

**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 24, 2019, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
City Clerk Jo Ann Thieling
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Discussion with Metro Cities (The Association of Metropolitan Municipalities)

City Administrator Ulrich introduced the Executive Director of Metro Cities and reviewed the staff report.

Patricia Nauman, Executive Director of Metro Cities, provided background information on the organization which exists within the seven-county metro area. She stated that membership is very diverse from small cities to large cities and developed cities as well as undeveloped cities. She stated that the organization represents its member cities at the legislation as well as the Metropolitan Council. She noted that the organization acts as a watchdog of the Metropolitan Council on behalf of its members. She stated that at the legislative level the organization works on issues of its member cities, using examples of fiscal disparities, local government aid (LGA), economic development funding, transportation, levy limits, and local control and authority. She stated that Metro Cities also provides an online newsletter, published on average once a week, and also provides legislative alerts. She stated that the organization works with a variety of organizations on salary surveys and license and permit fee surveys. She stated that while the organization typically lobbies on behalf of the consensus of its member cities, it can also help

singular member cities navigate their own work at the capital. She provided information on the number of staff people and the Metro Cities Board. She stated that the Builders Association of the Twin Cities has issued two papers that have been very critical of city development and permit fees and the Metro Cities has been working to respond to the papers and initiatives of that organization. She stated that Metro Cities has argued that the data used by the Builders Association is very dated and does not accurately represent the current building climate. She provided additional information on the topic. She noted that Metro Cities has asked its member cities to communicate with their legislators on this topic. She thanked Ramsey for its membership.

Councilmember Heinrich asked for information about affiliate membership.

Ms. Nauman replied that to qualify for affiliate members, you would be a city that straddles the seven-county metro area. She noted that those cities do not have voting abilities but are provided with the same information.

Mayor LeTourneau explained that the Council is currently going through a process to educate the new Councilmembers on the organizations that the City partners with as well as evaluate the partnerships to ensure that the City continues to partner with entities that provide value to the City.

Councilmember Musgrove asked the top four cities that receive LGA.

Ms. Nauman replied that she could supply that information to the Council upon further research. She noted that while the program has been around for decades, it has been revamped along the way. She noted that 69 percent of those funds go to cities outside the metro area.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that the work that Ramsey would appreciate is how the City could possibly change the legislation related to the policy to become a recipient of LGA.

Ms. Nauman confirmed that continues to be at the front of her mind. She stated that while formula changes in 2013 added Ramsey as a recipient of LGA, the City fell off again after that. She stated that Metro Cities continues to strive for a more consistent formula for LGA that would allow Ramsey to benefit.

Councilmember Menth asked the criteria for receiving LGA.

Ms. Nauman reviewed the different formula factors which include need factors and tax capacity. She noted that when Ramsey began to grow, that seemed to outweigh the need factors which include age of housing and infrastructure.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that Ramsey has been lumped together with other third ring suburbs, although those suburbs are wealthier than Ramsey.

Ms. Nauman stated that legislators are starting to take note of this and pay more attention. She noted that Ramsey definitely stands out on this issue for her.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that perhaps it would be helpful for one of Ramsey's members to participate on the Board, or in another way, to help provide a voice for the community.

2.02: Fire Department Joint Powers Agreement Update

City Administrator Ulrich provided background information on the topic.

Fire Chief Kohner reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma asked how much of the equipment and staff are at the Nowthen station.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that this is not a common JPA. He explained that Nowthen purchased all their own equipment and own their facility. He stated that Nowthen is also fully staffed with personnel and officers. He noted that the firefighters that respond to the Nowthen station are employees of Ramsey, but the way the contract is written, Nowthen would be able to retain those members as they are residents of Nowthen.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for more information on the division of firefighters, specifically whether members would need to live in the city, for example Ramsey firefighters would need to live within Ramsey and Nowthen firefighters would need to live in Nowthen.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that would be correct, noting that membership would be based on geographic location. He explained that it would not make sense for members to respond to a further location. He stated that Nowthen would be in a good position as they own their facility and equipment and could then start to provide service on their own. He noted that there are many other cities with similar, or less population that provide their own fire service. He stated that Nowthen could also join a different neighboring community.

Councilmember Heinrich asked for additional explanation on the deficit that Ramsey has operated on for the last several years.

Fire Chief Kohner provided additional details on the cost allocation formula that was developed and includes the average number of fire calls for each community over the past five years, the population, and the market value which provides a percentage. He stated that puts Nowthen at 16.9 percent. He noted that additionally Ramsey provides Fire Chief services, which provides operation and administration services; Fire Technician, which provides payroll services; mandated national reporting; and training, noting that Nowthen has never paid for training. He noted that after the addition of those services, the cost to Nowthen raised from \$6,416 to \$40,000. He explained that as he continued to review, he determined additional costs such as human resources services which are currently not covered under the current JPA and is not the best use of staff time. He stated that they must also consider whether the JPA works from an operational standpoint which he does not believe it does.

