

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, October 8, 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 (arrived at 5:55 p.m.)

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

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:34 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Discuss 2020 Legislative Platform

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Menth asked for additional details on what is required for special elections and what would need to change to only require one polling place rather than opening all eight.

City Administrator Ulrich provided additional details on the special election process and cost as well as the legislative requirements for special elections. He noted that the City Charter could also be amended to not require a special election for filling the remainder of a vacant position on the City Council.

Community Development Director Gladhill provided additional details on the desire to extend the allowed time period for expending TIF funds.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for additional details on the item related to the Metropolitan Council and whether that would mean that the City would advocate for a local representative.

City Administrator Ulrich clarified that the desire would be for City Councils to provide input on the appointment process.

Councilmember Musgrove referenced the items related to voting and asked for additional details.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained the election process, and record keeping, noting that the absentee ballot process involves a lot of record keeping. She confirmed that electronic voting would still allow daily tracking.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that while she would support streamlining the process, she would not support items that would add additional costs. She asked for details on the desire to have absentee voting end earlier.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that currently absentee voting is allowed up to 5:00 p.m. the day before elections which is very labor intensive, especially the day before elections.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that she would support absentee voting ending the Friday prior to election day. She stated that she would not support anyone over 18 being able to witness absentee voting and would limit that to the current people allowed. She referenced the issue of local government aid (LGA), stating that the information provided made it clear that Ramsey is not getting its fair share and would hope that is something the City can push more for. She hoped that the Metro Cities could assist Ramsey in this issue.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that a majority of the cities that receive LGA are located outside of the metro area but advised that both Anoka and Coon Rapids receive LGA.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that it is important that the City advocate for LGA and commented that perhaps that item could be moved up on the list.

Councilmember Riley arrived.

Councilmember Heinrich commented that perhaps the desire for Ramsey to have its own zip code could be moved down on the list as it does not sound very positive and that much traction could be gained. She commented that it may be helpful to present the list in a priority order as sometimes discussions are limited to a short number of the items on the list. She referenced the issue of voting, item D, and stated that she would also want to know about allowing alternative absentee voting sites. She noted that she also agreed with the comments of Councilmember Musgrove related to the other elements of voting.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that in prioritizing the list it would seem that the items on the bottom of the list are less important and therefore not prioritizing the list makes it appear that all the items are important.

Councilmember Musgrove suggested to then bullet the list rather than number it.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that related to water supply, the regional element should be emphasized.

Mayor LeTourneau referenced the issue of absentee voting and noted that he wants to ensure that the convenience of the process is balanced with cost. He noted that he would not want to limit the ability for people to vote.

Councilmember Riley stated that he did not believe that listing the zip code element as a legislative priority will be the strongest move. He noted that he would want to see the efforts continued but believed that there would be a better method to pursue that item.

2.02: Review Resident Information Card for Council Chambers

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Heinrich commented that it would be beneficial to have the comment card mirror the Charter statement as much as possible, even perhaps including the statement related to the Council placing reasonable restrictions upon citizen comments.

Councilmember Menth stated that the statement on the comment card and Charter language seem similar to him and therefore was unsure what the intent would be.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that when she looks at the citizen input portion of the comment card, specifically the comment related to this being a time to address items not listed on the regular agenda. She stated that she would insert the language from the Charter into that section as she would not want to prohibit residents from engaging. She noted that there has been inconsistency on when residents are allowed to speak on items on the agenda and when they are not.

Councilmember Riley commented that he believed that the comment card is contrary to the language in the Charter and therefore agreed that the language should be made consistent. He stated in a perfect world the Charter could be amended to be made similar, but the Council does not make that decision and therefore the language on the comment card should be amended.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that if a resident brought forward an issue related to an item on the agenda, the Council could postpone those comments until the agenda item.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that if the language is going to be changed, he would like a timeframe implemented, perhaps enacting a three-minute timeline.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that the City Attorney had commented that it is common in other cities to have a two to three-minute timeframes for comments.

Councilmember Menth stated that if the language from the Charter is placed on the comment card, that would not address what happened at the previous Council meeting where public input was an issue as public input would not be allowed after the citizen input section of the meeting.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that those residents were told that the item would be addressed later and that there would be an opportunity to address the topic at a later time, not specifically during that meeting.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that language could be added related to comments concerning agenda items to state upon approval of the Mayor or majority of the Council.

Mayor LeTourneau commented that the language on the comment card is very informative and agreed that the tweaks discussed could be made. He commented that the language from the Charter could be moved to the top of the card.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that perhaps prior to the meeting the information on the comment card could be displayed on the screens for the public as well.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would suggest removing redundancy between the front and back of the card as well. She noted that perhaps the card material could be easier to write on.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that staff can make amendments to the card to come back before the Council.

2.03: Consider Options for Temporarily Filling a Building Maintenance Staffing Shortage

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Menth asked for details on the job position.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer reviewed the building maintenance activities that would be covered by the position.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the person would be aware that they would only be employed for 12 weeks and asked if it would be difficult to fill the position.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer confirmed that the candidate would be aware that it is temporary.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that she would recommend following the normal recruitment process, similar to any other temporary position the City hires. She explained that the City has a solid process that can be trusted, and she would be reluctant to use a staffing agency.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she would support the City following its normal process to find a qualified candidate, which would include full background checks and would not come with multiple limitations on the work that could be completed.

