

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, September 10, 2019, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor John LeTourneau
Councilmember Nadine Heinrich (arrived at 5:37 p.m.)
Councilmember Mark Kuzma
Councilmember Jeff Menth
Councilmember Debra Musgrove
Councilmember Chris Riley

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
City Clerk Jo Ann Thieling
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby
City Attorney Joe Langel

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Continued Discussion of 2020 Budget/Levy

City Administrator Ulrich stated that he and Finance Director Lund worked with the department heads in order to reduce the budget to reach the six percent levy amount directed by the Council at the last worksession. He noted that this would be the preliminary levy and additional reductions could be made if desired prior to final adoption.

Councilmember Heinrich arrived.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Musgrove referenced the contingency line item and asked for clarification, noting a \$10,000 increase and decrease.

Finance Director Lund replied that the added \$10,000 was related to the presidential election, but the overall \$25,000 contingency was then reduced by \$10,000.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for clarification on the asphalt line item for park trail maintenance.

Finance Director Lund provided additional explanation noting that the expenditure was better offset by the revenue source and provided additional information on the capital maintenance fund.

Councilmember Riley asked the source of the firetruck funding.

Finance Director Lund replied that the first half would be funded by the equipment fund and funding for the second half would still need to be discussed.

Councilmember Riley asked if there are large equipment replacements in years two and three.

Finance Director Lund believed that plow trucks would be included in those years. She commented that the firetruck expenditure is not currently slated to impact the levy.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that if the truck replacement is pushed out there would no doubt be additional maintenance required as the truck is past the recommended lifecycle and the mechanic has recommended replacement. He noted that if the purchase is delayed, the cost would increase, and the revenue gained from the sale would decrease based on the age of the vehicle.

Mayor LeTourneau summarized that six percent will move forward as the preliminary levy increase amount. He noted that once the preliminary amount is adopted, the Council and staff can continue to have discussions related to possible decreases.

Councilmember Riley asked that Finance Director Lund review the items that the City was already committed to in the budget when she makes the presentation, noting that many of the increases were already built in due to obligations.

Councilmember Kuzma commended the hard work of staff to lower the budget to the directed six percent.

2.02: Recreation Program Policy Plan

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that when looking through the case, it sounds like this employee will be hired and will then provide a financial analysis to justify her job rather than completing that process ahead of time.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood explained that staff hopes to have the new employee work to reinstate programs that did not have action when the position was denied on August 12. He stated that staff put a hold on all park programming outside of the City movie night and therefore the new employee would reimplement programs for the remainder of 2019. He explained that the second phase would be to conduct a more thorough review of the recreation programming, with input from the Park and Recreation Commission and City Council. He noted that staff has received input on the classes and offerings in order to evaluate the programming.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would like to see additional information in the survey asking the priority residents give to parks and recreation compared to other City priorities such as roads, public works, or public safety. She commented that people using the programs are more likely to provide positive comments compared to residents that do not participate in the park programs. She referenced the cost element provided in the case and asked for clarification.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that those questions were asked as part of the survey completed with the Resilient Communities process and within the resident survey. He provided additional information on the cost table provided in the case, which includes the cost for the instructors of the programs and breaks that down to the cost per participant.

Councilmember Heinrich asked the programs referred to earlier that were budgeted for 2019 that had been put on hold.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that no new programming was added to finish the year. He explained that there was a long list of possibilities, but staff did not pursue those opportunities. He stated that one of the primary goals of recreational programming is to partner with an entity that has recreation programs to introduce and promote those programs to residents.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that it seems that most of the recreational programming occurs during the summer months and asked if the City has reviewed the option of a seasonal employee.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that specific option was not reviewed but that would follow the intern model, where someone is brought on for that season. He noted that a lot of the programming occurs outside of the summer months and a lot of the work for recreational programming needs to happen months in advance, using the examples of the Art Fest and the summer concert series.

