

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Monday, April 9, 2018, 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

Members Absent: Councilmember John LeTourneau

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Human Resources Manager Colleen Lasher
Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Patrick Brama

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Strommen called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:37 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Overview of Emergency Management for Elected Officials

Fire Chief Kohner reviewed the staff report and provided details on comprehensive emergency management. He explained that the priorities, in ranked order, are life safety, incident stabilization and property/environment conservation. He reviewed the different phases of emergency management which include response, recovery, mitigation, and preparedness. He noted that the more effort that is placed on mitigation and preparedness, the more fluid the response and recovery actions become. He provided details on the National Incident Management System (NIMS) and the Incident Command System (ICS).

Councilmember Kuzma stated that in the past, Elk River used a different radio system or channel and asked if that has been resolved.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that Elk River does use a different channel. He explained that dispatch would be able to patch the calls together if needed. He noted that there are also designated channels for mutual aid calls that would allow multiple agencies/departments to communicate. He provided additional information on the ICS functions and chain of command.

in an emergency situation. He provided emergency examples and explained how the different roles would respond in different situations. He reviewed examples of incidents that are managed using the ICS. He stated that the City is required to have an Emergency Operations Plan and noted that he will be updating the plan later this summer. He stated that the primary Emergency Operations Center (EOC) is at City Hall in the Alexander Ramsey room and the Ramsey Fire Station 2 is the secondary backup EOC. He provided additional details on the function of the EOC and when the EOC might be activated. He stated that every incident that begins in Ramsey starts and remains at a local level, although if the City resources are exhausted additional help can be gained from the County, State or federal government if needed. He noted that there are certain steps that must be taken in order to gain reimbursement from FEMA, which begins with the Mayor declaring a local declaration of emergency and then would move up to the State declaration and Presidential declaration. He provided an overview of the roles and responsibilities of different City staff and City Council members during an emergency situation.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the new computer system used by the County has been implemented and if that is working well.

Fire Chief Kohner noted that the system has been implemented. He stated that from an emergency response point the system is fully functional. He stated that the system is lagging a bit in the other system functions such as inspections.

Police Chief Katers agreed that the additional functions such as analytics are not fully functioning. He noted that the most resources for implementing that system were focused on emergency response. He stated that the new system began mid-year in 2015 and noted that the previous data is still available in the previous system.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that in terms of working with the media, the City Council members would be contacted and briefed by the City Administrator. He provided additional information on the Public Information Officer (PIO) for the City during an event. He noted that the PIO would depend on the type of event, explaining that for a fire event he would function as a PIO while other incidents would most likely use a PIO from the police department because of their experience with the media.

Police Chief Katers stated that in dealing with the media the key takeaway that he has gained is that if the City is not the source of the information, the story will develop on its own.

Fire Chief Kohner provided additional information on managing public information during emergency events. He noted that it is important during emergency events to speak with one voice. He explained that government officials must coordinate and integrate messages with on-scene Public Information Officers and other agencies.

Police Chief Katers provided additional information on the data practice act as applied to law enforcement and which information is public, referencing Chapter 13.82. He stated that while they would like to have a flow chart for every situation, emergencies are dynamic and therefore it is important for the departments to work together and keep an accurate log of information.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that if the Mayor were to declare an emergency, open meeting laws are bypassed, and the Council can be called to make emergency decisions. He stated that Police Chief Katers, Fire Chief Kohner and Public Works Superintendent Riemer have been well trained for emergency scenarios and therefore the City would be in a good position to respond if there were an emergency situation in Ramsey.

Councilmember Kuzma thanked staff for the presentation and time that has been put into the training.

Police Chief Katers provided additional details on emergency response.

Councilmember Shryock left the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

2.02: Discussion Regarding the Public Information and Events Specialist Vacancy and Alternative Staffing Options

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that Ms. Wenberg will be missed and has done a great job. He noted that this is an opportunity to bring someone in with more experience for a full-time position. He stated that the presence of social media continues to take a larger role for the community and the City. He stated that it is important to have a professional that has the experience to respond to those comments and that has a full-time investment in the City. He stated that in the interim, economic development staff and administration staff will handle the duties of the position. He noted that the frequency of social media posts will be reduced. He stated that Happy Days will continue to be a high priority as well as the economic development events.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he is not thrilled about the part-time suggestions or an intern and therefore would support a full-time position with an experienced individual.

Councilmember Riley stated that recently the Council discussed budget shortfalls and therefore he would not agree with expanding the position. He stated that he would also not agree with part-time position suggestions and would suggest continuing with the current role of the position.

Councilmember Johns noted that she would support suggestions two or three but shares the concern of Councilmember Riley regarding the budget concerns. She asked if the current structure of the position and pay scale is part of the reason the employee is leaving.

Asst. City Administrator/Economic Development Manager Brama stated that Ms. Wenberg wanted to make the transition to the private sector. He stated that one of the challenges is attempting to recruit a qualified candidate pool for the current position.

Councilmember Johns acknowledged that the City may have to take a step down if recruiting for the current position.

Mayor Strommen noted that most likely Ramsey is going to be a stepping stone for a lot of employees in this position because it is a small city and therefore there may not be a lot gained increasing from a specialist to a coordinator. She stated that the real challenge will be to think about this in a budget concept and decide whether the 16 percent difference between a specialist and coordinator should be invested into this position or into a different area of the budget. She stated that the City will not get all the experience on day one, but the applicants will have some experience and interest in learning.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that there is an overlap in the pay scale. He noted that the current employee was at step five and therefore there is flexibility. He stated that the title change does not have to have a cost. He stated that there has been a policy to hire at market rate but noted that does not take any options off the table.

Mayor Strommen asked for information on what the options would look like with market rate for option two.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the communications part of the City is important, to ensure a well written effective message is being sent out.

Councilmember Johns stated that this employee has been a face to the community at events and therefore it is helpful to have that continuous face for the position in addition to the communications piece.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that the part-time position is a benefit eligible position and therefore you may attract a qualified candidate that does not want to work full-time. She stated that with the part-time administrative assistant added that would bring the combination to 56 hours per week. She noted that economic development is already low staffed and very busy and therefore this vacant position will put a lot of stress on that department.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that real test between options two and three will be the application process. He stated that staff is cognizant of the budget impacts. He noted that if the Council were going to choose option three, a lower starting rate could be hired with room for that position to grow.

Mayor Strommen stated that she does not want to underpay people but simply is asking what the City “buys” for that level compared to what would be “bought” with the other position.

Councilmember Riley stated that he has a problem with using the term underpayment. He stated that if the City makes an offer and that is accepted, then that is market rate. He stated that this was filled with a new person that was groomed. He did not feel that the City will be able to retain someone in a long-term position.

Councilmember Shryock returned to the meeting at 6:54 p.m.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would support marketing for a more experienced person.

Councilmember Johns stated that perhaps the City proceeds with option two and if the qualified candidates are not obtained the position could be remarketed.

Mayor Strommen noted that she would rather take the time to fill the position correctly than rush the decision. She noted that only four people took part in the discussion and therefore that is challenging. She supported the suggestion of Councilmember Johns to market for option two and readjust if qualified candidates are not obtained.

Councilmember Riley agreed.

Human Resources Manager Lasher noted that if qualified candidates are not obtained staff can shut the process down without interviews and readvertise.

It was the consensus of the Council to advertise the position for the second option and if qualified candidates are not obtained staff will readvertise for the third option.

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 6:56 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.