

**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 22, 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: Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
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
City Engineer Bruce Westby
City Planner Chris Anderson
City Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl

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: Review Revised Draft of the Updated Resident Information Card for Council Chambers

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley referenced side b, the first bullet point, and asked if the word “only” could be removed to soften that statement.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that the revisions seem to encompass the comments from the previous discussion. She asked if the blank section for written comments will be made larger.

Administrative Services Director Lasher confirmed that would be incorporated along with using a cardstock that allows writing more easily.

Mayor LeTourneau confirmed the consensus of the Council to move forward with the revisions as proposed, with the one suggestion from Councilmember Riley.

2.02: Receive Update on Zoning Code Enforcement Cases

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Menth referenced the comment related to intimidation and asked if the resident was attempting to intimidate staff.

Community Development Director Gladhill provided additional details on the site visit.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that his concern is for the animals. He asked if the resident has proper care for the animals or whether there would be a problem when the cold weather hits.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that he is not an animal expert, noting that there are a few trailers and other structures that could be used. He stated that staff would like to see the structure for the animals but is simply missing the required information.

Councilmember Riley stated that this has been an ongoing case and he feels that City staff has gone above and beyond in trying to help and resolve the problem in working with the resident. He stated that it seems the resident is not interested in working with the City and was unsure how much more effort the City staff should put into this. He fully supported transitioning this to the City Attorney.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there was a diagram at one time about what the building would look like. She asked if it appears that the excavation is in line with the sketch.

Community Development Director Gladhill replied that if used as proposed, as a barn for animals, and if the proper tax classification is obtained, the building code would not apply in the same manner. He displayed the original plans and explained that staff attempted to reduce the size to avoid the need for a Conditional Use Permit (CUP). He noted that the intent of the resident was to sink the building down in order to meet the height requirement.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the pole in the middle of the area.

Community Development Director Gladhill replied that is a utility pole and the resident would need to work with the utility company to relocate that pole.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would also support transitioning this to the City Attorney. She asked for additional input on the process.

Community Development Director Gladhill provided additional details on the process. He noted that a stop order has been issued but it does not appear that has occurred.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that the City would simply be wasting additional dollars spending additional staff time and would recommend this go forward to the City Attorney.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she appreciates the time and effort that City staff has contributed to this issue and this resident. She recognized that this has been very challenging and agreed that City staff should not spend any additional time on this case and should forward this to the City Attorney. She believed that it was wise to have police escort on the last visit given the case history.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that after reading the emails from the resident he believed those to be threatening and should that communication continue, a restraining order should be pursued to stop the harassment.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed that there have been other negative actions from the resident that would warrant that activity.

Police Chief Katers stated that the primary purpose of the police escorting on the last visit was for the safety of City staff. He stated that the police executed the search warrant with adequate staff. He stated that the entire interaction was videotaped. He referenced the communications with the resident, noting that City cell phones were used for those communications and therefore that can be blocked. He confirmed that a restraining order could be pursued and provided additional details.

Councilmember Menth asked if the threshold has been crossed and a restraining order should be pursued.

Police Chief Katers stated that he is not a legal expert but could not imagine a judge not approving a restraining order in this case. He noted that in terms of pressing charges, there would need to be a very specific threat that would warrant that activity. He stated that the prior restraining order on behalf of a staff member was against this same resident.

Councilmember Menth stated that he would like to move to the next step on a restraining order and determining if charges could be filed.

Community Development Director Gladhill continued to review the zoning code enforcement cases within the staff report.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the neighbors are aware of the situation and the details that the City is providing latitude.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed that to be true.

Councilmember Riley stated that the City has been playing games with the landscaping business case for some time and it is clearly time to move on with that one.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that these were examples of cases that will be addressed more with the new Planning Technician. He recognized that neighbors can get frustrated with the length of time required to address code enforcement issues. He confirmed that code enforcement fell behind with the surplus of development cases that have come forward recently.

Councilmember Kuzma asked for an update on the pigeons.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that he has not received any recent complaints. He hoped that the department is meeting the expectations of the Council related to code enforcement.

Councilmember Riley referenced neighborhood disputes and HOA covenants, which is not a City issue and would be more of a neighborhood issue. He asked how the police department would respond.

Police Chief Katers stated that the department receives a variety of calls and always responds. He explained that the police do not enforce HOA rules, unless that violation is also a violation of City Ordinance. He stated that they attempt to find resolution within the 15 to 20 minutes that the police are onsite. He stated that mediation can be recommended for neighborhood disputes.

2.03: Review Current Development Fees, Sureties, and Permit Fees

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he read some of the comments from developers that seemed to state the City fees were reasonable. He noted that only one comment seemed to think the City fees were high. He believed that the fees were accurate.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that in his experience most developers have commended City staff and the process in Ramsey.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she appreciates that staff reached out to developers. She noted that she did the same and determined that Ramsey was on the higher end by about \$2,000 compared to Blaine and Otsego. She stated that based on the feedback she received it would seem that perhaps a closer look should be taken to ensure the City is comparable.

