

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Strategic Planning Work Session on Tuesday, February 21, 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  
City Clerk Jo Ann Thieling  
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill  
City Engineer Bruce Westby  
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Strategic Planning Work Session to order at 5:40 p.m.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Strategic Planning**

- Review Agenda and Meeting Objectives

City Administrator Ulrich welcomed everyone to the meeting and played a short video as an introduction to strategic planning. He stated that the City does a lot of different things ranging from law enforcement, road construction, park and recreation, and firefighting. He stated that the core reason for providing services must first be identified which will help to identify the other actions necessary. He summarized the course and purpose for the meeting tonight.

- Lightning Round Table: Greatest Accomplishments in 30 seconds

City Administrator Ulrich asked each of the members present to identify the greatest accomplishment of 2016 in 30 seconds or less.

Public Works Director Riemer stated that Armstrong interchange was a big accomplishment for the City and stated that road reconstruction has also been a great accomplishment. He stated that the City Council ran unopposed and therefore the perception would be that the Council did their job well.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that the City continued to engage its residents in new and exciting ways, mentioning the launch of e-permits and the upcoming interactive sessions for the Comprehensive Plan process. He stated that it is great that the City is able to increase the involvement of residents in decision making.

City Engineer Westby stated that completing Andrie Street was a huge accomplishment, noting that large amount of effort and time was spent with the residents in that area to make that project a success.

Human Resources Director Lasher highlighted the retirement of Fire Chief Kapler and the hiring of Fire Chief Kohner. She stated that Fire Chief Kohner is not only continuing the great work the department has done but is also implementing new ideas.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that a high personal accomplishment for himself was the amount of time he was able to contribute to the Council, with what occurred for him personally, and thanked the Council for letting him continue in his position. He also highlighted the work of the EPB, recognizing the new focus that their statement of purpose has provided.

Councilmember Johns agreed that the Council has been working very well with the different Commissions; noting that defining responsibilities and changing things up has worked well.

Councilmember Williams highlighted the work of the EDA, specifically the deal with Platinum Properties to clearly identify the wants of the City.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he is most proud of his fellow Councilmembers, noting that four members ran in the election unopposed and received 98 or 99 percent of the vote. He noted that is a great success from where the Council had been in the past.

Councilmember Riley stated that the completion of the new fire station was a great accomplishment, noting that the project came in as scheduled. He stated that the ease of the transition of the business park, although not yet complete, is also a big accomplishment.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that his top accomplishments would be the Armstrong interchange, the completion of fire station two, improved events with positive momentum, and residential development that will drive increased business development.

Councilmember Shryock appreciated the work of the staff and Council, noting that the groups both continue to cooperate and work hard to create a great highly functioning community. She recognized the increased outreach the City has done, using the Highway 10 Corridor as an example, noting that the City is emerging as a leader that is willing to take those first steps and push forward.

Mayor Strommen referenced the uncontested elections, which she believed is a reflection of the great work the Council has done.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that the continuity of staff and the Council is important and allows planning sessions like tonight to continue to be productive. He stated that community planning and visioning has continued to build a level of trust with the community.

Police Chief Katers highlighted the Citizen's Academy and other outreach the department has done that has helped to create transparency. He stated that the residents know the service that is provided but they were able to better learn the why the services are provided. He stated that there have been huge strides made in terms of communication.

Finance Director Lund stated that the budget was balanced, even with incorporation of the new personnel positions and road improvements to create a stable tax rate. She also highlighted the AA+ bond rating.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that he would like to focus on community engagement the fire department has done, which helps to provide safer living for the residents and businesses. He stated that the amount of presentations was increased to provide that level of outreach to seniors. He also highlighted the partnership with Allina and an increased response to high level medical calls.

City Clerk Thieling stated that there was a busy election but, with her great team of helpers, they were able to make the event go smoothly and the noted the Councilmembers ran unopposed.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the unopposed Council was also at the top of his list as that helps to provide quality, high efficient services.

Councilmember Kuzma noted that another accomplishment was the installation of the public safety data system.

