

**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 11, 2019, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor John LeTourneau  
Councilmember Nadine Heinrich  
Councilmember Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember Debra Musgrove  
Councilmember Chris Riley

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Finance Director Diana Lund  
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  
City Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Review Community Development – Planning Division Staffing Plan: Phased Retirement Plan and Code Enforcement Management**

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he understands the request for a phased retirement but asked if the request would be to hire an additional staff person to fill that gap.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that in 2020 the Community Development Assistant would begin phased retirement from 40 hours per week to 16 hours per week. He noted that a Planning Technician would be hired. He noted that staff would attempt to make the request budget neutral.

Councilmember Riley asked the preference of staff.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that staff would recommend allowing the phased retirement and hiring a Planning Technician.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for clarification on whether the request would be for a Planning Technician or Senior Code Enforcement Officer.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that staff has been focused on the Planning Technician but also wanted to provide another option to consider, which would be the Senior Code Enforcement Officer.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she likes the idea of a senior level staff as that would provide the current staff more direction. She asked if this would become effective in 2020 or in 2019.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that this is a 2020 budget request.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the 14-day timeframe should be reconsidered as that puts more pressure on staff for code enforcement. She stated that perhaps code enforcement should continue in the winter months as well.

Community Development Director Gladhill agreed that it is an issue of resources. He stated that there are some cases where not much could be done during winter, but other cases could make progress during the winter months.

Councilmember Heinrich asked the overlap in terms of positions, comparing the full-time Planning Technician to the 16 hours per week of the current Community Development Assistant.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that the primary overlap would be land use applications and preparation for Planning Commission meetings. He noted that the Community Development Assistant also provides backup to building and another area, but the primary shared knowledge would be in terms of land use and planning cases.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would support the phased retirement and would prefer the Planning Technician.

Mayor LeTourneau asked why one would be selected over another in terms of an entry level position compared to a senior staff level.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that a senior staff level will tend to bring a more cooperative aspect to code enforcement while entry level would provide a more cut and dry process.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he is confident that existing staff would be able to provide assistance to bring an entry level person up to speed.

Mayor LeTourneau acknowledged that the code enforcement cases are becoming more complex and therefore some basic knowledge in the process would be helpful.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that in his opinion there would be less opportunity for turnover with a senior level position as well.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that Community Development Director Gladhill is managing the bulk of his department and is becoming a target for negative input from some residents, which can lead to turnover.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would support a senior level staff. She stated that City staff time is spent bringing a new employee up to speed and if that position turns over, you are then spending those resources again with another new employee. She believed that a senior level staff person would bring additional benefits that could help offset the burden on existing planning staff.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she would support the Planning Technician, as there would be support from the phased retirement employee and other employees.

Mayor LeTourneau asked if there are elements of the overlap that Councilmember Heinrich would find effective or ineffective.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that it seems that the overlap would provide support for those elements and could increase the willingness for that position to stay at a more entry level position because of opportunities that could arise in the future.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed the consensus of the Council to support the phased retirement and direction for the Planning Technician.

## **2.02: Local Road Funding**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley asked if the League of Minnesota Cities would have helpful information on this topic.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that he has never seen that organization research projects on road funding policy and therefore the University of Minnesota would be more appropriate.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that one of his main concerns is that the five-year bonding is ending, and the City is using excess funds for this year's projects. He noted that if the study is completed, that would add an additional year without funding. He asked the stance of the Charter Commission, if the City were to move forward with the franchise fees. He noted that he would like to see this move forward.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the Charter Commission would bring forward a petition or could bring forward a Charter amendment. He stated that in staff discussion it was noted that franchise fees would not be built up for 2020 projects and therefore other funds would be used for projects that year. He provided additional background information on a previous attempt to craft an ordinance for franchise fees.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that if a process is being followed, the City has extensively engaged residents in discover and discussion and it would be prudent to take the next step. He stated that as they continue to go through the process, people can then weigh in on the way the work is being done. He believed that the next step should be taken to draft an ordinance, which the Council can then review to make sure the needs are being addressed as tightly as possible.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if there is a cost for the research project from the University of Minnesota.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that past projects have had a cost of about \$5,000 and estimated that this would be similar. He stated that the Charter states that the City must contribute \$1,500 to support the Charter Commission and therefore that is the available balance. He stated that additional funds would require the approval of the Council, unless direction is given from the Council to support that research.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the City already spent funds with WSB to get to this step in the process and answer questions. He believed that effort to be sufficient.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that element answered internal questions that the City had in regard to funding road improvements. He noted that the City did not ask WSB to go outside of Minnesota in their research, while the Charter Commission would like more exhaustive work done on franchise fees and what is done in other cold weather states.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he believes that would be a waste of funds and is simply a stall tactic.

