

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, April 14, 2020, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota. Meeting by telephone or other electronic means in accordance with Minnesota Statute 13D.021.

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 Chief Jeff Katers  
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer  
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher  
Deputy City Administrator Timothy Gladhill

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

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

City Administrator Ulrich read aloud a statement declaring that this meeting is being conducted by telephonic means, as noted, due to the COVID-19 pandemic.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Receive an Update Regarding COVID-19**

Fire Chief Kohner reviewed the staff report and provided an update on the COVID-19 situation. He provided details on the number of cases within the State, County and City of Ramsey. He noted that currently 76 percent of those that test positive do not require hospitalization. He explained that there is not a clear picture of the number of cases as only certain demographics are being tested for COVID-19. He stated that overall Minnesota continues to be lesser impacted than other states because of social distancing. He provided an update on the Orders from the Governor. He stated that police and fire continue to provide service to the community and maintain service levels. He explained that the City's declaration of emergency provides the City with access to State and Federal funds and is not linked to the Governor's Stay at Home Order or the closure of restaurants and bars.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for additional details related to the FEMA funds that could be available along with details on the State funding that could be available.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the City is tracking any costs incurred for additional items such as cleaning materials and PPE. He noted that the City would first request reimbursement from the State, and those costs would be recouped by the State through Federal funds.

City Administrator Ulrich provided a general update related to COVID-19, noting that parks remain open and the posting was made for playgrounds advising residents to use at their own risk, as previously recommended by the Council. He noted that most City services remain available through telephone or online, as City Hall is closed to the general public. He noted that park buildings are also closed for public use. He stated that police and fire services remain providing their normal level of service and public works and road work are being completed as essential services.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for details on the public works activities, specifically the parks staff members that were reassigned during this time, and whether there is still an adequate workload.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that parks employees were redeployed as street maintenance workers during the past two weeks.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated that public works employees are back to their normal jobs. He reported that parks staff will assist with watermain flushing and will begin work in the parks with typical spring clean-up, irrigation installation, and mowing activities.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill reviewed some of the questions that have been received by businesses, noting that most questions have been related to whether a business falls into the critical category. He noted that staff has also spent time connecting businesses with available resources at State and Federal levels. He noted that staff has also been working to develop a potential business assistance program through the City.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that enforcement of the Stay at Home Order is done on a complaint driven basis and under the guidelines developed by the State.

Police Chief Katers stated that the department received 14 complaints on businesses that remained open, noting that 11 of those calls were due to lack of social distancing. He stated that the department responds to the social distancing calls but have issued zero citations. He stated that the Governor's Order is not 100 percent clear and therefore leaves room for interpretation.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would hope that people keep that use of the police department to a minimum and that the police remain as lenient as possible during this trying time.

Police Chief Katers stated that a State hotline was setup for complaints, which are then routed to local departments. He stated that it has been decided that education will be used as the tool for enforcement.

## **2.02: Discuss Requirements for Review of Land Use Applications and Building Permits**

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she can appreciate both sides of the concern. She acknowledged that it is weird to ask for public comments and engage in a public meeting when the building is closed but stated that staff has implemented alternate ways for residents to provide comments. She commented that the City is doing its best to navigate these uncharted waters.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for more details on the concerns that have been heard from residents.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that any time there is new development on undeveloped land, there will be some concern from residents.

Councilmember Specht asked if the webinar was recorded and available for Councilmember Musgrove to watch to gather additional information.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed that it is available on the City website, noting that he would send the link to the Council.

Councilmember Riley stated that he watched the webinar and commended staff for the great job it did explaining the process.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that it seemed that everyone participating was appreciative of the information and is a reflection of how staff developed the process.

## **2.03: Organizational Process and Project Updates**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that staff has been very helpful in navigating some quirky technical difficulties, commenting that this is going as smoothly as it can for now and thanked Deputy City Administrator Gladhill for his assistance.

City Administrator Ulrich thanked Deputy City Administrator Gladhill and the IT staff for everything they have done to help facilitate virtual meetings. He referenced the Public Works Facility and stated that the City is still on schedule to potentially break ground later this year and potentially issue some debt. He asked for input from the Council.

Mayor LeTourneau recognized that this is a significant investment for the community and asked for input from the Council.

Councilmember Riley stated that he does not see a reason to change the decision that has already been made. He noted that this is a temporary setback in time and the economy, but this decision has already been made and interest rates are historically low, therefore this is a good time to incur debt.

Mayor LeTourneau agreed that this should continue to move forward.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she continues to support this basic infrastructure project, as the need is not going away. She stated that her main concern continues to be the amount of debt the City will issue and asked for information on the funds staff will look to utilize to reduce the issuance of debt.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the different funds that would be utilized to equate to 50 percent of the project cost, while the remaining 50 percent would be funded through debt.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if it is possible to increase the amount of funds on hand to reduce the amount of debt issued.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that could be a follow up activity for staff.

Finance Director Lund noted that the portion of funding from the utility fund is based off the percentage of the facility and capital that will be water and sewer related at the facility. She stated that municipal center debt is callable in 2022 and therefore there is discussion that could occur about staggering that debt.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she supports the project but would like to look further in detail about the opportunity to utilize available funds for the project, noting perhaps a 60/40 split rather than 50/50.