Community Development Director Gladhill provided comparable information for other communities, noting that Ramsey is not the lowest or the highest. He provided a similar comparison of park dedication and trail dedication fees.

Councilmember Menth asked for clarification on the figures.

Community Development Director Gladhill reviewed the different fees that are included in the residential fee comparison for the four communities.

Councilmember Menth stated that Otsego does not have a trail fee, which would be a difference of \$1,500.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that communities address trails in some manner. He reviewed the four major ways in which cities construct trails and fund that construction. He confirmed that not every community has a direct trail development fee.

Councilmember Menth stated that if you add that trail dedication fee to the Otsego figures, that would make it very comparable to Ramsey.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood explained that trail funding is a complicated issue that is not an apples-to-apples comparison as each community tends to fund that amenity differently. He stated that the Park and Recreation Commission reviewed the park dedication and trail fees and recommended no increase for 2020.

Councilmember Heinrich asked for clarification on the trail dedication fee.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed that fee to be \$1,000 per residential lot.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that development is occurring in all areas of Ramsey. He stated that those developers are choosing Ramsey because of the quality of life in this community. He noted that real estate ads typically mention whether the property is close to schools, parks and trails as those features are important to home buyers.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that there is a density bonus where lower rates are charged for higher density developments because those developments typically include their own amenities.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that there was a recent case in which a landowner subdivided his lot into three lots. She noted that resident was charged a higher fee rather than a developer. She noted that perhaps a lower fee be looked at for smaller developments. She referenced surety and asked for additional details.

Community Development Director Gladhill explained that 125 percent is the standard rate, noting that change was made to provide consistency. He noted that project applicants are coached by planning staff throughout the planning process.

Councilmember Musgrove referenced the stormwater management fee and asked if that fee comes from the City or another agency.

Community Development Director Gladhill replied that is a City fee.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would like additional understanding on the stormwater management fee of \$400 compared to the park and trail dedication fees totaling \$4,500.

Community Development Director Gladhill explained that the fees are per unit, not based on lot size. He stated that the fees are determined based on the different City CIPs.

Councilmember Musgrove believed that the stormwater fee should increase to ensure that the City costs are covered.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed that will come back to the Council in November for review.

Councilmember Riley asked the difference between the stormwater management and stormwater utility fees.

Finance Director Lund explained the difference between the two, noting that stormwater management funds new projects while stormwater utility funds maintenance activities.

Councilmember Heinrich referenced the park dedication comparatives and noted that it appears Ramsey is on the median to high range and asked if that could be reduced. She stated that it seems that is where Ramsey is coming in high.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that staff could look into that although he was unsure what the manner of that would be because of the different variables. He explained that the park and trail dedication fees are based off the City's Park CIP. He explained that there is a huge gap in revenue projections. He stated that while neighboring communities may have a lesser park dedication rate, their projected park system does not have the same want or need. He stated that some of the other communities mentioned are funding parks and trails through other methods, such as municipal liquor store proceeds.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would not want the Ramsey numbers to be out of line. He asked if staff has heard that Ramsey is not getting development because of its fees.

Community Development Director Gladhill commented that there is a significant amount of development in Ramsey, that is actually taxing staff to process the applications. He noted that there has been an immense amount of growth.

Councilmember Riley noted that the City received some strong feedback a few years ago from Dennis Sharp and asked if those comments were incorporated into the City fees.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed that feedback was used to provide additional balance when the fees were revamped in 2016. He reviewed some of the improvements and tweaks that were made throughout the past ten years to reduce the City fees.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he has not received complaints about the fees but more the time it takes to process permits. He stated that he would not be in favor of spending time reducing fees and would be more interested in further streamlining the process.

Community Development Director Gladhill stated that they have streamlined the process to the extent possible and it was simply an issue of a surplus of projects that were received within the same period of time. He noted that it became an issue of resources, noting that staff was working on weekends and bringing in staff from other departments to assist.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the Council could receive a glimpse into the funding deficit for trails. She stated that perhaps the Parks CIP items could be extended further to allow additional funds to be collected.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed he could provide that information. He noted that he is also working on a staging and phasing plan for the remaining park improvements in the downtown area. He stated that the Ford Brook playground is an example of a project that has been pushed out for multiple years.

Community Development Director Gladhill noted that it appears that there should be a separate discussion at a future worksession more focused on parks. He noted that could be a good opportunity to have a joint meeting with the City Council and Park and Recreation Commission. He asked if there are other topics that the Council would like additional discussion on.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she appreciates the staff suggestion to reduce the private surety improvement fee.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that it is good to see Ramsey growing and developing.

Community Development Director Gladhill confirmed the consensus of the Council to further discuss park dedication along with the change to the private surety improvement fee.

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 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich

City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.