Councilmember Riley stated that it would be helpful to work together with the Charter Commission, to ensure that they have all the information the Council has received. He stated that beyond the Charter Commission, residents would have a lot of similar questions and therefore the study would not be a bad thing.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for additional input on the financial information included in the packet.

Finance Director Lund provided additional clarification.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that it does not appear that the franchise fee would be sufficient to fund road improvement.

City Engineer Westby explained that the five dollars per utility franchise fee would be the starting point that would get the City going and started down the road to see how it works and how that equates to road improvements. He stated that if the City starts too high, the odds of starting a successful franchise fee process would decrease. He noted that other cities have found that there is a reduction in other costs because of the elimination of the assessment process that they have been able to maintain on the franchise fee level.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that this would get the City through the five-year trial basis to provide more information.

Councilmember Riley stated that he is not interested in saying the City will start at five dollars per utility and then increase in the future if needed. He stated that he would rather start at the right number to begin with. He attempted to clarify that the options today in order to eliminate the assessment option would either be to use franchise fees or raise property taxes by 6.46 percent.

Councilmember Kuzma noted that the increase could be higher, depending on the details of the 2020 budget. He stated that franchise fees would be a cost of \$120 per year. He noted that his concern would be the financial burden that a large assessment could put on a younger lower income family. He stated that given the two choices he would pick franchise fees.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that it seems that the Charter Commission has asked for additional research to be done, which the Council can entertain or not. She stated that if that request is approved, that could help to answer questions. She stated that she feels there is an importance to pursue what Commissions may feel would bring them clarity. She stated that she also sees value in that the Council is elected to make tough decisions, and this is one of those decisions. She agreed that the process should continue to move forward.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would be ready to move forward to draft an ordinance that would dedicate the franchise fees to only road funding. He noted that franchise fees would be used specifically for road financing. He stated that he would like to see a more specific number, rather than a generic five-dollar figure, which also takes into account the rebating for those that have paid assessments.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would also support drafting an ordinance. He stated that he is not supportive of funding another study.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that staff would prepare a draft ordinance which will come forward at a future worksession. He also confirmed the consensus that the Council would support the study from the University of Minnesota, as requested by the Charter Commission, contingent upon the cost.

### **2.03: Review 2018 Comprehensive Annual Financial Report (CAFR), Management Report and Special Purpose Audit Reports**

Finance Director Lund introduced Aaron Nielsen of MMKR.

Aaron Nielsen, MMKR, reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if this would help the City with its bond rating.

Finance Director Lund stated that the City meets its fund balance requirements and does not have an excess of debt which play into the bond rating.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that this is a lot of financial information and thanked staff. She stated that she is looking forward to the budgeting process for 2020.

#### **2.04: Begin 2020 Budget Discussions**

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the main point of the case was to introduce the budget calendar.

Councilmember Riley stated that he likes the priority questions but stated that four of the nine priorities show that they should be done in 2019 and therefore was not sure why those were included in the 2020 budget.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that if the items have been completed, they would not be a part of the 2020 discussion.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that some items are ongoing and items that have an ending date in 2019 will not continue in future discussions.

### **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 6:52 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.*