Councilmember Kuzma asked for additional information on coverage.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that there would be no loss in coverage as Nowthen currently does not come into Ramsey unless there is a structure fire. He stated that if they enter into a mutual aid agreement, the response would be the same but there would be no additional charge.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that is one of the biggest misperceptions as the JPA was sold on the fact that Nowthen would service the northern boundary, but Ramsey can respond more quickly than Nowthen. He stated that the theory made sense but in practice it has not proven true.

Councilmember Riley asked if this would require Ramsey to build a third fire station.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that would not be needed at this time, noting that perhaps in 20 or 30 years, based on growth something may need to be considered.

Councilmember Riley asked if something has changed in the past 12 years that makes the JPA not make sense.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the cities have gone in two different directions as Ramsey continues to grow and build while Nowthen has not, therefore there is a disparity between the needs of the communities.

Councilmember Menth asked what would happen to Nowthen if Ramsey severs these ties.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that those are elements that would need to be worked through, but those would be the decision of Nowthen on how to provide service; whether it would utilize its own City staff for administrative services or whether it would choose to find a better fitting JPA with another community.

Councilmember Musgrove acknowledged the work that Fire Chief Kohner has put into this topic. She stated that he determined a formula to review with the Board, noting that it is easy to look at the numbers and determine that this is not working for Ramsey, but they also reviewed this from a personnel and operational standpoint as well. She asked Fire Chief Kohner to provide additional input on the operational challenges.

Fire Chief Kohner explained that there are essentially two different departments and it becomes difficult to manage time between two funding sources, two budgets, and two cities. He stated that although the cost allocation formula equated to 16.9 percent, he is spending more than 16.9 percent of his time on Nowthen related issues.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for information on the contract's two-year timeframe.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the contract provides language which states at any time, either party can provide a two-year notice to cancel the contract. He noted that would make sense for departments that need to split equipment, but he would hope that the split would not take that long. He stated that his concern would be that if Nowthen does not have a plan on how to move forward, that would cause uneasiness for the firefighters at station three. He stated that he would

want to make sure that stations one and two remain positive and that morale would not be impacted.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that two years is an obligational cap and therefore that clock should be started in order to negotiate a mutual agreement and provided additional details. He stated that the City would have the ability to negotiate actual costs for 2020 and 2021.

Mayor LeTourneau asked if direction is needed from the Council.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the intent would be to bring this back to the next regular Council meeting to begin the two-year clock, noting that meeting would fall prior to the next Fire Board meeting. He stated that Ramsey would want to make this a smooth transition for both cities. He stated that when the JPA began, Nowthen had almost nothing and now has a facility, equipment, and trained personnel. Therefore, this would be a good time for them to move on.

Mayor LeTourneau asked for input from the Councilmembers that serve on the Fire Board.

Councilmember Heinrich echoed the comments that Fire Chief Kohner spent a lot of time and energy on this to determine the benefit each city receives from the JPA. She noted that Nowthen also wanted to pay their fair share, which led to the cost allocation formula. She stated that the taxpayers in Ramsey are paying too much to fund Nowthen's fire service. She explained that operationally this is very taxing on Fire Chief Kohner and therefore she would support the break between the two cities.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that it came down to the operational input from Fire Chief Kohner and therefore she also supports the dissolution of the JPA.

Councilmember Riley asked, and received confirmation, that the Fire Chief would still want to dissolve the JPA even if the cost allocation was adjusted. He noted that he would then support the action but would want to ensure that Ramsey fulfills its obligation true to the contract. He stated that Nowthen has been a good partner and would want Ramsey to act honorably.

Mayor LeTourneau agreed with those comments, noting that Nowthen has been a great partner. He thanked Councilmembers Heinrich and Musgrove for their input and contribution to this process. He hoped that as the City continues to honor the two-year agreement, he would hope that there could be an expedited exit if amenable. He stated that he would hope a new cost structure could be determined for the next two years.

2.03: Discuss Council Committee Appointments for Alternates Acting as Members

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the Quad Cities Cable Communication Commission (QCCCC) appointment is typically filled by staff.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that typically a Chief Administrator and elected official serve on that Commission. He noted that prior to Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad, Ramsey has filled that second seat with a Councilmember. He noted that the other cities tend to be represented by their City Administrator and a City Councilmember. He stated that Ramsey was the first city to have two staff members in representation. He explained that it is very much a policy board and therefore Communication and Events Coordinator Thorstad has asked to step away from that position.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she appreciates the opportunity to serve on the Lower Rum River Water Management Organization (LRRWMO), as it has increased her knowledge and awareness, and would not like to change that appointment. She stated that she has also appreciated her time serving on the Environmental Policy Board as an alternate. She noted that in her opinion, the EPB is duplicative of services provided by other entities such as the LRRWMO and Anoka Conservation District and hoped that the Council could have discussions on that topic in the future. She referenced language in the Charter which states that Committees can have nine members and noted that she does not believe that all Committees have nine members.

