

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, July 9, 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
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby
Communications and Events Coordinator Megan Thorstad

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:40 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: 2020 Preliminary Budget/Levy Discussion

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the purpose of the preliminary budget and levy discussion tonight. He also provided details on the future worksessions that will take place on the topic.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that it appears, as proposed there would be a 5.09 percent increase.

Finance Director Lund noted that would be the increase for the general fund and not the overall levy, which also includes the EDA and debt levies. She stated that the overall increase to the levy is proposed at this point to be 8.56 percent.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if road financing is included in the figures as well.

Finance Director Lund noted that road debt has not yet been included.

Councilmember Heinrich asked for details on the police equipment purchase proposed.

The Police Chief believed that cost would be for about ten rifles. He noted that the current rifles are about ten years old and have been regularly maintained but there is a cycle where replacement becomes a better option than the cost of continued maintenance. He noted that the purchase price also includes the additional equipment such as slings and optics.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that the growth of Ramsey is an important part of the discussion.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that staff will review the priorities identified in the survey results from the previous Council worksession to compare those to the related budget items. He noted that specific topics will be brought back to the Council during future worksessions for further discussion.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would like to see a scenario with the road funding added as an option, in the case that franchise fees are not implemented. He stated that they need to start reviewing the options in reality.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she would also like to see the scenario that continues with the road funding method that utilizes assessments. She asked if each department will review the flexible budget items to determine where costs could be cut.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that he will be reviewing those items with the different department heads.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would like to see the non-discretionary amount that has been locked in through previous contracts. He agreed that he would like to see the different road funding scenarios and the funding decisions that would be locked in with a future public works facility.

Mayor LeTourneau agreed that he would like to see the obligations but would also like to see the increase in property values/tax capacity and how those figures are linked.

2.02: Continue Discussion on Outsourcing Ramsey Resident Newsletter

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma referenced the ad revenue, which is being split between the agent and the City. He asked if the revenue would be solely kept by Prime.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad confirmed that Prime would keep the revenue generated by ads. She noted that the ad revenue received by the City was included in the current costs. She noted that after writing the case, she was able to negotiate the ad sales with Prime from 38 percent to 30 percent.

Councilmember Kuzma asked for details on keeping the newsletter inhouse.

Communications and Events Coordinator stated that when she speaks of keeping it inhouse that would be related to design and the layout of the newsletter. She confirmed that even if outsourced, staff would still be responsible for generating content.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he believes that outsourcing the design would be efficient. He believed that the best option would be for staff to provide the content and outsource everything else.

Mayor LeTourneau asked the contract length.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad replied that Prime would have a three-year contract, but the contract could be canceled at any time with a 90-day notice.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she has given this topic a lot of thought since the last discussion and appreciated the additional work that staff has done. She asked for pricing information if the newsletter was reduced to 16 pages.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad stated that the City bid out for the current newsletter but noted that in attempting to improve the process the City has identified a cost-savings that could be gained by reducing to 16 pages. She stated that she did not ask for additional bids as they had already received bids from the vendors at 24 pages.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she prefers a 16-page option and would support outsourcing because of the burden on staff time.

Administrative Services Director Lasher provided clarification on the amount of staff time calculated in the case, which would be 184 hours annually and equates to about three hours per week.

Councilmember Musgrove referenced the dollar amount shown for the 16-page inhouse option and asked if that would be the cost for one issue and whether the cost for Prime would be the cost for the remaining issues.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad noted that those figures are annual costs.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that it appeared that previously the cost for inhouse was higher than outsourcing but noted that in this case it appears the opposite is true.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad provided additional explanation.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that perhaps the lesser quality paper should be chosen. She noted that more money is being spent on higher quality paper and some people are simply choosing to recycle the newsletter regardless of the type of paper, therefore she would want to

see an option within the three-year contract to downgrade the type of paper if desired. She noted that she would support outsourcing.

Mayor LeTourneau confirmed the consensus of the Council to support outsourcing the newsletter. He stated that future discussion could occur on the number of pages and type of paper.

Councilmember Kuzma reviewed some of the benefits of using the higher quality paper.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she is not bothered by the lower quality paper and could support either option.

Councilmember Riley asked if there could be an option for residents to opt out.

Councilmember Kuzma noted that would not be an option for every door direct delivery.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad stated that it would take more time and effort and there would be higher postage to develop a specific list for the post office compared to every door direct.

Councilmember Riley noted that the proposal includes decreasing the number of issues from six annually to four, even though this has been noted as the number one source of resident information.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad noted that there would be one community guide and one recycler, in addition to the four newsletters, for a total of six publications annually.

2.03: Discuss Police Department Staffing

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Mayor LeTourneau asked the interest of the Council in moving forward with the hire as scheduled.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would like to hear from the Police Chief in regard to need based on the activities of the past three to six months.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would not be opposed to delaying the hire to 2020.

Councilmember Riley agreed with delaying the hire to 2020. He noted that it does not appear that Police Chief Katers has a request for the 2020 budget.

Police Chief Katers confirmed that he does not anticipate a need to request additional staff in 2020, outside of the requests that were approved in 2019, which included this position.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if the staffing request is based on current population or forecasted population.

Police Chief Katers replied that the staffing is based on the population figures provided by Community Development and the Metropolitan Council. He stated that this year thus far there has been an increase of 461 calls for service. He noted that is typical as there is an increase in calls for service when the population increases.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she thought this was an approved position in the 2019 budget and therefore wondered why this was being brought up for discussion.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that because of the length of time for hiring and complexity, it is a courtesy to know now whether the hire would be approved rather than going through the hiring process and then having the Council not fully support the hire.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that this discussion was because of turnover in the Council and the lengthy hiring process. He reviewed the different timelines, whether the hiring process begins now or begins with a goal of a 2020 start.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would support this hire as fire, safety, and roads are the main community priorities. She stated that she does not have a preference on whether the hire occurs now or in 2020.

The consensus of the Council was to delay the hire to 2020.

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,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.