

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, November 13, 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  
                          Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher  
                          City Engineer Bruce Westby

**1.     CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:42 p.m.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau welcomed the two newly elected officials Debra Musgrove and Nadine Heinrich who are present tonight and will soon join the Council.

**2.     TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01:   Continued Discussion of 2019-2028 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report.

City Engineer Westby provided background information on the City's water supply, which is currently supplied from groundwater wells and the thought to look into a surface water supply system. He stated that a water treatment plant is currently included in the CIP for groundwater treatment. He stated that the trend across the metro is that as cities across the metro continue to develop, the residents do not like the orange tint that accumulates. He stated that the question would be whether it would be better for the City to treat the water or have the industrial uses treat their own water. He provided background information on the funds available through the Metropolitan Council for a regional surface water treatment system. He stated that this is a planning level study, which would provide more accurate costs and options as well as design alternatives. He stated that Ramsey and the three other cities involved have passed resolutions in support of the study, which will be funded through Clean Water funds that were received by the Metropolitan Council.

City Administrator Ulrich asked and received confirmation that the current water rates include a future water treatment center.

Finance Director Lund provided additional details on the two percent increase that occurs each year to prepare for the treatment center to come on line in the future. She stated that sufficient funds have been budgeted to fund the improvement and the repairs for the lines as long as the cost remain in line with the estimated amounts.

Councilmember Riley stated that there are competing interests as the City is planning for both surface water and ground water. He stated that he has been told that the two types of water do not mix well and therefore believes that the City should choose one direction rather than continue in two directions. He stated that he was against the surface water study and is also against the ground water treatment facility.

City Engineer Westby stated that the surface water study is a planning level document that will inform the City to alternative options for surface water treatment. He stated that the member cities could then use that information and review the anticipated costs, which would be spread among four cities, to provide an accurate cost estimate for the options. He noted again that this is a planning level document that will provide more answers on the topic.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that the aquifer may have limited supply in the future as development continues.

Councilmember Riley stated that his comment is that the groundwater treatment facility included in the CIP is not needed.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that as the population grows, the demand for water increases and the City only has access to one aquifer. He stated that the report will provide additional details on an alternate process and from a planning standpoint makes a lot of sense.

Councilmember Johns stated that this is the first step in a regional approach to this topic.

City Engineer Westby stated that this would also be beneficial, as the City would be looking to add two new wells to the City's water supply system in the next ten years, which would have an additional cost. He stated that the study will provide information on whether there is a more sustainable option before the City continues to invest in wells.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that she was in favor of the study as this will provide data and the Metropolitan Council has no ability to hold the City to moving forward on that element.

Councilmember Riley stated that his point, again, was that the groundwater treatment facility is not needed and should not be included in the CIP.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that he is hoping that the study will provide information that will help the City choose one option, for the time being both options need to remain open.

City Administrator Ulrich asked that the study also include a comparison of groundwater use compared to surface water use, including costs, which will help the City to make the choice on which option would be better for the City moving forward.

Finance Director Lund stated that a two percent increase is included in the water rates and confirmed the consensus of the Council to have that rate increase remain.

Councilmember Johns stated that years ago the City was told by the DNR that additional City wells would not be an option and that is why the other options were being pursued. She stated that could be a reality in the future and therefore the additional options should continue to be discussed.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau asked if there is still a possibility that the DNR could restrict the ability to install additional wells.

City Engineer Westby replied that possibility still exists as the DNR is the permitting agency. He stated that he has not heard that directly from the DNR, but the City has also not asked for another well lately.

Councilmember Shryock stated that if the City continues to put aside the two percent for the water treatment facility, those funds could be used for the installation of wells.

Finance Director Lund confirmed that because these are water funds, they could be used for any water improvement.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that if the City has its own treatment facility, the City would be able to reclaim its water through treatment, rather than losing wastewater to St. Paul.

Finance Director Lund confirmed the consensus to leave the water treatment facility, the community center and the public works campus in the CIP as proposed. She noted that some of the items remain as placeholders at this time and provided additional details on the timing of the public works facility.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that although he does acknowledge the need for a new facility for the public works department, he also realizes the need to prioritize other needs of the City.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he is opposed to the community center because of the low population of the City. He explained that with the aging community that big item would place a large burden on the community and believed that other needs are a higher priority.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau noted that the community center is unfunded.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that the City could not sustain or fund a community center on its own, but leaving the item on would provide an opportunity should a partnership opportunity arise in the future.

Councilmember Johns agreed that the City would be looking for a partner and without a partnership, that facility would not exist.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that the community at large is asking for a community center but there is not a method of funding. He stated that leaving the item on the CIP will keep the opportunity open should a partnership arise in the future. He stated that removing the item from the CIP would send a message to the residents that the Council is not listening to them.

Councilmember Riley stated that too many people want a community center and therefore until additional research and opportunities are explored, the item should not be removed from the CIP.

Councilmember Johns noted that the item has remained on the CIP for over 20 years and continues to be pushed back until the right opportunity arises.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the CIP identifies the public works facility as a higher priority than a community center.

Councilmember Riley stated that the public works facility needs to remain a high priority goal for the short-term. He stated that each time the budget is increased, that makes it more difficult to afford the expense.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau agreed to some degree but explained that the organization is currently struggling to balance the needs of the growing community and the services provided by the City.

Councilmember Riley stated that the Ramsey railroad is listed between 2019 and 2020, with identified funding, and asked if that is accurate and probable.

