

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, November 26, 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
Councilmember Dan Specht

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Finance Director Diana Lund
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Captain Brad Bluml
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
Community Development Director Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor LeTourneau called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Youth First Presentation

City Administrator Ulrich introduced the Executive Director of Youth First.

Devin Hanson, Executive Director of Youth First, played a short video that provided background information on her organization. She reviewed the mission of the organization and displayed pictures from events from the past year. She explained that they bring youth out to experience things in the larger community and also within the local community. She stated that the average attendance is about 35 children but on non-school days that could increase to 70 children. She noted that they want the children to have fun and connect with other children in the community. She stated that the organization works with children aged 11 through 18 and 71 of the participants qualify for free/reduced lunch. She explained that Youth First is a free program for the participants that is funded through donations from member cities. She explained how the

organization began and has evolved, reviewing the services that are provided. She provided a copy of the year-end report for the organization and provided a summary of that information. She explained that the organization also links youth with proper resources. She provided examples of how people can connect with the organization. She stated that they focus on celebrating the successes of their participants with a main goal of reaching graduation. She reviewed the staff members and the structure of the organization as well as the members that are represented on the organization's Board. She noted that Ramsey has been a phenomenal partner, not just financially but in providing the building and outdoor space. She stated that while the organization does receive grant funds at times, city and county funding continues to be the main sources of funding.

Councilmember Menth referenced the Ramsey contributions year to date and noted that appears to be higher than other contributions.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that contribution does include the building use. He noted that the organization will have to think about the future as the Highway 10 plans may impact that location.

Police Captain Bluml stated that he has had the opportunity to be a part of the organization since he began as a young patrol officer. He explained that when he had time, he would stop by in his patrol vehicle to interact with the children or attend field trips. He stated that he is now a member on the Board and commented that Ms. Hanson has done a great job improving the organization since she joined as the Executive Director.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the contribution to Youth First has been moved from the general fund to the charitable gambling fund. He advised that other cities have contributed buildings in the past for use as well.

Councilmember Heinrich asked for additional information on the number of non-school days when service is provided on average.

Ms. Hanson explained that during the school year there is an average of about ten to 12 non-school days. She stated that the hours for non-school days were changed this year to 10:30 a.m. to 3:30 p.m. to allow an earlier start time as they previously began at noon. She stated that over the summer they run a ten-week program on Tuesdays, Wednesdays and Thursdays and they do bus children during the summer months.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if participants come from all four cities that contribute.

Ms. Hanson confirmed that children within the attendance boundaries from the four schools are available to participate. She stated that the organization contracts for bussing.

Councilmember Musgrove asked the thoughts for the future if Highway 10 impacts that building. She asked if the programing would be moved to school sites.

Ms. Hanson stated that it would be challenging to use only school buildings. She reviewed some of the previous locations and noted that the organization would speak with other potential partners to find a suitable location.

Councilmember Musgrove asked the size of the current building.

Ms. Hanson replied that the organization uses half of the building.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that some of the children in the photos look older and asked the ages of participants.

Ms. Hanson replied that the program serves sixth through twelfth grades.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there has been thought of offering services to younger children.

Ms. Hanson explained that the focus of this organization is on middle to high school. She explained that while middle schoolers can be home alone, sometimes parents do not want them home alone.

Mayor LeTourneau thanked Ms. Hanson for coming tonight and for the excellent work the organization provides.

2.02: Fire Service Joint Powers Agreement Update

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report. He stated that there is interest from both parties in developing a new JPA. He stated that with the proposed payment from Nowthen, Ramsey feels comfortable that a new arrangement could be negotiated.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the Fire Board determined earlier that Ramsey was operating at a deficit and the current JPA is not sufficient. He explained that submitting that information to Nowthen was the first step in determining if an agreement could be made that would be suitable for both cities. He noted that the next steps would be to review the operational duties to ensure the two are operating similarly.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that previously Fire Chief Katers commented that he did not have sufficient time to manage both cities. He stated that the change in financial contribution would not seem to change that demand on staff.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that item would be addressed during the next step of operational and administrative review. He explained that the financial element was first and the staffing part would be in the next step.

Councilmember Specht asked the current amount paid by Nowthen.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that currently Nowthen pays \$6,400 and Ramsey currently pays more to Nowthen for their response to calls in Ramsey.

Councilmember Heinrich explained that the Fire Board came to a consensus to determine a cost-share formula that would be equitable to both cities. She asked how many years the cities operated at that deficit.

City Administrator Ulrich replied that agreement has been in place since 2006. He noted that he was incorrect in the reporting of the fee paid by Nowthen, as the fee was raised to \$8,200 two years ago.