City Administrator Ulrich provided an overview of the items that were mentioned and the great accomplishments that were made throughout the year.

- Traffic Light Report 2016: Status of Action Items / Celebrate Success

City Administrator Ulrich provided an overview of the Strategic Plan and the status on the different items.

Finance Director Lund provided additional information on the budget process and a new, more interactive system that can be used to make the process more efficient, fluid, and easy to follow.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the City is gaining a quote for services and will bring that information back to the Council if desired.

It was the consensus of the Council to further research the more user-friendly and interactive tool for the budgeting process.

Mayor Strommen stated that this direction appears to be more microscale, in regard to the action items on this plan, and believed that this discussion should be on a larger scale as the plan itself may be amended.

City Administrator Ulrich provided a brief overview of the status of the different items on the Strategic Plan and highlighted the items marked yellow.

Councilmember Shryock referenced the key outcome indicators and asked if those are all items that were on the plan prior to completion of the project or whether they were added upon completion.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that primarily those are items that were identified ahead of time and therefore those items are not always all met. He noted that sometimes there are changes in the plan along the way or explained that in some instances the progress is underway and completed but not all the outcomes had been completed yet.

Councilmember Shryock suggested perhaps amending the outcomes as they go to mark the outcomes that were completed, cross off outcomes that did not occur, and add on outcomes that were not predicted ahead of time but did occur.

- Small Group Exercise: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT)

City Administrator Ulrich split the group into four smaller groups and asked each group to appoint a spokesperson to report at the end of the session. He noted that the one hour timeframe would be split into 30 minutes of identification and discussion and 30 minutes of reporting.

The group broke into small groups to conduct discussions.

City Administrator Ulrich brought the group back together to report the results of their small group discussions.

Community Development Director Gladhill summarized the results of his group's discussion. He began with strengths, identifying a stable tax base, collaborative environment, robust database of survey data, and technology enhancements. He stated that for weakness they identified that there are more opportunities for communication, specifically in The COR and lofty goals, with additional resources needed to accomplish. He stated that for opportunities they identified the built-in natural environment, communication of success, technology enhancements,

variety of housing products, support from neighbors, and legislative support. He stated that for threats they identified funding, especially for transportation as well as the built-in natural environment, return on investments, and the perception of affordable housing.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama reported the results of his group identifying the strengths as the mix of housing products, the connection between the rural and urban community, The COR, City owned land which provides control over the land and visions, the Highway 10 access planning study, and the two rivers. He stated that for weaknesses they identified the appearance, perception, and functionality of Highway 10, the MUSA bisect, the lack of control the City has over highways 10 and 47 and County roads, City owned land, and a need for more restaurants and retail. He stated that for opportunity, they identified The ROR (rest of Ramsey) where there is room for growth and development, the appearance of Highway 10, and the ability to take the Highway 10 access plan to the next study. He stated that for threats they identified the two rivers which threaten retail and commercial development, railroad crossings, control over funding for major corridors, and the impacts of a community on the tax base.

City Clerk Thieling communicated the results of her group. She identified the strengths which included great leadership, stable long-term staff with institutional knowledge, great citizen participation, stable tax base, long-term strategic thinking, natural resources, and the City is easy to work with in regard to working with developers, businesses, etc. She stated that for weaknesses they identified transportation infrastructure, lack of long-term funding for roads, water resources, communication, and lack of three deep staff training to cover in shortages. She identified the opportunities noting that the City has room to grow, a possible new zip code and post office, new schools, positive City reputation, transportation improvements, recreation based on natural resources, population close to critical mass which will draw retail, and employee advancement opportunity. She stated that the threats include prior bad press, natural disasters (i.e. train derailments), illegal drug use, competing cities for economic development, lack of state and federal resources for transportation, and Asian Carp in the river(s).

