

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, May 22, 2018, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present:     Acting Mayor John LeTourneau  
                          Councilmember Mark Kuzma  
                          Councilmember Jill Johns (arrived at 6:43 p.m.)  
                          Councilmember Chris Riley  
                          Councilmember Melody Shryock

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

**1.     CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:35 p.m.

**2.     TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01:   Purple Light Initiative for Domestic Violence Awareness**

Councilmember Riley introduced his sister, Kathy Green, who is present tonight.

Mary Sheie provided background information on her affiliations with organizations that serve and educate against domestic violence.

Kathy Green reviewed the organizations that she is involved in.

Ms. Sheie stated that they would like to propose that the City of Ramsey light the outside of their public buildings in purple during October 2018. She stated that this will help to increase awareness and interest in the topic. She stated that the Anoka County Sheriff's Office has already agreed to light their building in October and will be participating on other efforts as well. She reviewed the list of partners involved in the advocacy that support this initiative. She stated that Maple Grove participated last year and will be participating again this year. She noted that this would be good publicity for the City and would also support victims.

Ms. Green stated that ten years ago she knew nothing about this topic and never could have imagined that she would become so passionate. She stated that this initiative would honor those victims that have lost their lives to domestic violence. She stated that it would also show that the City stands in solidarity with those who are still experiencing domestic violence in the community and will also spur conversations in the community to bring the issue further into the light and hopefully decrease the number of domestic violence incidents.

Ms. Sheie commented that the more these efforts come forward, the better the chance to change history. She stated that lights would be needed for the City to participate and advised that she would walk around to determine the lighting needs. She stated that she would then draft a description of the needs with recommended products. She noted that price would depend upon the options chosen for lighting. She stated that her draft would then include installation options. She stated that once the cost has been determined, she will be able to determine the amount the coalition would be able to assist with. She stated that communications information would be provided to the City to include in its newsletter and post on social media. She noted that there would also be options to have a display in the lobby at City Hall if desired during October. She stated that another option would be to participate in #purplethursday, where employees can dress in purple with pins, and pins could be available for the public.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would be open to having a display in the lobby area but was concerned with staff time and cost that it would take to do the lighting, as this could become a large project. He noted that Ramsey is already short staffed. He stated that if putting lights up was simple and the lights were provided, he could support that, but would not want to put a heavier burden on staff.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she would also be interested in the display. She stated that she would be interested in the lighting but would want more information, perhaps picking key spots that could provide the most impact.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that Connexus has been a key partner with the Christmas lighting and perhaps that would be a good partnership.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would want to know more information and believed that the walkthrough would provide that information. He noted that perhaps it could be as easy as placing a purple lens on the existing lights.

Ms. Sheie stated that when they do the walk through they will look at inside and outside options. She stated that even if the City starts small, that would be helpful. She noted that the coalition is willing to provide funding for the lights and installation.

Councilmember Riley suggested limiting the purple lights to City Hall and not the parking ramp, as the purple lighting could provide safety concerns in the ramp.

Police Chief Katers stated that he is encouraged by the collaborative effort. He noted that domestic violence touches this community and the police works on domestic violence prevention. He stated that this is a great program and although the costs are not known, he

encouraged the City to participate. He noted that residents could also use a purple bulb at their home.

Ms. Sheie stated that she will report back to the Council following the walk through. She welcomed any additional questions staff and the Council may have after the meeting tonight and provided her contact information.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau thanked her for coming tonight and inviting the City to participate. He encouraged Ms. Sheie to continue to communicate with City Administrator Ulrich.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that he will bring back different options for the City to consider.

Ms. Green noted that she will reach out to Connexus to determine if they would be willing to assist as well.

## **2.02: Discussion Regarding the AFSCME Career Ladder**

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma asked how many potential employees would qualify.

Human Resources Manager Lasher noted that six public works employees would qualify.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that if each of those employees holds an equal position he would not want to see participation from everyone as that would simply increase wages.

Human Resources Manager Lasher reviewed the different categories.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that this seems like a good plan for employee development and providing employees with a way to move up. He stated that he does not believe this should apply to part-time employees.