Councilmember Musgrove referenced the area recreational analysis summary from 2015 and asked if that is the most current edition. She asked if that information is regularly reviewed with the Planning Commission.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that was simply an example of a survey that has been done, noting the most current survey would have been part of the Resilient Communities process.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that her question related to the survey of recreational programs available in neighboring communities or other local entities. She asked how often that information is updated in order to capture the available recreation programs.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that he has not updated that information since 2013. He stated that data was the result of the entire season of one intern and therefore he does not plan to update that information.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that data provides a general sense of the programming available in the community and how the City makes decisions when offering different programs.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he is in support of recreational programming as there are many young families in the community that take advantage, noting that the senior population also enjoys the offerings.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that he is fond of the idea that the Council has been able to have a conversation and look at the work plan, noting that the new employee will put together a more comprehensive review in order to make future decisions on programming.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that the person in this position would be a public employee and would not qualify to be a seasonal employee.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if the position could be qualified as an intern position.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that the number of days would be the trigger for the union contracts. She explained that if an employee works less than 14 hours per week they would not be qualified as a public employee but did not believe that would be a sufficient amount of time for the work required by this position.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if this position is based on the current offerings for recreation and not the assumption that perhaps the recreation programs would be reduced in the future.

Administrative Services Director Lasher noted that her office is near the employee, and the employee was functioning at high speed and busy for their 20 hours per week.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that while that may be an outcome of future discussion, the reverse must also be considered where the City could offer more recreational programs.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that her comments are related to the input she has received from residents that would like the recreational budget reduced with a higher focus on road and public safety.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that he has also received comments in support of the programming and a request for additional programs.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for input on the rollout on the online programs and park registration process.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that the work of the employee is program development, program management, auditing, and resident interaction with only a small portion of the time spent on reservations. He noted that this position will also be a backup to the public works administrative assistant.

2.03: Discussion Regarding Processes and Procedures for Council Meetings

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the meetings are also recorded and therefore verbatim information is available on the recordings.

Administrative Services Director Lasher confirmed that QCTV must keep the videos posted for three years by State Statute and the City keeps those DVD's on file for a longer period.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she would like clarity on whether the recreation specialist position is going to remain on the consent agenda for tonight's meeting and asked for that discussion to occur prior to the minutes.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the items on the consent agenda are items that have had previous discussion at a work session or are administrative/clerical issues that are not expected to have debate. He noted that any item could be proposed to be removed from the consent agenda at the regular Council meeting, should a member wish to vote against the item. He stated that staff has also amended the agenda prior to a regular meeting in order to move an item from the consent agenda to the regular agenda at the direction of a Councilmember, but noted that does require additional staff time. He stated that a deadline was previously discussed to be set as noon the Friday before the Council meeting for members to alert staff to items they may have concern with on the consent agenda, which would allow time for staff to amend the agenda and repost.

Councilmember Heinrich agreed that seems to be a fair timeline. She stated that she was surprised to see the recreation specialist position on the consent agenda, as even though there was previous worksession discussion, there was not a clear consensus.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that it has been the practice of the Council for a Councilmember to alert staff, even in the work session prior to the regular meeting to an item they would like moved to the regular agenda. He stated that the benefit of having the change made the Friday before the regular meeting is that the change would be made public for the residents to see.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she would like the recreation specialist position moved from the consent agenda to the regular agenda.

Councilmember Riley stated that the request to have changes submitted by noon the Friday prior to the Council meeting is a good practice that the Council can strive for but acknowledged that

changes could still be made prior to the regular meeting to move an item from consent to the regular agenda.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that requests could be received after that deadline; it simply would not be reflected on the agenda.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that other groups that she is a part of distributes their minutes earlier, which allows quicker review by the members. She asked if the minutes could be distributed earlier for the Council meetings.

City Clerk Thieling stated that staff receives the minutes the morning following the meeting, but the practice of staff has been to distribute the minutes with the next meeting packet. She noted that should staff agree the minutes could be distributed earlier for review purposes.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that it is nice to know about technical changes, which can be checked and implemented, but for staff to rewrite the narrative is difficult and unworkable.

Councilmember Heinrich appreciated that while that can be difficult, if the summary does not summarize a portion of the meeting, she would have concerns. She provided an example of a recent meeting where she did not feel the summary captured the dialogue. She stated that overall the summary minutes have been fine but there have been a few things that have not been to her liking as she did not feel the complete picture was captured.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that minutes can be changed and if there is a change to the summary narrative, that change would be brought forward to the full Council for discussion.