City Engineer Westby reported the results of his group's discussion. He stated that the strengths included the positive Council/staff relationship, good inter-Council relationship, public engagement, high-median household income, and financial stability. He stated that for weaknesses, they identified challenging geography, low density and number of residents, lack of parks in new residential developments, and general lack of understanding/civic engagement on a large scale. He stated that for opportunities they identified the rivers, recreation, high-median household income, good reputation with developers and builders, the purchase of land by the School District for an elementary school, and a lot of entrepreneurs. He stated that for threats they identified the challenging geography, a location between two historical communities, neighboring communities giving away land for development, and a lack of transportation funding. He noted that his group determined that Highway 10 would fit into all four categories.

Councilmember Shryock stated that, in general, the responses were very alike and, going forward, that will assist in this process.

Human Resources Manager Lasher suggested that positive relationships were identified on all of the boards.

Councilmember Kuzma noted that while some groups think of items as threats, others view them as opportunities.

### ***RECESS AND RECONVENE***

The meeting was recessed at 7:10 p.m.

The meeting was reconvened at 7:25 p.m.

- Small Group Exercise: Strengths, Weakness, Opportunities, Threats (SWOT) Remission and Goals - continued

City Administrator Ulrich stated that during the break, staff grouped the results of the SWOT exercise to identify common themes.

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the common themes identified during the small group exercise and noted that these themes will be used in the updating of the Comprehensive Plan.

City Administrator Ulrich explained the correlation between the different categories and noted that they will be able to use the strengths and opportunities to overcome the weaknesses and challenges.

- Review and Prioritize Existing and Proposed Action Items for 2017 - Discuss and Identify Resources Needed to Accomplish Strategic Action Items

City Administrator Ulrich asked if there are any additional items that should appear on the list.

Councilmember Johns noted that the potential new elementary school brings opportunities for planning in terms of infrastructure and trail/sidewalk connections within the one mile walking area.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that there are four corridors identified (Highway 10, Highway 47, County Road 5 and Armstrong Boulevard) ranking Highway 10 as the highest priority.

Mayor Strommen asked how the corridor studies relate to the transportation chapter of the new Comprehensive Plan. She stated that while each of the corridors are important, there is an overall question of how people move in and out of the city. She asked if they are looking at this plan from the right scale.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that the transportation chapter is very broad and looks at a high-level overview and will identify gaps. He stated that the corridor studies would occur to flush out further details after the transportation plan is completed.

Councilmember Riley suggested removing Armstrong from the corridor study as he did not feel that it held the same importance as the other three roadways.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that Armstrong was added as there were concerns with safety and noise but improvements have been made to address those concerns. He agreed that Armstrong does not have the same type of concerns that the other roadways have.

It was the consensus of the Council to remove Armstrong from the list of corridors.

Councilmember Riley suggested adding the School District to the Highway 5 corridor as their purchase and development will increase the need for this corridor.

Mayor Strommen stated that while the corridor studies are great, she wanted to ensure that a large-scale picture is not lost in the process as there is a need to identify the flow of traffic in and out of the community.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that staff will be meeting with the School District and County monthly to discuss this elementary school project.

Councilmember Shryock stated that perhaps the School District should be considered with key outcomes for other areas as well.

Mayor Strommen stated that she is struggling with where to place the item but agreed that planning for the second elementary school should be reflected in the plan.

It was the consensus of the Council to place the item under smart citizen focused government.

Mayor Strommen referenced the long-term water supply and confirmed the consensus of the group to also reflect sewer under that item. It was noted that the language should be changed from develop to update as there are already sewer and water plans that simply need to be updated.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that the item will be retitled to long-term water resource and there will be individual tactics regarding water and sewer.

Councilmember Williams provided a suggested edit for the element regarding retail development, as the plan currently addressed key metrics that are not in harmony with what is reasonable to occur in Ramsey.

Community Development Director Gladhill suggested changing the language to say that they would like to see an increase in retail development, leaving out the key metrics.

Mayor Strommen noted that she would want to see quality retail development and perhaps the metrics could be developed at a later time.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would not want to see the wording so loose that it takes away from the drive and momentum.