Councilmember Riley agreed that he does not think this should apply to part-time employees.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that part-time should not be eligible. She stated that it would be great to help employees advance and stay here. She shared the concern that the program is managed to ensure there is appropriate space for those that complete the training. She stated that she would want to see conversations about retention.

Councilmember Kuzma suggested that a timeline be identified in which the employee must remain with the City or reimburse the City for the cost.

Human Resources Manager Lasher stated that there is language that requires an employee to remain with the City for one year after tuition reimbursement. She noted that training funds are significantly less but confirmed the consensus of the Council to have similar language requiring one year.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that he likes the ladder concept and that could be something that draws in millennials. He stated that this would allow flexibility to provide cross training. He agreed that this is a career training level and therefore should only be offered to full-time. He asked staff to be careful of who is in the program and which positions would be available. He explained that it would not make sense for someone to go through the cost and expense of the program if there is no where to go after.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the RCP really helped the City to get to this next step.

### **2.03: Road Funding Option Discussion**

City Administrator Ulrich noted that this item is on the agenda in attempt to close the loop on previous discussions. He stated that there were a few options included to consider. He reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the last time there were discussions with the community, it seemed that there was a small group that rallied against the City. He asked if there would be enough time to get this on the ballot.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that there would be enough time.

Councilmember Kuzma suggested placing this on the ballot, noting that there would be enough time to get out public education elements between now and then. He stated that now that people have been assessed, they may have a different attitude.

Councilmember Riley agreed with the thought of putting this on the ballot. He stated that he would want to ensure that it does not give off the impression that the City does not know how to lead and has to ask the people. He stated that everyone understands the effects of this as everyone uses the roads and has driven on bad roads. He stated that people will now understand that this is a bigger issue and there is background information on the funding that has occurred and the tax increases that would continue to follow if the City continues on the current path for road financing. He stated that it has to be made clear that this is not an additional tax on top of everything else and would be dedicated to roads.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the Charter Commission is taken out of the loop if this is placed on the ballot.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that there are no restrictions now. He stated that the Charter Commission would have to be involved at some point and noted that he will follow up on that to determine the role of the Charter Commission.

Councilmember Shryock stated that a ballot option will be a good option and wording of that will be important. She believed that a large education campaign will also be an important part of helping people to understand that this would be a fair method to fund road improvements. She stated that it will also be important to state that these would be dedicated funds for roads.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that his concern with going through that process is that the public at large does not pay attention to most things and it's the small group of opposition that attempts to change the direction.

Councilmember Shryock stated that written information can be available and perhaps a few open house times. She noted that no matter what the City does, there will be negative people.

Councilmember Riley stated that the City would also need to determine what would be fair for the people that have already, or are still, paying assessments. He stated that it would be helpful to show that a large tax increase will be coming if the financing for roads does not change. He stated that it would be helpful to show that this method for funding would perhaps decrease taxes.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau provided background information on the last time this topic was discussed. He noted that there was a lot of misinformation and a group of people opposed to the topic that came out strong. He stated that the City should start out generating conversations about the tax burden and current road financing and then sharing the options and allowing the residents to come to the conclusion on the best option. He stated that he would be afraid of rushing things and having a repeat situation.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that if this is not put on the election, this is a normal election. He stated that next year would have to be a special election or the City would need to wait an additional two years for another regular election.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she would like a refresher on the timeline in order to have something appropriate on the ballot. She stated that it may be helpful for residents to have a similar presentation that the Council viewed a few weeks ago that provided the different funding options.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the deadline to submit the question to the County would be August 24<sup>th</sup>. He noted that the educational components could begin before that time.

Councilmember Riley agreed that this has to be done right and he does not want to wait past this election cycle.

Councilmember Kuzma agreed with Councilmember Riley's comments. He stated that his concern is that when there is an open house there are maybe 30 people, which is only a small portion of the population. He stated that the Council was elected to lead, and they know what's coming and therefore should plan to lead this forward.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that there will be decision making that needs to occur. She stated that any public education efforts will be helpful, using the website and *Ramsey Resident* to share helpful information that will not be misinterpreted.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that there are members of the public that can create strife when they do not have all the information. He believed that the potential timing of the election and the complexity will be a huge distraction. He stated that he would hate for that November date to be the thing that makes this successful/unsuccessful.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that if it is not included on the ballot and there is time to get the pros and cons out there, the public would speak and give direction.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that if this were going to be on the ballot, it would need to be phrased appropriately and the message would need to be clearly written as well. He agreed that this will be a controversial issue.

