additional details on the fee for the Lower Rum River Water Management Organization. He stated that this fee seems low.

Finance Director Lund stated that this is the fee that she received from the City of Anoka.

City Engineer Westby stated that the organization has been planning for the creation of the Fourth Generation Plan and believes that the LRRWMO has sufficient funds for the development of that plan and therefore the contribution has been reduced.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced Family Promise, stating that he is a bit uncomfortable with the Family Promise line item as there are many similar, worthy organizations and therefore it would be hard to pick just one organization. He stated that perhaps there is a method that staff would use to vet donation requests that the City receives.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that in the past there has been discussion of the groups that the City has a lot of participation with. He stated that the policy has been to look at the direct relationship between the services the City provides and the services that these organizations provide.

Mayor Strommen stated that it is her recollection that the funding of items of this nature has been based on the services that are provided by the organization that would reduce the need for the City to provide those resources directly.

It was the consensus of the Council to remove the Family Promise line item from the budget.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced an email that was received from a resident who shared their dislike of the budget. He noted that is the first time that he has received objection to the work the City is doing on the budget. He stated that he did invite the resident to talk in person, and he really enjoyed the discussion that they had. He stated that the resident was perhaps not comfortable with the levy but better understood how the system is working and what the City is trying to do. He stated that the resident was troubled with the public works position proposed to be added and asked for additional justification for adding the position.

Public Works Director Riemer stated that this position would restore the 2011 staffing level, noting that the department has been running shorthanded. He stated that the City relies on seasonal help and that pool of workers continues to shrink with the increased needs in the workforce. He stated that seasonal student workers have limitations on the equipment that they are able to run, which is why the full-time position is helpful. He highlighted the work that his staff handles each season. He noted that while the department is maintaining the core functions, they are not able to complete all the duties necessary and if someone is absent on a vacation or because of sickness that also requires moving employees around. He stated that when people travel to the community for a sports activity, the parks are what they are seeing as representation of the City.

Mayor Strommen agreed that parks are a very important part of someone's perception of the City.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that there is a lot of new demand with the approved improvements, parks, facilities, and roads and the department is still working shorthanded. He noted that while there is a place for seasonal workers, there is also a need for full-time employees that can perform other necessary duties.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he understands that the City cannot meet the expectation level of residents for the parks and other improvements, while running at a lower operation rate than the City had in 2011 and handling more duties. He stated that perhaps he would like an opportunity to talk about this item on camera when the budget comes forward because he believes it would be important for residents to hear that justification.

Mayor Strommen stated that she would hate to focus on one piece of the budget because one resident brought that up and rather focus on the budget in its entirety.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that while he is not thrilled with the levy rate, roads are a big portion of that and residents will need to understand that the City is doing its best to control that cost.

Mayor Strommen stated that the comparisons are not apples to apples comparisons because the roads were not included in the budget in the past. She noted that some municipalities use franchise fees while others do not have their own police department. She stated that if the roads were done on a franchise fee, the levy may look different.

Finance Director Lund confirmed that the Councilmembers present are comfortable with the budget and levy coming forward for final adoption as discussed.

## **2.02: Proposed 2018 Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges**

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report. She noted that there will be a public hearing tonight at the regular meeting. She stated that once adopted there is a 30-day period before the fees could be enacted and therefore this is the timeline to enable the fees beginning in 2018.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked for details on the use of a fund and whether it could be used for trail maintenance.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that the fund can only be used for the construction of new capital.

## **2.03: Discussion Regarding the Process for the City Administrator's Next Annual Performance Evaluation**

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Johns stated that she liked the new tool they used the previous year. She stated that although there is a cost to the product, it did seem to use less human resources time and she found it easier to work with.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he likes the tool they began using the previous year because of the depth of information that you're able to gather. He stated that using the same tool the second year would provide information on a baseline and for comparison purposes. He asked

if the City took full advantage of the information they received, and could they move forward in more depth to ensure that they use the tool to the highest extent.

Mayor Strommen asked where the questions came from as to whether the tool should be used again.

Human Resources Manager Lasher noted that through a review of the minutes there were some Councilmembers that were not a fan of the tool.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he is indifferent to the process. He stated that personally he believes that the City Administrator is doing a good job and if an issue arose he would be comfortable addressing the issue with staff and therefore he does not have an opinion on the tool used.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she shares the same thoughts as to whether the tool is being used the highest potential and what is being done with the data. She asked whether that same information could be gathered by an internal review.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that this tool helps not for today but for tomorrow as it will provide this timeline of consistent data to provide an objective review.

Mayor Strommen stated that the review is required, and the use of this system ensures that staff can feel comfortable weighing in with their opinions.

Councilmember Johns stated that it may be easy for the Council to provide input, but it is also important to receive input from staff and therefore it is important to hear from staff as well.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that it is more important for the staff members to weigh in as well on the internal interaction.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that feedback is helpful, regardless. He stated that he has worked with this Council and staff long enough to receive honest feedback throughout the year rather than have the input stored all year for an opportunity but agreed that this tool can be helpful to identify opportunities. He stated that each year he compares the review from the past to determine if any issues were identified and how those have evolved. He stated that he found this tool a bit broad and would recommend making the questions more specific. He stated that staff did comment that this format was much easier and saved a lot of staff time.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that she would be happy to choose either route, noting that the purpose is to communicate any issues and for City Administrator Ulrich to receive feedback. She commented that the program used last year was much easier to manage.

Public Works Director Riemer stated that he preferred the tool used the previous year.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that once the City is more comfortable with using the tool and gathering data from the tool, perhaps it could also be used further down the management line in order to facilitate continuous improvement for staff.

The consensus of the Council was to continue to use the Checkpoint 360 tool for the annual review of the City Administrator.

#### **2.04: Policy for Naming Public Facilities**

City Clerk Thieling reviewed the staff report.

Mayor Strommen stated that she had a resident approach her about doing something in the name of Bruce Bacon and therefore she believed this to be a timely discussion.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he likes keeping the policy simple but noted that perhaps adding the review of the Planning Commission would be a good idea.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he would be in favor of reviewing the policy and receiving input from other Boards/Commissions. He stated that he would be open to being more flexible.

Mayor Strommen stated that there is an element of naming rights, such as a person that financially contributes versus someone that has contributed in service to the community and therefore, there should be slightly different considerations for those elements.

City Clerk Thieling noted that there is a memorial policy as well and perhaps the discussions can be combined.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that perhaps both aspects should be combined, in terms of monetary contributions and service contributions. He stated that the issue is much broader than just parks, as other items can be named as well including rooms at City Hall, streets, or community gardens.

Councilmember Shryock stated that quite a few years ago there was a consideration of a memorial park along Sunwood Drive. She stated that the issue can become tricky as that can affect other neighbors as well.

Mayor Strommen noted that was tricky because it was creating something that did not already exist rather than naming an existing facility.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood referenced some language that had been drafted in terms of a planned need rather than an additional element that had not been planned for.

Councilmember Johns agreed that she would like to keep the idea positive.

Mayor Strommen summarized the desired discussion points for the future regarding what can be named, levels of review, and combining naming rights and contributions of service.

**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 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kurtis G. Ulrich  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

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Jo Ann M. Thieling  
City Clerk

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*