Councilmember Heinrich asked for additional input on the staffing demands and challenges.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the Ramsey Fire Code does not allow permit burning in commercial areas whereas Nowthen staff did recently issue a burning permit for unattended burning of construction material in a commercial area, even after Nowthen staff consulted him and he recommended denial. He stated that is one example of the challenges between the two cities.

Councilmember Heinrich commented that it appears Ramsey and Nowthen are headed in different directions and asked for additional input.

Fire Chief Kohner provided examples of discrepancies between the two cities using the example of call volume noting that Ramsey has an annual call volume of about 875 calls whereas Nowthen is around 135 calls.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that the intent of the discussion tonight was to receive an update on the progress that has been made and the direction this is moving forward.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the Fire Board will meet on December 5th and if the Council agrees with this amount it can be presented as a proposal. He stated that Ramsey would want the contract to be amended to include this new amount in the 2020 fee schedule. He noted that each city would need to approve the amended contract.

Councilmember Menth stated that he is confused as the last worksession discussion focused on the consensus to end the JPA and asked if Ramsey is changing directions.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that Ramsey does not want the JPA to continue as is with the \$8,200 contribution from Nowthen. He stated that if Nowthen is interested in the price Ramsey is willing to offer, the JPA would need to be terminated and a new JPA would need to be developed. He stated that the JPA has a two-year termination period and because the fee is not working, that is where discussion began. He noted that if the operational challenges can be worked out, then perhaps a new agreement could be negotiated that would serve both communities.

Councilmember Menth stated that two of the Councilmembers are on the Fire Board and asked for input as to whether they support this action.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she agrees that this has changed directions since the last Council worksession. She stated that a few firefighters are opposed to this but not all of the firefighters are against a dissolved JPA.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that he does not have a specific number but stated that he has not heard from anyone regarding the dissolution of the contract.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that at the last Council worksession it was clear Ramsey was not being served well by the JPA. She noted that more questions arose from that and a figure was determined that would provide an equitable contribution from Nowthen. She stated that it does not appear that the JPA will serve this arrangement but perhaps a contract would, if Nowthen would be supportive of the higher contribution.

Mayor LeTourneau recognized that there are multiple layers, cities and aspects involved in this issue. He appreciated the work of Fire Chief Kohner on this matter as well as the Councilmembers that serve on the Fire Board.

2.03: Discussion of 2020 Budget/Levy and Review of 5-Year Budget (2020-2024)

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the budget proposed is reasonable and satisfies the desired efforts without drawing down on capital reserves. He explained that increasing proposed revenues would not be encouraged and staff would recommend approving the budget as proposed. He noted that strategic planning could be completed in 2020 to provide further guidance on future budgeting.

Mayor LeTourneau provided additional input on tax capacity and the ability to capture the benefit from the growth in Ramsey. He stated that when you only look at the levy amount outside of the tax capacity that can be distracting. He stated that there has been sizable discussion since adoption of the preliminary budget, which has kept the Council aware of the fact that Ramsey is a growing community that has been able to maintain a desired level of service. He acknowledged the hard work that has been accomplished to get to this point. He noted that he would welcome additional discussion in 2020 on desired service levels and budgeting goals.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he received his tax statement the previous day. He noted that even though Ramsey is increasing its taxes, his taxes are decreasing. He explained that the amount taxed by Ramsey is being spread over more residents, which is a good thing.

Councilmember Menth stated that he also opened his tax statement the previous day and his Ramsey taxes decreased by 5.5 percent, which was a great thing. He stated that the taxes on his rental properties in Coon Rapids increased by five to nine percent.

Councilmember Musgrove appreciated the hard work that has been done by staff. She stated that there is still a road problem and discussion that will need to occur on that topic. She asked for clarification on how personnel time is shown for certain items.

Finance Director Lund provided additional details on how that staffing time is shown and allocated.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for clarification on the tree lighting expense line item and discrepancies between the years.

Finance Director Lund provided additional details.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if she could see the starting ranges for personnel positions.

Mayor LeTourneau noted that it may be more efficient for Councilmember Musgrove to speak with staff to have her specific questions answered. He noted that the intent tonight would be whether the Council could support the budget as proposed.

Councilmember Heinrich thanked staff for taking a deeper dive into the sealcoat fund and asked what would happen with that allocation.

Finance Director Lund stated those funds would be added to the road maintenance fund.

Mayor LeTourneau confirmed the consensus of the Council for this proposed budget to move forward to the Council at the December 10th meeting for formal adoption.

Finance Director Lund provided details on the assumptions she used to formulate the five-year budget projection.

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 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.