Councilmember Kuzma suggested that staff bring back some potential language for the Council to review. He stated that, if appropriate, Council could direct staff to continue.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that a logistical plan would also be helpful. He noted that currently the City is lacking in communications and administrative staff and perhaps it would be helpful to have WSB assist in preparing some of the materials.

Councilmember Riley asked if Acting Mayor LeTourneau would support a special election if he does not want to place it on the ballot in November.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau noted that there may be another method without referendum. He stated that if the information can get out to the public and the consensus of the public is supportive, the Council could then make the discussion. He suggested that the topic be tabled and direct staff to prepare bullet points to be brought back for further discussion. He stated that the funding of the road debt is a large concern and the Council wants to continue to look at alternate options to be able to provide the proper level of road maintenance.

Councilmember Shryock asked if there should be a special worksession dedicated to just this topic, as it does not feel that there is sufficient time when it is partnered together with other discussion items. She stated that she does not have a problem making the decision as a member of the Council, as long as she feels that is the best choice for road funding.

Councilmember Riley stated that there was a lot more discussion that Councilmember Shryock did not hear, which is why she may feel behind in the discussion. He stated that it is probably time to dust off those reports.

Councilmember Shryock noted that she could come in on her own time to review the presentation that the other members of the Council received.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that a part of the process would be to determine an accurate number of Connexus accounts, which could start sparks.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that they would need to have the necessary information to share within the next few months in order to attempt to make this successful.

Councilmember Kuzma suggested reaching out to WSB to determine the cost for having them assist with the process.

Councilmember Johns arrived.

Finance Director Lund asked for input on whether staff should reach out to determine the number of accounts at the utilities. She stated that the utilities typically get the word out that the City is looking at franchise fees.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau noted that there are a lot of moving parts and he is worried that this could go the wrong way. He believed that it's important to have the conversation in the right way about roads to raise support for the best option.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that after seeing the bullet points from staff it will help to determine whether this could go forward on the ballot or in another manner.

It was confirmed that staff will not make the request of the utility companies.

Finance Director Lund noted that in most communities it has taken one to 1.5 years to get franchise fees implemented.

Councilmember Riley questioned how many additional people will be assessed during that time.

### **3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION**

#### **3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar**

None.

### **4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT**

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that things turned out well at the legislature and it looks like the Governor is going to sign the funding bill. He explained that at the end of the session, the bill passed at the last minute included \$15,000,000 for Thurston/Fairoak and \$2,000,000 for Ramsey Boulevard. He stated that with the funds received last year, Ramsey Boulevard would then have \$3,500,000 available for the underpass and associated improvements. He stated that there were additional Quarters of Commerce funds allocated through the bill, which could open up RALF acquisitions. He stated that they met with MnDOT and it was explained why Highway 10 did not receive the Quarters of Commerce funds this year because they made the decision that they could not have both Highway 10 and I-94 under construction at one time. He noted that I-94 will be repaired first and that they are committed to Highway 10 beginning in 2021/2022. He stated that while it is good that the \$15,000,000 was allocated to Thurston/Fairoak, those funds will not be spent until 2021/2022. He stated that there are things that can continue to be done, perhaps the improvements at Ramsey Boulevard and the frontage road in Ramsey as there are funds available to knock off those small items. He stated that it is really important for Ramsey to keep

moving. He stated that if Ramsey is ready to move, perhaps that could be ready to go and move forward rather than waiting until after Thurston/Fairoak, as that project has been put on hold for the next three years.

Councilmember Riley stated that he understands what he is saying about Thurston/Fairoak and asked if other parties would agree.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that there was a general acceptance that you could not have the critical corridors under construction at the same time. He believed that there is an opportunity for the City to move forward and to think through that option.

## **5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:59 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.*