

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Monday, August 6, 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  
                            Fire Chief Matt Kohner  
                            Police Chief Jeff Katers  
                            Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
                            Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
                            Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher  
                            Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill  
                            City Engineer Bruce Westby

**1.     CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:33 p.m.

**2.     TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01:   Road Funding Communication Proposal**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Jennifer Edison, WSB, stated that over the course of several months, the communication plan would be broken into three phases. She explained that the phases are important because they provide the opportunity for the City to determine if it would like to continue to move forward or stop the work. She provided details on the elements included in the first phase of the proposal.

Kirstin Gray, WSB, stated that phase two would include the bulk of the tasks and reviewed the elements included in that phase. She stated that there would be an opportunity for the City to conduct a review after phase two to determine if it would like to continue or stop. She noted that if the decision was to stop after phase two, the City would only be responsible for the costs up to that point. She then reviewed the elements that would be included in phase three of the proposal.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the Charter Commission was not very receptive in the last discussion and asked for input on how that discussion would be handled.

Ms. Gray replied that they are aware of that element and stated that if the City chooses to proceed with the proposal, it would simply explore road funding alternatives and in coordination with all parties, find the right fit for the City rather than simply deciding to implement franchise fees. She stated that gathering input from all stakeholders is an important part of the process.

Ms. Edison explained that this is a road funding discussion and educating everyone on the means and methods of funding this huge plan provides a better opportunity to weigh each option. She stated that there are a lot of misconceptions on what franchise fees are and therefore providing that education helps to ensure that everyone understands the pros and cons of each option for funding.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the City recently conducted a resident survey and the overwhelming response was against franchise fees.

Ms. Gray stated that the proposal is to provide the pros and cons of each funding alternative so that all the stakeholders can make an informed decision. She explained that it is difficult to put a lot of thought into a survey response because the response can be swayed by many factors.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau asked why the decision was made to speak with just the Charter Commission rather than other Commissions or perhaps speaking to all Commissions.

Ms. Edison explained that the thought to include the Charter Commission in phase one was to ensure transparency and that nothing is being hidden but confirmed that each of the Commissions could be included to gather input equally.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if there is a funding source for this proposal.

Finance Director Lund replied that the public improvement revolving fund would be used.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau noted that phase two includes the element of public meetings and asked for information on what would be included in a public meeting.

Ms. Edison stated that the public open house includes a scheduled presentation that would summarize how the City has been funding road improvements, alternative funding options, the impact to individual homeowners for each option, as well as boards throughout the room with information that would allow people to roam freely and then answer questions.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that staff has been successful in increasing resident participation through public engagement and asking for staff input.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that he is comfortable with the format as that mirrors what staff has been doing and noted that staff would work with WSB to smooth out the details prior to the public meetings.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that staff is aware of comments and concerns that residents have brought forward in the past and could share those concerns to ensure that they could be addressed through this campaign.

Ms. Edison confirmed that they would be interested in gathering input from staff on those elements. She explained that in the past they have developed a frequently asked questions document that is available on the City website and in print format at the front desk. She stated that it is important to address those questions quickly before they spiral.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she was not involved in the prior process discussing franchise fees and therefore she believes that the approach that this is an investigation of alternative road funding options is healthy and important. She noted that many residents have moved to the community in the past few years and therefore this is a fresh topic for some residents.

Councilmember Riley asked if staff has done an analysis of the costs proposed.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that he is comfortable with the costs as shown but noted that another review could be done prior to final approval.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the proposal as drafted, making the amendment to include all Commissions. It was noted that this item will come back before the Council for formal approval.

## **2.02: 2019 Preliminary Budget/Levy Review**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that he appreciates the work that the staff has put into the process this year. He stated that the community has set the standard that it needs, based on growth and desires of the residents. He stated that staff is attempting to provide a proposal that meets the needs and desires of the community. He stated that staff is sharing their prospective of what would need to happen in order to meet the needs of the community. He stated that it is less of a competition and more of how the City will meet the needs of the community.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the fire department is proposing to add a firefighter, advising that the staffing level has remained constant and the last new firefighter position was added in 2000. He stated that there has been an increase to the calls of service because of the increased residential and commercial growth the City has experienced. He acknowledged the difficulty the department has had in recruiting and obtaining reliable daytime responders. He stated that the main responsibility of the new position would be to respond to daytime calls for service. He stated that when the employee is not responding to calls, they would conduct code compliance inspections and life safety education. He stated that the department is not able to keep up with the building inspections. He stated that fire prevention is one of the most important duties the department conducts, and the department struggles to keep up with the request for life safety

education. He stated that because he often has to respond to daytime calls, he is then not able to keep up with the supervisory/administrative duties of his position. He reviewed different policies and procedures that are in need of updating. He stated that currently there is no backup for himself and the Fire Marshall when they are out of the office. He stated that this position would align with three of the City's strategic initiatives.

