

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, June 12, 2018, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Acting Mayor John LeTourneau
 Councilmember Jill Johns
 Councilmember Mark Kuzma
 Councilmember Chris Riley
 Councilmember Melody Shryock

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
 Finance Director Diana Lund
 Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
 Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
 City Engineer Bruce Westby
 Aaron Nielsen, MMKR

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:36 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Road Funding Option Discussion

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the WSB proposal includes postage and printing costs or whether those costs would be additional. He stated that if postage and other communications costs are additional, that could be expensive.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that he was unsure but would not think those costs are included. He noted that regular newsletters are already planned in the budget and the mailing could be added to that mailing.

Finance Director Lund stated that issuance of debt alone has a cost of \$37,000 each time the City issues debt.

Councilmember Riley asked if an alternative to hiring WSB would mean that staff would develop the same kinds of things.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that would be the other option and is what the City attempted about five years ago. He stated that WSB has a fair amount of expertise in this area and recognize the sensitivity of how a City works.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau asked for input on whether or not to condense the timeframe from six to eight months to four months in order to time with the election.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that if the City started now getting the communications out, four months should be sufficient time and would give residents the opportunity to vote yay or nay. He stated that would provide the Council with direction on how to proceed with assessments or the benefit or not having assessments. He stated that he would like to see the question on the ballot.

Councilmember Johns asked if this would go towards the direction of the ballot.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that was not the direction until that comment was made.

Councilmember Shryock stated that if the City continued and stayed on a heavy course, the City could be in the position to put this on the ballot. She noted that the information would need to remain heavy and consistent. She stated that is a big-ticket item but recognized that the cost is not large in comparison to the cost for the issuance of debt. She stated that it would have value to have the expertise for public meetings but perhaps the new communications staff member could complete the flyers and informational mailings, if time allowed.

Councilmember Johns stated that currently the City does not have a communications member and is actually down multiple staff members and therefore would support having that expertise. She stated that whether or not the Council chooses to go to ballot, the communications piece is vital.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the communications staff member will be coming on board and does have expertise with writing newsletter articles. He explained that WSB has a really complete knowledge of the financing piece and has the experience in how to best communicate that information and engage the public. He stated that perhaps the cost could be negotiated a bit, using City staff for some portions.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that perhaps it would be a good combination of the knowledge from WSB combined with some of the leg work that could be done by City staff, which could possibly lower the ultimate cost.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that in a four-month timeframe that would be difficult as there are three large vacancies in staff currently. He stated that in his experience, taking items out of a contract to be done in-house sometimes costs more in efficiency and time.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that the communications piece is important for this process and it will be important to provide the best opportunity for residents to learn about alternatives. He stated that whether the message could be communicated in four, six or eight months has not yet

been decided in his mind. He stated that if the City starts down the road with engagement and the community is largely supportive, one action could be chosen but if the community is largely opposed, then another action could be chosen. He stated that he believes that if there is support from the community, the topic would not need to go to the ballot and the Council could make the decision.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that his only concern is that if the topic is placed on the ballot and passes with the support of the community, there would be no going back.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that the Council is tasked with making difficult decisions all the time and he is not aware of a time when the public has ever repealed an ordinance. He stated that even if that were to occur, he did not think that would be bad either.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would also be concerned with the Charter Commission and potential actions.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that he would encourage engagement of the community and if the community is supportive, there would not be pushback from the Charter Commission.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that one of the first pieces of engagement in the WSB process would be to engage and inform the Charter Commission.

Councilmember Johns agreed that having concrete information will be helpful to inform the Charter Commission more effectively.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that there have been assessments that have impacted residents now and there is solid financial information to use for comparison.

Councilmember Shryock stated that given the timeline from WSB, she believed that it would be helpful to begin this now. She stated that the education piece will be important whether this goes to ballot or not.

City Administrator Ulrich acknowledged the point made by Acting Mayor LeTourneau that perhaps along the way it is clear that the community will not support this action and therefore language could be added into the contract that would provide a check-in where the City could choose not to move forward.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that there will be activity between now and November that will be distracting and noted that he would like to ensure that the conversation is done in a time when there will not be distractions. He stated that he does not want this to be a fight and asked the Council to consider shutting down the discussion until there is not that distraction. He acknowledged that the Council is attempting to get ahead of the next road assessment cycle but wanted to ensure that this can be a thoughtful discussion that engages people for the right reason.

Councilmember Riley agreed that there needs to be a long-term solution for the long-term problem. He stated that the City does not have the expertise and is short on staff, which would

support using the consultant. He stated that although he would like a decision sooner rather than later, he agreed that it is more important to ensure that this is done right rather than fast.

Councilmember Shryock suggested including breakpoints in the contract, perhaps after the first public meeting which would allow the City to assess whether to move further in the contract process.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau agreed that it would be helpful to have an escape in the contract based off of learned information from the public.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed the consensus of the Council to move forward and start the process of engaging the public through the contract with WSB, amending the contract to include breakpoints where the City can determine whether to continue moving through the process.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau asked if the Council shares his concern of trying to communicate this message during an election cycle.

