

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, July 14, 2020, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor John LeTourneau  
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  
Police Chief Jeff Katers  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood  
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 5:30 p.m.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Preliminary 2021 General Fund Budget/Levy Review**

City Administrator Ulrich noted that this is the first opportunity for the Council to review the draft 2021 budget and the impacts to the tax levy.

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report.

City Administrator Ulrich thanked Finance Director Lund and the department heads for putting together this information. He provided additional details on personnel.

Mayor LeTourneau thanked staff for the presentation and their work on the draft budget.

Councilmember Riley asked if the 2.75 COLA is an open item and whether that has been negotiated through the contracts or whether a different number could be used in the budget.

Finance Director Lund confirmed that the COLA and health insurance are not yet in the contracts.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that typically they begin negotiations around this time. He stated that typically they are two-year contracts but perhaps this would be a circumstance where a one-year contract is negotiated.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that all four notices of desire to negotiate have been received from the unions and meetings are setup beginning in late August.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if that is the normal timeframe for the negotiation process.

Administrative Services Director Lasher confirmed that is the normal process. She explained that it is labor intensive with multiple meetings throughout the three to four-month process.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if Ramsey is behind other cities.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that Ramsey is not behind. She stated that other cities may have had a different two-year period which expires in 2021, whereas Ramsey's contracts expire in 2020.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that it would make it easier to look at the remainder of the budget if that figure were already known.

Mayor LeTourneau recognized that there are many moving parts in this process, and this is just the beginning where general direction is given, and more specific details are worked out as the process moves along.

Councilmember Specht thanked staff for their work on the draft budget. He asked for details on how capital equipment purchases are decided upon, using the example of the police administration vehicle.

Finance Director Lund replied that the City falls under the State contract for police vehicles and therefore they review what is available under that contract.

Police Chief Katers stated that there is a fleet service and each of the vehicles is on a rotation schedule, along with input from the mechanic. He stated that they purchase all vehicles on the State contract that is negotiated with specific vendors at predetermined prices. He stated that there can be some variation between the different brands. He noted that there is typically also a police package, although that can be different for administrative vehicles.

Finance Director Lund provided additional details on the State contract and how the State negotiates in place of the cities.

Councilmember Riley referenced the body cameras. He asked if there is outside funding or grants available for that equipment.

Police Chief Katers stated that there has been a lot of discussion on that topic, noting that the State is in the process of negotiating with vendors and then the City would purchase on the State contract.

He replied that there are some grants available and the legislature is scheduled to discuss that topic as well. He stated that at this point the counties and cities have to purchase the equipment on their own. He stated that the personnel request is related to the body camera, in order to redact, manage and process the body camera footage and other evidence. He stated that Ramsey has had cameras in the squad cars since 2006, with the footage used as evidence in criminal cases. He explained that now there are requests from the public for footage, which requires the footage to be redacted.

Councilmember Riley stated that he would like to have a bigger discussion on that topic in the future. He stated that in the past there was a consensus that the City should not move forward with body cameras. He asked if the recommendation from Police Chief Katers would be to have the body cameras as it was included in the budget.

Police Chief Katers confirmed that the officers want body cameras, based on recent incidents, to have that as a layer of protection. He acknowledged that there was discussion in the past but recent unrest in other communities drive this request.

Councilmember Kuzma agreed that it has gotten to the point where that equipment is needed. He asked about storage and whether additional storage would be needed.

Police Chief Katers stated that the cost estimate for the body cameras includes some storage. He noted that there are options to have onsite storage or storage through the vendor. He noted that there are also options for shared storage between cities.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the police officer request was pushed off from the previous year or whether it is a new request.

Police Chief Katers replied that it is a new request based off the service calculations. He stated that there are currently 27 officers. He stated that the calculation is based off population, calls for service, and administrative services.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she has concerns with 12-hour shifts and whether 27 officers cover those staffing needs and whether there is adequate staffing to cover vacation shifts. She asked if it would be better, or possible, to have 10-hour shifts.

Police Chief Katers stated that there is a lot of input from officers as well as what provides the best amount of coverage. He stated that currently there is not enough equipment to have 10-hour shifts. He stated that the consensus from the officers is that they like the 12 hours shift model, noting that they made the change to 12-hour shifts about six or seven years ago.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she believed that there was a past discussion that the line item for the storage system came in under budget.

Finance Director Lund replied that was to setup the system, which was a capital item, which occurred in a previous budget. She stated that the capital was funded through the equipment fund and therefore the savings remained in that fund. She explained that this service would be considered operational and therefore would come from the general fund.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if she could receive paper copies of the information.

Councilmember Riley commented that if there is a six percent growth in the tax base, he would not want to see more than six percent increase to the levy. He stated that would include the increase in debt.

Mayor LeTourneau stated that he likes the idea to provide a target as this is the first review. He stated that this is the first review and will not be the final adopted budget. He stated that he likes the idea of having a target but that comes with a focus. He stated that the Council would need to give direction to staff on what should be changed in the budget at the next review of the budget.