Councilmember Kuzma referenced the increase in calls and asked the type of calls.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that nationwide, fire departments are responding to more medical calls and noted that 52 percent of the department calls are medical calls which include injury accidents.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that 56 percent of the calls for response occur during the daytime and asked if that trend has increased the past few years.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that historically that figure has been around 45 percent and confirmed that the increase in calls has mostly occurred during the daytime hours. He stated that Ramsey is an aging community and therefore a majority of those calls for service occur during the daytime.

Councilmember Riley asked if there would be a cost savings in having this new position to conduct the building inspections rather than using paid on-call employees.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that in 2017 there was a cost of \$9,800 for the paid on-call employees to assist with building inspections.

Police Chief Katers provided information on the calls for service in the past ten years, noting the increase in calls for service each year. He stated that there are currently 25 sworn officers in Ramsey, providing background information on the community and comparing that to neighboring communities. He stated that the department continues to get a lot of calls for service, noting that the calls require a lot of follow-up and investigation time. He stated that he has had to take officers from patrol to assist with investigations. He noted that the department can weather shortages in the short-term but in the long-term that will affect morale and will have an impact. He reviewed some of the programs that have been implemented and go beyond basic calls for service, noting that if the calls for service continue to increase he will need to take from those community programs. He stated that the intent is to provide quality service to the community through a proactive partnership, noting that the community programs fulfill that mission and are critical in building relationships with the community. He explained that the department runs very efficiently and therefore when there is a loss, that impact is felt. He stated that the citizen survey provided high ratings to both the police and fire departments. He stated that public service is a primary service and is something the citizens expect. He noted that when things are going well you will not hear much from residents on public safety but when that level of service is not reached, there will be complaints.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if additional equipment would be needed for two new officers.

Police Chief Katers stated that the cost for equipment would be approximately \$9,000 per officer. He stated that initially there was a vehicle request for the two officers but there has since been a forfeiture that will offset that cost.

Councilmember Riley stated that two officers are requested this year and asked if zero officers would be requested next year.

Police Chief Katers stated that he would need to review the community information before making that decision. He stated that the community is continuing to grow, and the additional elementary school will most likely bring additional residents as well. He explained that he will receive calls for service on day one and does not like to be behind, noting that the department has already received calls since construction began.

Public Works Superintendent Reimer stated that calls for service continue to increase in all departments as the population continues to grow. He stated that in example the calls for pothole repair in 2016 were 19 and then in 2018 that increased to 29, and so far, this year there have been 57 calls for pothole repair. He reviewed some of the public works duties that the department provides during the different seasons and stated that all of those duties take time and people to complete. He stated that the department is falling behind on the duties to the community and one additional employee would help the department to respond to the department needs. He stated that street sweeping takes three of the four employees to complete and therefore he does not have additional employees to respond to calls for service. He stated that there was only one employee added to the department in the past ten years.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that any public works employee is added to the on-call responders. He stated that someone is available 24/7 to respond to public works needs.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the start date for this position would be March 1<sup>st</sup> and therefore the impact to the future budgets would be higher.

City Engineer Westby stated that his request falls in the same category as the other departments, noting that the additional employee would help the department meet the needs of the community. He reviewed some of the department duties and responsibilities and stated that there is a lot of demand for staff. He stated that he has been acting as the project manager for the City improvement projects, working to develop the projects and move them through the City Council and then administer and supervise as the projects are in the field. He stated that the department is struggling to keep up with the requests and needs of the residents and to meet deadlines. He reviewed upcoming projects that the department is involved in and stated that he is concerned with the Ramsey Highway 10 plan that the Bolton & Menk consultants are involved with. He stated that he has concerns with his ability to assist with phase one and to be involved with phase two. He stated that his goal would be to transition his project manager duties to the engineer technician but in order to do that, they would need to push some of the technician's duties to the administrative assistant. He stated that increasing the hours of the administrative assistant from 20 to 40 hours per week would allow for the transference of duties.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the Council approved an administrative assistant last year for 20 hours per week.

City Engineer Westby confirmed that the Council did allow the half-time position and he is requesting to increase the hours for that position beginning in July 2019.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that a portion of the duties would be to assist with sewer, water, and other utilities and therefore part of the position could be funded through the enterprise fund rather than the general fund.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if any of the Highway 10 funds could be used to pay for some of the engineering expenses.

City Engineer Westby stated that he is unsure of whether the City has planned to use the funding for Highway 10 for staffing.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau noted that would be a short-term solution for a long-term problem.