Councilmember LeTourneau agreed that is why a goal is important to tie into the item. He asked if the business park mentioned west of Armstrong is still feasible or whether that item should be generalized.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama provided additional details on the proposed business park, noting that they are in the process of rezoning and amending the Comprehensive Plan. He estimated that the timeline would be five to six months, should everything continue to move forward. He noted that a detailed case will come before the Council on March 14<sup>th</sup>. He also provided information on Highway 10 planning and a communications plan for the residents, businesses, and stakeholders. He stated that the communications plan will come before the Council in the next month or so.

City Administrator Ulrich referenced code enforcement, specifically proactive versus reactive. He asked the opinion of the Council in terms of the level of enforcement provided.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that currently the City is exclusively reactive with code enforcement. He noted that it is a struggle to find a balance between enforcement and available staffing. He stated that at some time there would need to be more resources if there is a desire for more code enforcement activity.

Police Chief Katers noted that it is a joint effort between Community Development and the Police departments. He agreed that if there is a higher level of enforcement desired there would need to be more resources allocated. He stated that they do hear the complaint of unequal enforcement but noted that they are reactive at this point.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that even at this level it is hard to keep up with being reactive to complaints.

Police Chief Katers stated that perhaps this is not the best use of time for a licensed officer. He asked for the input of the Council on this matter.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he does not believe there is a problem and likes the reactive nature of code enforcement, noting that he does not want the City to go out looking for violations to issue residents.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that the City should not go out looking for violations. She liked the reactive process but was concerned that staff has time following up on the complaints they do receive as that can be frustrating for residents. She noted that perhaps that concern could be addressed but still remain reactive.

Mayor Strommen stated that the goal is not to punish people that are not compliant but to make sure that people feel safe and have pride in their neighborhood and therefore code enforcement should be the last tool used to reach that outcome. She asked if there are neighborhoods with

clusters of violations and noted that perhaps there is a different tool that could be employed in those situations outside of code enforcement. She noted that some people are not aware that they would need to call with complaints and so perhaps there is another tool that could be used.

Community Development Director Gladhill agreed that there could be more resources, such as a housing resources position that could look at other forms of assistance and outreach.

Councilmember Shryock stated that sounds similar to the neighborhood resource coordinator that other communities have. She asked if there is a section on the website that allows people to click on their question to find an answer. It was confirmed the City website does have this ability.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he would support putting more resources towards this issue so that staff can outline how to address this issue outside of simply code enforcement. He stated that staff should also include a staffing estimate not only for creation but for ongoing responsibilities.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that staff will explore that element.

It was the Council consensus to delete number 21 from the tactics.

Mayor Strommen referenced the illegal drug use and Drug Task Force officer position. She asked if a list should be created to track items like this, as obviously the item has not yet been completed.

Police Chief Katers noted that they can measure the figures as time goes on and continue to provide reporting to measure the level of effectiveness.

Councilmember Shryock noted that this is an instance where certain elements of the item could be crossed off as completed while others be identified as continued monitoring or work occurring.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that the event of hiring the individual was accomplished and the key outcomes, while important, were not the original event.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he did not notice the rebuild of the website on the list and noted that could be incorporated.

Councilmember LeTourneau noted that there also needs to be focus on social media and the incorporation of those tools to reach residents, in addition to the City website.

Councilmember Riley referenced the item regarding more volunteers and the hiring of a staff person to coordinate volunteers, noting that it seems counterintuitive.

Councilmember Shryock noted that there is a process beyond the discussion tonight where the Council and staff can flush out further details and identify if perhaps there is a current staff person that would be able to coordinate volunteers.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that perhaps at a future work session the Council and staff can discuss the process for a potential public works facility. He noted that some crucial decisions will need to be made regarding this project in 2017/2018.

- Discuss Next Steps/Closing Comments

City Administrator Ulrich noted that staff will make revisions as discussed and bring the item back to the Council at a future work session within 30 to 45 days.

Councilmember LeTourneau noted that the initiatives should also be reviewed to determine if another strategic tactic should be listed on the items that have been greyed out, and also to review the tactics against the SWOT analysis.

Mayor Strommen cautioned to ensure there is sufficient time available for discussion at the future work session, noting that it should be the only topic on the agenda.

### **3. ADJOURNMENT**

The Strategic Planning Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 8:53 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.*