The consensus of the Council was to follow the typical external recruitment process to fill the temporary vacancy.

2.04: Discuss the Flagpole Dedication Ceremony at Alpine Park

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma asked if the flag would be lighted at night.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer replied that a solar light would be mounted on the pole to shine on the flag.

Councilmember Menth asked who would be responsible for the maintenance of the pole and rope, should the flag get stuck.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer commented that the rope would be inside of the pole. He provided details on the location for the pole.

Councilmember Menth asked how the pole would be installed.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer provided details on the installation process, noting that City equipment would be used. He commented that he did not have information as of yet on the dedication but believed that would occur in the spring. He noted that weather dependent the pole should be installed in the next few weeks.

Mayor LeTourneau asked that the Council be updated prior to the dedication so that members of the Council could attend.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

City Administrator Ulrich stated that he sent an email to the Council prior to the meeting tonight to provide the Council with talking points related to the dissolution of the Fire Service JPA with Nowthen to ensure that a consistent message is communicated and provided a brief update. He noted that firefighters are a big resource for the community and therefore wants to ensure that accurate information is being communicated.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that he did have a chance to speak with the firefighters the previous week to communicate the process and how the City arrived at this preliminary decision based off of Ramsey operating at a deficit, not meeting the intent of the original agreement, and focusing staff time on Ramsey 100 percent because of the City's growth. He agreed that it would be

helpful to have one representative from Ramsey and one from Nowthen to help answer questions and communicate the message.

Councilmember Heinrich thanked Fire Chief Kohner and City Administrator Ulrich for their continued efforts.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that the main problem that he sees with the JPA is Ramsey not having enough manpower and therefore it would seem to make sense for Nowthen to hire its own staff for those services and the cities eventually coming down to typical mutual aid agreements.

Fire Chief Kohner agreed that this was not a typical JPA and unlike most JPAs, it was setup in such a way to eventually allow for a clean separation since Nowthen owns their own equipment. He confirmed that Nowthen would need to hire additional staff and handle additional administrative duties for its department.

Councilmember Riley asked if staff would still recommend separating the departments even if the funding were made fair and equal.

Fire Chief Kohner commented that the decision to separate is up to the City Council. He commented that Ramsey would still not receive any services from Nowthen in return and explained that because of Ramsey's growth, it is appropriate for Ramsey's staff to focus their effort solely on Ramsey.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that even if the financial issue were solved, the City would have to hire additional staff in order to service Nowthen. He commented that it would add so much cost that it would not seem to make sense for Nowthen and therefore there would not be an operational benefit. He explained that the prime benefit that was anticipated has not materialized as the Nowthen station is not providing service to Ramsey and there is no operational benefit received.

Councilmember Riley asked how this JPA is different than JPA's used by other departments, using the example of Anoka-Champlin Fire.

Fire Chief Kohner explained that under a typical JPA there is one budget that is then split between a cost allocation formula and all equipment is purchased jointly. He explained that the Ramsey/Nowthen JPA is different in that it is setup more like a contract where everything is separate.

City Administrator Ulrich clarified that this JPA was setup with the intention of being able to split in the future, as the desire is today.

Councilmember Menth asked for details on the pensions.

Fire Chief Kohner explained that the pensions are in the names of the individuals and therefore would remain with the individual. He provided details on the process that would be followed.

Mayor LeTourneau asked what the next two years would look like for this transition.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the two-year process can be reduced if agreed upon by both parties. He stated that timeline would fall into Nowthen's court, as far as if they will join a JPA with another Fire Service provider or whether they will make their own department. He stated that Ramsey will help Nowthen along in the process as needed, to ensure that Nowthen is comfortable and secure. He stated that the cities have had a good working relationship for the past 12 years and he would want to ensure that continues. He commented that if Nowthen needs the full two years, Ramsey will honor that.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that Anoka Ramsey Athletic Association has requested that the City sponsor its event on October 25th at a cost of \$400 for one table of eight seats. He noted that previously the City has not sponsored the event.

Councilmember Heinrich commented that the City sponsors tables at a number of other events and asked if there is a reason the City has not supported this in the past. She noted that this would seem to be a good fit as Anoka participates in the event.

Mayor LeTourneau commented that if there was an appropriate funding source, there does not seem to be opposition. He commented that perhaps the City sponsor a table at this event and then make the decision on future events.

City Administrator Ulrich suggested holding a special worksession on Tuesday, October 29th and reviewed some potential discussion items.

Mayor LeTourneau commented that he may not be available. He asked if those topics could be fit into future worksession discussions over the next few weeks.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that he could attempt to do that but noted that some of the items require additional time.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the budget could be included in a special worksession agenda.

Councilmember Kuzma commented that he would prefer to fit the items into regular worksession agendas.

Councilmember Menth stated that he would be open to the special worksession on the 29th. He suggested that perhaps a hard stop time be set for the meeting.

Administrative Services Director Lasher noted the all staff appreciation and luncheon the following week and invited the Council to attend if able. She stated that staff believes that the last fall seasonal worker has been selected and could start as soon as October 14th, or perhaps sooner but noted that the next Council meeting falls on the 22nd which would delay action for one week. She asked for consensus to hire the employee now and formally approve the hire on the 22nd.

The Council confirmed consensus to hire the seasonal employee and bring forward the formal hire on October 22nd.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.