City Clerk Thieling noted that the Charter Commission has nine members but believed the other Commissions and Board to have seven member positions available.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that if the EPB were dissolved, perhaps those members could join other Boards or Commissions.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if Councilmember Musgrove would like to remain on the EPB as the acting member.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that it is difficult to stay on that many Committees. She again commented that the EPB seems duplicative to the LRRWMO and services provided by the Anoka Conservation District. She noted that there also seems to be duplicative to discussions of the Public Works Committee. She stated that she is not a voting member of the EPB and noted that there are other appointments where the Councilmember is also not a voting member.

Mayor LeTourneau agreed that these points are important and perhaps those topics could be discussed at another worksession. He suggested that the focus tonight remain on seating the current vacancies. He noted that staff could provide a more comprehensive review in the future.

Councilmember Musgrove confirmed that she would be willing to remain as an alternate for the EPB.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she would be willing to remain as an alternate for the Public Works Committee.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that there would be a similar discussion on appointments in November and possibly January following elections.

Councilmember Menth asked if only vacancies are up for discussion or if other positions are available for discussion. He stated that he would be interested in the Highway 10 Committee and Public Works Committee based on his previous discussion.

Mayor LeTourneau agreed that the Public Works Committee appointment would be open, and Councilmember Menth could fill that vacancy.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she would not be willing to give up her position on the Highway 10 Committee as that is something she is passionate about. She stated that her schedule has changed and therefore has some conflicts with her appointment to the Joint Law Enforcement Council and Youth First Board. She noted that she can work through her conflicts, but if someone has an active interest, she would entertain that.

Councilmember Menth stated that he would be open to those two appointments: Youth First Board and Joint Law Enforcement Council. He also confirmed appointment to the Public Works Committee.

Councilmember Heinrich confirmed that she would serve as an alternate for the Youth First Board.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that the appointment to QCCCC and the primary appointment for the EPB remain unfilled. He asked if it would be acceptable to leave those appointments vacant for the time being until another member joins the Council.

Councilmember Menth stated that he could serve on the QCCCC.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she can continue to serve on the EPB for the time being.

Councilmember Heinrich thanked Councilmember Menth for his willingness to jump in and fill the vacancies.

City Administrator Ulrich asked if Councilmember Musgrove could fulfill the appointment to the EPB with no alternate or have an alternate step forward.

Councilmember Musgrove confirmed that she would be willing to accept the primary appointment to the EPB.

Councilmember Menth volunteered to be the alternate for the EPB.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that all of this information will be discussed again once the new member joins the Council.

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the agreed upon appointments:

- Public Works Committee: Councilmember Menth as the appointed member and Councilmember Heinrich as the alternate

- Environmental Policy Board: Councilmember Musgrove as the appointed member and Council Menth as the alternate
- Joint Law Enforcement Council: Councilmember Menth as the appointed member and Councilmember Heinrich as the alternate
- Youth First Board: Councilmember Menth as the appointed member and Councilmember Heinrich as the alternate
- Quad Cities Cable Communications Commission: Councilmember Menth as the appointed member along with City Administrator Ulrich

Councilmember Heinrich noted that she was willing to fulfill her obligations but because of her scheduling conflicts she was willing to step down from those two groups and let someone else accept that appointment.

2.04: Continue Discussion Regarding Processes and Procedures for Council Meetings

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she learned at the previous discussion that there is a video record and asked if that could be included in the minutes so that someone reading the minutes would know they could reference the video.

Mayor LeTourneau asked if the desire would be to include a footnote that the video is available for additional detail.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would be okay with summary minutes if that footnote was added.

City Clerk Thieling stated that statement could be added at the bottom of the minutes near the TimeSaver stamp.

Administrative Service Director Lasher continued to review the staff report. She stated that the City Attorney recommended that approval of the agenda be placed between Call to Order and Presentations and stated that staff would like that to occur beginning the next regular Council meeting.

Councilmember Menth asked if a 7-0 vote of the Council would be needed to recommend the Charter Commission review the language or to pass a change to the Charter.

Administrative Services Director Lasher clarified that the 7-0 vote of the Council would be needed to pass a change to the Charter.

City Administrator Ulrich commented that it would be more achievable with seven Council members, but a majority of the Council (four votes) could override the action of the Chair/Mayor. He used the example of whether the public is allowed to speak at a previous meeting.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for clarification in regard to the Charter Commission discussion, as to whether that would reflect changes to the comment card.

City Clerk Thieling stated that the discussion related to the Charter Commission was in regard to changing anything related to the Charter. She explained that when drafted, the comment card was created using language from other cities and the League of Minnesota Cities, rather than exactly mirroring the Charter. She confirmed that the comment card could be redone by staff to better mirror the Charter language. She explained that if the desire is for the Charter language to more mirror the comment cards, that would require an amendment of the Charter.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if the handout for the comment cards was available at the meeting as there is difficulty in reading the handout in the packet.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that for the purpose of time, the comment card could be brought to a future meeting for additional discussion.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if it would be possible to discuss a Council liaison to attend the flag dedication ceremony.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that could be discussed as a future topic.

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.