Councilmember Shryock stated that dynamic should be watched if that option is chosen as sometimes staff time is counted towards the City match for grant funds.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that recreational programming responds to one of the City's strategic initiative. He stated that when recreational programming began in 2017, it was cost effective and efficient for one full-time position to handle the programming needs. He explained that in 2018 that position is being filled by three interns, which require training to get up to speed and has not been an efficient method as it has caused him to spend additional time on the programming and takes away from his other duties. He stated that recreational programming is a highly visible service available to all residents and all demographics and is uniquely unifying and positive in terms of building a favorable sense of community. He stated that the recreational specialist proposal as proposed would not increase the 2019 levy. He stated that if the position is not added, it would then be responsible to significantly pull back on the recreational programming offered as he could not continue to run the programming in this method with interns.

Councilmember Shryock stated that there are a number of organizations which the department has partnered with and asked if perhaps those organizations could be tasked to develop programming.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that could be an option, but the City would lose an opportunity for branding. He noted that budgets would need to be set for certain events as the City currently provides staff for certain programming events. He used the example of the Art Fest the City currently holds, noting that this year the cost was \$56 plus staff time and noted that without the staff time the City contributes, that cost would be more.

Councilmember Riley stated that he is impressed that, as proposed, this position would not have a cost to the City.

City Administrator Ulrich explained that it would help the City to have a permanent part-time staff person that can coordinate for programming rather than having a constant rotating cast of interns.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood referenced the inefficiency of using interns. He stated that he would hope that the City would be able to attract someone that would want to work part-time.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the conversation began with the statement that the baseline increase to the budget will be five percent and asked what the increase would be with the staff positions added.

Councilmember Riley replied that the increase with the staff positions would be 7.93 percent.

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed some of the changes that were made to the proposed baseline budget following the last worksession discussion on the budget.

Finance Director Lund noted that the 7.93 percent increase would be the total levy increase for the budget as a whole and confirmed that if the staff positions were removed, the proposed increase would be about five percent. She stated that the 2018 budget increased by 8.54 percent from 2017 whereas this proposed budget would be an increase of 7.93 from the previous year. She reviewed the proposed rate of growth for the community and compared that to the previous year as well.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that staff has addressed the needs of the community as they see and experience and hoped that matched what the Council sees as reasonable requests for staffing as a result of the increased growth and activity the community has experienced. He stated that there is not a clear line for staffing needs for the police department and the requests are a result of planning to meet the needs of the community and respond to the calls for service. He stated that there would be similar needs for the fire and public works departments in order to respond to the calls for the service in the growing community.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau asked for input from the Council on the proposed increase of 7.93 with the positions as proposed.

Councilmember Riley stated that two police officers is too much of an ask.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that everyone made compelling asks of what is needed in order to respond to the needs of the community and maintain the level of service. He stated that he would be inclined to support the request from Police Chief Katers for two officers. He stated that his bigger problem is the baseline five percent increase and would like to see that part of the budget slow down.

Councilmember Johns stated that the baseline budget increase will play into the road financing discussions as the road funding continues to be impacted by the bonding for road improvement.

Finance Director Lund stated that debt service increased by \$119,000, which is over six percent.

Councilmember Riley stated that last year there was a discussion on staffing, noting that hiring additional staff compounds future budget increases.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that while he appreciates that concern, there is also a concern of how to continue to protect the asset that is the community as it continues to grow, and the needs continue to increase.

Councilmember Shryock asked how adding employees will impact future budgets. She stated that she would like to know how that looks in future budgets and what that baseline increase would be each year.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that he would be concerned with what would happen if the additional employees are not added and the impacts to the level of service that the community receives.

Finance Director Lund stated that she includes that information in the five-year plan. She stated that the big item that was included last year was the public works campus, which needs to be discussed outside of the road discussion. She noted that previously that was planned for 2020 but that will now be delayed. She stated that she has the numbers based on the proposed increase of the budget, noting that she used a three percent COLA increase as she would rather plan higher than not plan for enough.

Councilmember Shryock stated that she would support using the proposed increase of 7.93 with staff providing additional information at the next discussion of the impacts of that increase.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that staff could also provide similar information for the five percent increase.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would lean more towards the five percent increase. He noted that the City will have a bubble that comes in a few years, which people may have forgotten about and is concerned with adding five new positions.

Councilmember Johns stated that she would like to see the numbers but would like to try to make reductions. She stated that the discussion starts to become people over projects and balancing those needs.

It was the consensus of the Council to move forward in the next discussion using the proposed 7.93 percent increase and also providing similar projection information for the baseline five percent increase.

### **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 7:00 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.*