Councilmember Specht referenced the cost of living for this next year and stated that he would like to see that lower for this year. He stated that perhaps this could be a one-year contract due to COVID. He noted that many have lost their jobs or have had lessened wages and therefore he would like to see that lower for this year. He asked for more information on the need for the additional parks maintenance person.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that prior to the recession there were a number of dedicated parks maintenance workers. He noted that since 2006 two maintenance workers have been lost and Council previously chose not to replace them. He stated that since that time the City has expanded its parks and road system which add maintenance needs. He stated that staff feels that there is not enough manpower to cover the maintenance needs.

Councilmember Specht asked for examples of maintenance needs that could not be completed if this additional person is not hired.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that some work has been contracted out when possible. He stated that residents have noticed the reduction in service that occurred when staffing was cut. He stated that since that time the parks facilities and public works needs have expanded as the City continues to grow which increases the demand on staff. He stated that a thorough analysis has been done in terms of contracted services and noted that could be shared again with the Council. He stated that public works has about 40 different contractors that they work with to provide different services. He stated that maintenance workers have a certain level of expertise which provides flexibility in being able to adjust and change with the weather and/or priorities.

Mayor LeTourneau summarized that the City is in the customer service business with residents being the customers. He stated that it appears that staff is hearing quite a bit from residents when the level of service is decreased.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that when residents reach out to staff related to a request, they expect the City to address that request. He noted that when time is taken out to address the request, that interrupts the flow and efficiency of staff to complete other tasks. He stated that they have been as judicious as possible in making personnel requests, but staff feels that this request is warranted at this time.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she is surprised to hear that there are contracted services and would like additional discussion. She stated that an additional public works staff member seems to be a large ask this year. She stated that they are currently underway with the new public works facility which is meant to increase efficiency and asked for input from public works on that topic. She asked the number of employees between parks and public works.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood replied that perhaps a follow up could occur on the contracted services in a future worksession. He provided examples of contracted work such as irrigation, electrical services, etc. He stated that the new public works facility will not be completed for some time but provided examples of efficiencies that will occur with the new facility.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated that the park department handles the cul-de-sac, trails and sidewalk plowing and snow clearing. He noted that it has also been difficult to find temporary seasonal help. He reviewed the number of employees and their dedicated responsibilities. He stated that the department is running as lean as possible.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that she agrees that public works and parks is a tight ship in terms of staffing.

Councilmember Musgrove referenced the rate of salary for the position and asked if someone could come in at a lower rate.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that these positions are somewhat skilled and reviewed some of the requirements for the position. She stated that this is within the range of what other cities hire at and noted that the pay in the private sector would be even higher.

Finance Director Lund confirmed that staff has received adequate input for this first budget discussion.

Councilmember Riley stated that \$1,893,000 was decided as a need for road funding. He stated that based on the total budget of last year \$12,000,509, if road funding were added to the levy that would be an additional 15 percent increase just for that item.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that was if the total package were added to the levy and there are options to go with a lesser amount.

Councilmember Riley agreed that anything could be done. He stated that if that were put on the levy that would be a large increase to the levy. He stated that the Council has agreed that eight percent is too high and therefore a 23 percent increase would also be too high.

Councilmember Specht commented that currently the City is paying 75 percent of the road cost through bonding and therefore it would seem to only be the additional 25 percent that would be added.

Finance Director Lund explained how the bonding is done, which is levied over 20 years.

Councilmember Riley stated that if the road funding were fully funded by the City, that would need to be added to the levy fully.

Mayor LeTourneau clarified that if the road financing were fully added to the levy that would be a significant increase to the levy. He noted that additional discussion on road financing can occur at the regular Council meeting tonight as that item is on the agenda.

## **2.02: Review CARES Act Funding Allocations**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Finance Director Lund provided clarification on the eligible City expenses in terms of public safety staffing.

Councilmember Riley requested that the City is able to track how the funds are spent and where funds have been saved. He stated that he will listen and provide the Council direction to the EDA.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would want to ensure that the businesses that could receive assistance have not received assistance through another program already.

City Administrator Ulrich asked if there are guidelines that state that the funds cannot be doubled up with PPP funds.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that there are strict parameters for businesses and guidance has been provided through the U.S. Treasury. He stated that additional follow up and documentation will need to occur to ensure that a business is eligible. He noted that some communities are offering 10 percent of their funds to businesses, while some are choosing to offer more or less. He stated that if a business has received funds through the County or DEED, they would not be eligible for these funds.

Finance Director Lund stated that the City would be subject to State law and provided additional details.

Mayor LeTourneau clarified that the Council will have access to the line items and how these funds are spent moving forward.

## **3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION**

### **3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar**

Councilmember Riley requested that a COVID update be provided on City staffing and how the City is being affected.

City Administrator Ulrich provided an update on City operations and COVID case information in Anoka County and within Ramsey. He stated that while there are still members of staff working remotely, City Hall is operating at full capacity.

**4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT**

None.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:48 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.*