

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, December 12, 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

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
Human Resources Manager Colleen Lasher  
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill  
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 5:31 p.m.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: 6745 Highway 10 Lease Renewal Request**

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

Councilmember Kuzma asked and received confirmation that the language in the current lease offers a three-year lease extension option. He asked if there is language in the lease that would allow the City to cancel the lease.

Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama noted that there are a few provisions within the lease that would allow the City to cancel the lease.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that if there is language in the lease that offers an extension, he would believe that the lease should be continued. He asked the tenant, and confirmed, that the tenant would be comfortable with extending the lease and with the maintenance responsibility.

Mayor Strommen asked for clarification from the tenant that if the current lease is extended, the tenant would be responsible for maintenance and if a more market rate lease is negotiated, the City would be responsible for maintenance.

Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama confirmed that if there is a negotiation on a more market rate lease, perhaps the City could make a one-time investment in maintenance but from then on, any maintenance would be the responsibility of the tenant.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that he is curious of the lease rate and asked if there is a current policy on how the rate is viewed, whether the lease could remain at the current rate, or whether the rate should be changed to market. He asked how that would apply to other RALF properties as well.

Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that the lowest rate that the City would allow is 90 percent of the market rate. He stated that this lease was negotiated at the lowest point in the economic downfall. He noted that the lease of this building was also an attempt to fill the vacant building and assist a Ramsey business. He stated that this rate is about 60 percent of the market rate and noted that jumping to the market rate would be a substantial difference for the business.

Allen Berg, owner of Independent Auto stated that the building was not in 100 percent condition when he began his lease and he is aware that there are not relocation funds available because this is a RALF property and therefore when the road is expanded he will be out of his location with no relocation costs and that is why the lower rate was agreed upon. He noted that he began his building with no assistance and started from nothing.

Councilmember Riley stated that it would be helpful to have a memorandum from the City Attorney on this issue. He stated that the most important thing he has heard is that there is a contract in place that should be honored and that should answer the question regarding market value. He stated that with the shape the building is in, perhaps this would be considered market value. He stated that if there are things the tenant would need to do in terms of maintenance under the contract, that should be done. He agreed that the lease language should be clarified to address what will or will not do, but the lease should be renewed.

Mayor Strommen agreed that the lease should be extended, and this would be an opportunity to clarify the language in the lease.

Councilmember Kuzma asked for additional information on late payments.

Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that there is no default language in the contract that would address late payments. He noted that the lease is currently up to date.

Mr. Berg replied that there was an issue with late payments when he began leasing the second storage building because of unanticipated problems with summer storage and provided additional

details. He stated that he is no longer leasing that portion of the building and has not had problems since that time, noting that occurred about two years ago.

Councilmember Riley stated that there is a large amount of work that would need to be done in the future and hoped that would be two to three years out which would allow the City time to rethink whether to extend the lease further at that time. He noted that would also give the tenant time to think of a plan for their future after that point.

Mayor Strommen noted that health safety improvements would need to be addressed.

Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama noted that staff would develop a recommendation on which party would be responsible for the needed improvements.

Marty Fischer, Premier Commercial Realty, stated that the work was bid to determine what would be needed for improvements and \$115,000 would be needed to bring the building up to code. He noted that the work was split into life safety issues, most of which is electrical work. He noted that additional work was done on the garage door. He stated that the driveway and parking lot also need work which would have a cost of about \$40,000 and would be needed prior to three years.

Mr. Berg replied that there are three pot holes in the parking lot that need to be cut out and filled. He stated that there are additional pot holes and damage between the building and the church from the bus traffic. He stated that patching seemed to help to provide a short-term fix. He noted that the sink hole in the parking lot existed prior to him taking space as a tenant.

Mr. Fischer stated that the concrete aprons on the property lead inward rather than outward and cause water to drain into the building, which has caused the water damage to the electric.

Mayor Strommen stated that the consensus of the Council is that the Council is willing to renew the lease, but if the lease is going to be renewed at the current lease rate, the City will not take responsibility for all of the maintenance responsibilities. She asked what could be done differently in the drafting of the leases to ensure that there is not a document with inconsistencies in the language.

Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama noted that staff will continue to work with the tenant and bring back proposed language and negotiation of the maintenance responsibilities noting that he would also obtain input from the City Attorney.

## **2.02: Review Drafts of Comprehensive Plan Update and Discuss Next Steps**

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley referenced the language “balanced transportation” noting that he would like to see a focus on vehicles driving on the corridors.

Community Development Director Gladhill agreed that perhaps different language could be used and provided clarification noting that the intent was to balance the study and focus on different transportation corridors within the City, such as Hwy 47, Hwy 10, and CR 5. He continued to review the staff report.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if the household and population estimates align with the actual amount of housing space available.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed that the future land use plan was used to make that estimated determination of population. He continued to review the staff report and provide an update on the process and draft plan. He noted that because a substantial amount of work was put into the future land use plan, little amendment will be needed for that section. He provided additional input on the future developing areas staging and the implementation plan. He reviewed the remaining meetings associated with the Comprehensive Plan update.

Councilmember LeTourneau asked if an update could be provided at the end of this meeting, if time allows, on the recent open house that occurred.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed that he could give an update and noted that there is a scheduled update to occur in January.

Councilmember LeTourneau stated that this is a huge document and great undertaking and is pleased to see that the process began 18 months out to allow for the community engagement portion. He stated that this is a comprehensive planning document and yet there are constantly Comprehensive Plan updates, which can be confusing. He acknowledged that development is market driven and hoped that there would be a better way to communicate that this document should be flexible to a point.