City Attorney Langel stated that State law does not provide much guidance in terms of what must be included in the minutes. He stated that beyond the basic requirements, it is up to the City as to the level of detail that must be included. He stated that from his experience the level of detail is as much, if not more than, other cities. He explained that if too much detail is provided in the "he said/she said" you reach more of a transcript level. He cautioned against getting overly detailed in the minutes, noting that someone wanting additional detail can watch the video. He explained that the more detail that is put into minutes, the more people deny what/how was said and the character of the discussion. He stated that the current level of minutes is fine, and he would not recommend additional detail. He stated that the City Code contains a provision that states any Councilmember has the right to express dissent of any action, using the example of a Councilmember stating, I would like the minutes to show I am opposed to this action for the following reasons.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he would be opposed to increasing the level of detail and cost to the minutes, noting that someone wanting additional detail can review the tapes.

Councilmember Riley asked to move to the public input portion of the case. He read language from the Charter that states the Council shall not place restrictions on citizen comments and questions. He stated that if people are at a meeting to talk, they should be allowed to talk and asked for input from the Council.

City Attorney Langel explained that statement applies to the open forum portion of the meeting. He noted that the comment is inconsistent with the remainder of the language in that section. He stated that each City allows residents to comment in open forum for things not on the agenda. He stated that there is no regulation on the comments related to items on the agenda and that is an issue the City Council would have to discuss and resolve. He noted that this is an area of the Charter that could use clarification.

Councilmember Riley stated that it would not make sense to preclude people from making comments on the cases that are being discussed as that voids the purpose of having an open meeting.

City Attorney Langel stated that he has seen instances where Councils have allowed or disallowed public comments, depending on the agenda item.

City Administrator Ulrich asked for information related to time limits for public comments.

City Attorney Langel stated that almost every city has a three to five-minute limitation on public comment and a request not to duplicate previously provided comments as a method of efficiency.

Councilmember Riley stated that if the City has to develop its own rule, he would propose that citizens in the audience that would like to address the Council on an agenda item would be allowed to speak. He noted that if the Charter needs to be amended to incorporate that statement, he would suggest that be made.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if the comment card currently specifies that a resident cannot speak at open forum on an item related to a regular agenda item. That was confirmed. She requested that those cards be pulled to remove that language, as she believes it conflicts with the Charter.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if a recommendation made to the Charter Commission to amend the Charter would need to come back before the Council and require a 7-0 vote.

City Attorney Langel stated that he would need to review the Charter language. He stated that currently the two groups are working together to cleanup language in the Charter. He noted that this may be an instance that requires unanimous approval.

Councilmember Menth stated that it does not appear that any decision has been made to pull cards and change language as additional discussion will be needed.

Mayor LeTourneau agreed that this item should come forward at a future worksession for further discussion.

Councilmember Riley stated that he was unsure why much more discussion would be needed to allow residents to provide public input at meetings. He stated that if the direction is going to be to follow the Charter and only allow discussion during open forum, then the comment card

should reflect that, but if the direction is to allow residents to speak during agenda items, the card should reflect that as well.

Mayor LeTourneau asked if this discussion is related to a previous Council meeting where residents were not allowed to speak. It was confirmed. He stated that there may be direction to limit or put reasonable restrictions on comments based on the agenda item. He explained that he was not prohibiting input but asking residents to write their comments down on the cards as their input would not inform the case. He explained that the case was meant to declare a public meeting where input would then be allowed. He stated therefore resident input would not inform the decision of the Council as to whether a public meeting should be held on the topic. He noted that written comments were still allowed. He stated that there are mechanisms in place in which the Council could have overridden his statement during that meeting. He stated that was not done at the meeting.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she made an attempt to make a motion to open the public hearing. She stated that perhaps City staff could have provided the correct language for her to use.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that in order to hold a public hearing, notice would be required to be published prior to the meeting.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that perhaps she used the wrong language.

City Clerk Thieling stated that from what she understood, the action of the case was to place the item on the next agenda, which would be a public hearing.

Mayor LeTourneau confirmed that to be true. He noted that this item will need to come back at a future meeting because of the lack of time.

2.04: Discuss Council Committee Appointments for Alternates Acting as Members

No discussion for lack of time.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

None.

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.