Councilmember Shryock stated that if the process begins, but is not rushed, that could provide a positive opportunity.

Councilmember Johns stated that she wants to start the discussion but does not want to rush the process to put it on the ballot and would simply suggest starting on the longer timeline.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he believes that this would become an election topic. He stated that he supports franchise fees but would be leaning towards waiting until after the election to ensure that there could be an honest discussion.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that part of the communications piece will be how the topic is phrased and therefore the discussion could be positive.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she does not want it to seem like the topic is being pushed off because people are near the end of the term. She agreed that the communications portion could begin with proper phrasing and communications. She stated that the longer the decision is delayed, the more impact there will be to residents. She suggested starting the process, thoughtfully to get the discussion going.

Councilmember Riley stated that if this cannot be done quickly, he would agree with using the long-term process to ensure that it can be done right.

Councilmember Johns agreed that she is not afraid of the election but that the topic would be exploited into a political football. She stated that her intention is for the discussion to be clear and honest and not clouded within the election cycle and potential misinformation.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the topic can be phrased as a road funding discussion and not franchise fee discussion. He stated that there has to be proper information for the public in

order to gain support from the public, which is what they would attempt to build over the next year.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau noted that the Council can be in favor of moving along very gingerly and phrasing the discussion appropriately. He confirmed that the discussion is not intended to make a decision in the next few months but to spend the six to eight months to properly phrase the discussion and get the communication out to the public.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that he would go back to WSB and ask for a longer process schedule that would better align with the comments of the Council.

Councilmember Shryock suggested that phase two be broken out into two parts and to also include a few points where the City could choose whether or not to continue to move forward.

2.02: Review 2017 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), Management Report and Special Purpose Audit Reports

Aaron Nielsen, MMKR, reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley referenced the COR land balance, noting that it appeared to increase during the year and asked if that was due to the McDonalds transaction.

Finance Director Lund noted that is the balance of the fund and not the balance of land available.

Councilmember Riley referenced the water operating revenue and asked if there was something special this year.

Finance Director Lund explained that developer contributions are now included in that revenue rather than listed in its own line item.

Councilmember Riley stated that there is a big pension change this year and asked for details.

Mr. Nielsen stated that the changes have been challenging. He provided additional details on the new implementations for PERA, noting that the information is also disclosed within the summary of the CAFR.

Finance Director Lund noted that there will be a proposed increase in PERA as part of the budget process due to recent changes at the legislature.

2.03: Report Regarding Highway 10 Entry Sign Repair

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau asked if there has been an assessment of the brick supports for the sign.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the bricks seem solid but noted that there are some wood portions that need replacement.

Councilmember Riley stated that there has been discussion on Highway 10 signage and therefore this seems appropriate, especially at a cost of \$3,000.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he likes the idea but stated that he would prefer the fonts on the other sign proposals shown for the corridor compared to the proposal within this case. He suggested changing the font or alignment for “City of” portion of the sign to be consistent with the other signs.

The consensus of the Council was to direct staff to move forward on the sign, changing the font/alignment of the “City of” portion of the sign to match the other proposed signs in the corridor.

2.04: Update and Discussion Regarding NW COR Development Concepts

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he was vocal at the joint meeting in that he supports selling the available property to a willing buyer, whether or not that business will compete with an existing business. He stated that he believes that the businesses will help each other and would agree in moving forward.

Councilmember Riley agreed with the comments of Councilmember Kuzma.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she likes the proposal but would prefer another location.

Councilmember Johns agreed with Councilmember Shryock’s comments.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau confirmed the consensus of the Council to support this proposal moving forward.

Councilmember Johns stated that she would want to ensure that Coborn’s does not feel threatened and the City is left only with an Aldi. She stated that it would be great if the businesses complement each other.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that he was present at the Corborn’s meeting and the statement was made that the business is not afraid of competition and would continue to invest in their business in Ramsey.

Councilmember Riley stated that in his opinion this is not an issue of liking or not liking Coborn’s or Aldi but having available land and a willing buyer.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed the consensus of the Council to direct Aldi to go through the process and gather input from the Commissions and back to the Council for the final decision.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau asked at what point site details would come through the process.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that if the Council feels strongly about something, such as orientation, that could be included in the purchase agreement rather than waiting for the input process during the Planning Commission and Council reviews of the site plan.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she would like the discussion to be had early on in the purchase agreement process, as this is a very visible spot and she would want to ensure those conversations happen early on in the process.

Councilmember Johns stated that there were enhancements done with the daycare, but Aldi would not have that street front appearance.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that Aldi would be open to having false windows, as the back of the warehouse would face Sunwood Drive.

Councilmember Shryock stated that perhaps clarity be given to where the front of the site is and which direction the front of the building faces.

Councilmember Johns stated that she would also not want a parking lot on the Sunwood Drive side either.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that this is a prime location for the gateway of The COR and therefore review and discussion will continue.

2.05: Reschedule Monday, August 13 City Council Meeting to Monday, August 6, 2018

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report. He confirmed the consensus of the Council to reschedule the August 13th meeting to August 6th.

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.