Mayor Strommen stated that she views the Comprehensive Plan as a ten-year document that provides information to residents. She stated that while there is flexibility in some areas, the values, vision and for most part, the land use should stay as designated. She stated that perhaps there is a communication plan that goes along with the document that outlines expectations.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that this is a conversation that planners have constantly and agreed that regular communication may help to answer those questions.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that adding language on the intention of the document would help to clarify that this will be used as a guide and not set in stone.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the process to amend the plan could perhaps be spelled out, including the driving criteria.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that language is not included in the current plan. He noted that the process is pretty clear, but perhaps additional information to encapsulate a narrative of why the plan could be amended could be drafted.

Councilmember Riley asked if a vocal minority has been a driving force.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that staff has done a great job with the Steering Committee and to increase community engagement and participation to ensure that there is not a vocal minority driving conversation and input. He acknowledged that there may be a minority of population not participating in the process but noted that staff will continue, through implementation, to continue to reach out to ensure all portions of the City are represented throughout the process.

### **2.03: New City Website Project Update**

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

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he does not like the website design. He stated that the type is too small to easily read, although acknowledging that he could zoom in. He believed that the type font could be increased.

Mayor Strommen agreed that the font size could be increased, noting that this appears to be a mobile layout that could be zoomed in. She stated that this is too stripped down for the homepage, noting that the four items are not applicable to residents. She stated that most of the items that a resident would contact City Hall for are not easily findable on the homepage.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the consultant was selected because of their experience with municipalities but noted that perhaps this was the wrong choice.

Councilmember Shryock acknowledged that the intent is to be able to transition to mobile use but noted that the main site layout should not be just mobile looking in appearance. She noted that the residents that will use the site vary in age from young to old and therefore the site should be easy to use for all residents.

Mayor Strommen stated that people often look for information on the website rather than calling the City and this is not obvious as to where you would find the information. She stated that while she would agree the intent is not to clutter the site, this seems to go to the extreme in being simple. She stated that the majority of the homepage is a picture of a flower, and that does not make sense.

Information Technology Manager Fredrickson stated that because this is a still image, the font size is not to scale of what it will be, noting that the font size and type will be different as this is just a mock up. He stated that it would be helpful to have information on the design. He noted that the recommended number of selections for the main button options would be five and asked for input, noting that e-permits is already an option.

Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that staff made similar comments on the text font and size, noting that there is difficulty in shrinking everything down to show on a presentation of this nature. He noted that many websites are going in this direction to have the dropdown menus that appear when you move the cursor over the text. He

recognized that the text size makes that difficult to see and acknowledged that perhaps that should have been changed for the presentation.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that would be hard to provide input on without being able to clearly see the information.

Mayor Strommen noted that employment does not need to be a main button as that is not the reason most people will go to the website.

Councilmember Shryock asked if there is traffic data on the current website use, as the most used features would show what those main buttons should be.

Information Technology Manager Frederickson stated that the current website does not have analytics. He stated that the new website does have that feature and therefore the main buttons could be amended after one year of use, when that most used features could be tracked.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that another option would be to look at similar benchmark cities that have updated websites to see the options that are promoted on their homepages.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if other options for the header photograph could be provided.

Information Technology Manager Fredrickson stated that the banner will be linked to a repository that would change the image upon each visit.

Mayor Strommen stated that she does not want people to see the flower image, as that is not the image the City wants to convey. She stated that the City logo is also too small and should be increased in size.

Information Technology Manager Fredrickson stated that he would also like to increase the size of the City logo and noted that the photograph could be changed at any time.

Councilmember Johns noted that she pulled up some other city websites during this discussion and their city name is much more visible.

Mayor Strommen suggested that another update be given soon to ensure that this does not go too far down the wrong path, given the strong input provided tonight.

Assistant City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that staff will work to incorporate the comments made tonight and will come back with a presentation that provides a better feel for the actual sizes of font.

#### **2.04: Discussion Regarding Improving the Board and Commission Interview Questions**

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Mayor Strommen stated that she likes the idea of tailoring specific to the Commission or Board, as better information is then received. She noted that if someone is interested in multiple Boards/Commissions, one question could be asked of each group. She stated that making the questions too broad makes it so that the Council does not really receive any information and therefore she would prefer to make more specific questions so that better information is received through the interview. She stated that one question from each Board/Commission could be asked for someone that has interest in two different groups and then you would be receiving information relative to each group.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she would like to see the questions kept more neutral or positive in nature, rather than asking for concerns, which could make it seem that the City is asking for complaints.

Councilmember Riley referenced question five, noting that there was vagueness and perhaps additional language should be added “in regard to the Economic Development Authority/Park Commission” which would provide more detail in the applicant’s response.

Mayor Strommen agreed that the question could be made topical, such as related to economic development or park and recreation as some of the meetings are not televised and therefore asking for input on the topic in general could provide the clarity.

Councilmember LeTourneau referenced question three, which references ethics and integrity, and suggested rewording the question to ask for examples of how groups of people working together provides a positive outcome. He suggested removing the language “to the Board/Commission of your preference” and instead using language such as “to the City”.

Mayor Strommen referenced the last question asking if there is anything else the applicant would want the City to know, which usually does not get much response and suggested instead asking a question that would give more information.

Councilmember LeTourneau agreed that question should be removed and instead a different question is asked that would give input on the person’s personality if that is the desired outcome.

Councilmember Riley asked if HR would be concerned with that in terms of personal divulgence related to asking someone what they like to do in their spare time.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that while she would not ask that in an employment interview, it would be okay for this situation. She confirmed the consensus of the Council that additional interview questions will not be asked to the supplemental application and the changes will only be made to the interview questions. She confirmed that the website used to submit the applications is being changed from the previous format.

### **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,

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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.*