City Engineer Westby stated that the City is currently working on the Highway 10 Plan to understand which of the improvements should be prioritized and the costs that would be associated. He stated that element is at the top of the priority list and the consultant is working to further flush out the details of that element. He stated that the City needs to ensure that it does not lose the funds that have been designated towards that improvement.

Councilmember Riley stated that his question was relating to whether the timing identified for that improvement is realistic or whether that element should be pushed back a year or two.

City Administrator Ulrich provided additional details and agreed that it would be appropriate to push that project back a year or two because the City has not yet identified the remaining funds that would be needed for that full railroad crossing and interchange project.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that the City continues to identify projects that could be done now to use the funds requested by the legislature.

Councilmember Shryock agreed that the City has made good progress and should continue to push forward. She stated that once Anoka is completed, Ramsey is next in line and therefore the more prepared the City is for that to occur, the more quickly it could be implemented.

Finance Director Lund confirmed the consensus of the Council to leave the timing identified for the Ramsey rail crossing as is.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the public works garage is running out of space and the City has begun to look for space to lease to provide a band-aid approach until the public works campus can be constructed. He identified a possible location that could be leased by Anoka County, and noted that the City will continue to review options for equipment storage.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau reminded the Council that this is simply a planning document that is revisited and reviewed annually.

Finance Director Lund confirmed that this is only a planning document and each project listed within would still need to come before the Council for review and approval.

## **2.02: Budget Work Session – 2019 Personnel Requests**

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley stated that previously he recalled that there was a substantial increase in calls because there had been a change in how the calls were responded to or counted.

Fire Chief Kohner confirmed that there has been an increase in the response to medical calls, which are increasing in frequency. He stated that the call volume alone has increased quite a bit.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that previously the department was only responding to accident medical.

Councilmember Riley asked how the policy was changed.

Fire Chief Kohner explained that the dispatching center is simplifying the three types of calls and provided additional details. He stated that there was also an increase in calls and training that benefits the residents. He stated that from a medical standpoint, patrol officers are not trained for those medical calls and therefore the fire department can do some preparation care until Allina can respond.

Councilmember Johns acknowledged the increase in daytime calls that the department has seen as well.

Fire Chief Kohner agreed that with the increased growth in the community, 60 percent of those calls are occurring during the daytime hours. He stated that the department has not hired a full-time staff member since 2007.

Councilmember Riley stated that two or three of the positions would be hired later in the year, which pushes that increase into the next year and makes the increase this year look artificially lower. He explained that these positions automatically build increases into the budget for the next year. He stated that the City would already be at a one percent increase for the next year with just these new positions, in addition to the increase for existing staff, which equates to a sizeable increase for next year's budget.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau agreed that is correct but noted that another way to think about this is that the recommendation for the staffing changes are based on the needs of the community. He stated that eliminating these staffing positions will impact the level of services provided to the community as well. He stated that he understands the funding impacts but also believed that these requests meet the needs of the growing community.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the City is growing, the population continues to grow, and the City has already fallen behind on the number of police and safety personnel required to keep the community safe. He stated that these are real needs for the community and he supports the personnel requests.

Councilmember Shryock stated that safety is a priority and so she does support those positions. She stated that if reductions were to be made it would need to be done to the in-house staff. She stated that there is not that big of a difference in the long-term impact from the documents that she has seen, but there would be a difference in the level of services provided.

Finance Director Lund provided additional details on the step increases, COLA increases, benefits and additional personnel.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that the costs of these positions are an expense to the City and are real expenses that move forward in future budgets. He stated that when the City continues to grow, that also adds revenue that offset some of those costs. He stated that the role of the Council and City is to attempt to figure out how to maximize the revenue of the City.

Finance Director Lund noted that the five-year projection included the personnel requests but also included the road bonding debt and public works campus.

Councilmember Shryock stated that the Council has chosen to offset 50 percent of the road debt and asked if that would be available the next year.

Finance Director Lund stated that it would be the option of the Council whether to continue to use the PIR fund in the next year, but explained that eventually that fund would draw down.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the tax levy has remained stable. He stated that even though the overall costs are increasing, the tax levy is remaining stable and therefore the City is managing its growth to provide adequate services to its residents.

City Administrator Ulrich clarified that the tax capacity rate has remained stable, even though the levy has increased.

Councilmember Riley stated that he believes that the use of the PIR fund was a good decision this year. He asked if the City has fallen behind in terms of public safety.

Police Chief Katers replied that he has recommended the two additional officers in order to remain equal to the growth. He stated that Ramsey spends the lowest amount in Anoka County on public safety.

Councilmember Riley referenced a local newspaper article that mentioned the Sheriff contract with local cities. He provided the amount that Andover pays to the Sheriff for their services and stated that he would like to know why it costs more for the City to have its own police department rather than to contract through the County.

Police Chief Katers stated that all taxpayers in the County pay for the Sheriff's Office. He stated that Ramsey is only paying taxes for the Ramsey Police Department. He stated that the Sheriff's Office contracts have increased over the years for Andover because of requests for dedicated services.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that Ramsey has a different set of standards than Andover.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that the Council could revisit that topic at a future meeting.

The consensus of the Council was to continue to move the personnel requests forward as discussed.

Councilmember Shryock stated that it just makes her nervous that the street debt and personnel costs will continue to increase the budget in future years.

Acting Mayor LeTourneau stated that the Council has not committed to all road improvements and decisions can be made in the future on that topic. He noted that additional discussion on choices could be had at future meetings.

### **2.03: Review Administration of Enforcement of City Code Violations**

It was the consensus of the Council to postpone this discussion.

## **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 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kurtis G. Ulrich  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

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Katie M. Schmidt  
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*