Councilmember Mentsh stated that he understands that an architect and project manager have been hired and asked for a high-level overview of the funds that have been spent as of now.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the project manager and architect have worked with staff to develop schematic designs.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated that they have schematic designs and his team is working on redlining the plans to fit the intended use. He stated that there is a concept drawing of the outside of the building. He stated that RJM is reviewing the budget numbers to determine if cuts need to be made to the design. He noted thus far there has been one bill for \$5,000 from the architect. He estimated a cost of \$1,000,000 for the architect and project manager services in total for the project at completion.

City Administrator Ulrich moved on to the water treatment study, noting that the study will provide options for the future and will be a decision point on whether the Council wants to move forward on any of those recommendations within the report. He provided an update on the Highway 10 corridor improvement and the legislative discussions that have occurred related to funding.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that perhaps a deeper discussion could occur at the Highway 10 Subcommittee meeting.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that the City intended to delve into the discussion related to long term road funding and pavement management prior to the COVID-19 situation.

Councilmember Riley stated that this discussion is vital and does not believe the City can wait on this topic. He stated that if the City wants to move forward, it needs to happen soon, or if assessments will continue, that choice also needs to happen soon. He stated that doing nothing does not work. He noted that was the decision last year and he will not accept another year of doing nothing.

Councilmember Specht agreed. He stated that from his perception not many people like the model the City was using with assessments and believed it is important to get onto the next method.

Councilmember Kuzma stated that he also agrees that this decision is long overdue and is disappointed that one year was lost. He stated that he supports franchise fees, as that seems to make the most sense and would like the City to continue down that path.

Councilmember Mentsh stated that he agrees that something needs to be done. He commented that no one likes the system the City has now and also favors the franchise fee model. He stated that if that cannot be done, then taxes need to be raised to fix the roads.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she agrees that road funding is a priority as that is a basic piece of infrastructure but does not agree that the City has not done anything. She stated that multiple open houses were held the previous year and the City paid for a consultant to come in and host that. She stated that while franchise fees did not move forward, the 75/25 plan is in place. She stated that it is a tough decision and the City needs to continue on with being decisive about how the City will fund roads in the next five years.

Mayor LeTourneau agreed that the City has been working on roads but acknowledged that the next five-year plan has not been put in place.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she feels that the Council does need to have the discussion and needs to make a long-term decision. She credited the staff for the creative use of funds this year and last year in order to facilitate some projects moving forward in the interim.

Mayor LeTourneau confirmed the consensus of Council that this topic come back to the Council in the near future to discuss and make a decision.

City Administrator Ulrich provided an update on the fire services JPA and process to dissolve that agreement.

Fire Chief Kohner noted that he spoke with the Nowthen consultant today, noting that the consultant provided a plan to Nowthen today and was under the understanding that the item would be reviewed by the Nowthen Council tonight, but advised that the item was not placed on the city's agenda. He stated that Ramsey will continue to attempt to push this forward.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she found herself a bit uneasy during the COVID-19 situation and the way the legislative session is going. She asked if the Fire Chief believes that this legislation will move forward, and the Fire Relief Association will get relief in a way that the firefighters will not lose funds.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the bill was introduced before the State was in deep in the COVID-19 situation. He stated that he cannot guarantee that the bill will be heard, as the COVID-19 bills will receive priority, but the author of the bill does feel confident.

Councilmember Heinrich asked for details on the timeline that would be needed for the dissolve date in two years, and in one year, related to the timing of the legislation. She also asked for input on the communication between the two cities and the drafting of the legislation.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that he cannot speak to the timeline, as that would be dependent on different possibilities of when the bill could be heard. He stated that the author of the bill based the language off what occurred in Lino Lakes. He stated that the discussion has been between City Administrator Ulrich, City Attorney Langel, and the City Attorney and Mayor of Nowthen. He stated that everyone would get what they have earned in their years of service through the Relief Association.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she believed Nowthen meets once a month and asked if staff could address the topic or whether the City would need to wait another month for action.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that it would be nice if Nowthen could have the conversation before the Fire Board meets, whether that is done by city staff or the Nowthen Council. He confirmed that the Nowthen Council only meets once per month but noted that the Council could call a special meeting. He stated that he will contact Nowthen the following day in attempt to push this forward.

Councilmember Menth stated that he believed he read that the response time for Ramsey fire has been lowered and commended the department.

Fire Chief Kohner confirmed that the response times have decreased with the duty crew.

City Administrator Ulrich highlighted the topics of interviewing candidates for Boards and Commissions virtually and continuing discussion related to multi-family housing within The COR.

Councilmember Riley stated that there has been a lot of discussion related to multi-family housing and believed that it is time for the Council to develop a policy on that topic.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that staff could bring that topic back for a worksession discussion. He reviewed the topics related to legislation activity, the upcoming budget process, and potential cancelation of summer programming and events.

Councilmember Heinrich stated that she would support allowing staff to accept reappointments on Boards and Commissions and confirmed the consensus of the Council on that 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 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kurtis G. Ulrich  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

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Katie M. Schmidt  
Administrative Assistant

Drafted by Amanda Staple  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*