

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Monday, February 8, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Mark Kuzma
Councilmember Chelsee Howell
Councilmember Debra Musgrove
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Dan Specht
Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
Deputy City Administrator Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby
Communications and Events Coordinator Megan Thorstad

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kuzma called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Consider Next Steps for Implementation of Centralized Water Treatment Plant

City Engineer Westby reviewed the staff report.

Mayor Kuzma asked if there would still be room for expansion in the future.

City Engineer Westby replied that the plan would be to build the 10,300,000 gallon per day plant now with the option to expand to a 20,000,000 per day plant at full build out in the future if that is needed.

Mayor Kuzma asked staff to provide details on proposed funding.

City Engineer Westby replied that the estimate for the plant is currently \$32,000,000 with up to \$4,500,000 for site development. He stated that \$25,000,000 has already been secured for this purpose from municipal water users. He stated that additional funds would be needed, and the City has been working with legislators in attempt to find additional funding opportunities through

the State. He stated that bonding would also be an option, along with other alternatives that will be explored as the process gets to that point.

Councilmember Specht referenced the mention of the pressure being placed on the wells as they are constantly being run and asked if there is a plan B in the case that a problem arises.

City Engineer Westby commented that there are six wells and any of those wells can be used, but they have to limit the downtime to no more than one month. He stated that if another well needs to be used, that can be done. He stated that the City has been lucky in that maintenance needs have occurred during nonpeak use. He noted that the issue of manganese would need to continue to be monitored if one of those wells were brought online. He stated that Ramsey also has an interconnect with the City of Anoka that could possibly be utilized in an emergency.

Councilmember Riley stated that two direct procurements were mentioned. He noted that the first action seems easier but noted that he did not hear associated costs or pros/cons.

The City Engineer estimated \$1,500,000 to \$2,000,000 in watermain work. He stated that if they complete that action now, that will prevent further disruption to Bunker Laker Boulevard in the future which would also have additional costs.

Councilmember Riley asked how the Council can be made comfortable with that cost.

The City Engineer stated that the earlier a project is bid, the better the bids come back as contractors do not have full schedules for the season.

City Administrator Ulrich clarified that the project itself would still be bid. He stated that the cost for the design and specs could be compared to similar projects from other municipalities in order to provide the Council with comfort for that cost.

City Engineer Westby agreed that the first step would be to authorize SEH to prepare plans and specifications and those would come back for the Council to review and then the second step would be to go out for bids for the construction, therefore it will come before the Council multiple times. He stated that the larger action would be to go out for RFP's for the Water Treatment Plant, similar to the process followed for the Public Works Facility and provided additional details on the process. He confirmed that he would like direction from the Council on whether they are comfortable moving ahead on the plans or the additional information that would be needed to make the Council comfortable.

Councilmember Riley stated that he is not comfortable procuring the whole plans and administration of the project as he is concerned with saving dollars and making sure things are right. He agreed that it would seem to make sense to move forward with the portion that can be completed with the County project.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that for a project of this size he would agree with the RFP process, as that would involve interviews similar to the Public Works Facility where additional

details and questions could be answered that would help to ensure the desired timeline could be met.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for details on the location of the County project on Bunker Lake Boulevard.

City Engineer Westby identified the portion of Bunker Lake Boulevard that would be part of the County project.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that the timing seems to be a benefit in working with the County project but asked if there is also a cost savings provided.

City Engineer Westby replied that the contractors would have all the information needed for the design which would be more efficient. He commented that adding another consultant would add staff time to go through the RFP process, along with the additional information staff would need to provide, therefore the savings would be staff time.

Councilmember Musgrove asked the total number for that process, as she tends to favor that because she does not want to pay the County down the road or do work that causes the road to be torn up again in the future. She asked if there are any other options for additional wells in the interim.

City Engineer Westby stated that requesting additional wells is a different process that has its own hoops with the DNR. He estimated a total cost of \$3,250,000 to \$3,500,000 to run the watermain/lines. He stated that if the process moves forward, he can provide more detailed figures in that staff report.

Mayor Kuzma asked the cost to prepare an RFP.

City Engineer Westby replied that the RFP is prepared in-house by staff and then the proposals are reviewed and rated by staff. He stated that the first action would be related to the watermain itself and staff asks for authorization to hire SEH to prepare the plans and specifications. He stated that typically that cost is a percentage of the project cost.

Miles Jensen with SEH, Inc stated that staff is not fully sure of the scope of the County project, therefore that needs to be taken into account. He stated that if the County is going to do something, it would make sense to work with that.

City Engineer Westby stated that there will be another meeting with the County later this week, noting that he will continue to provide updates, during which he will gather more information on their plans for the project. He stated that SEH cannot provide an estimate until the scope of the County work is known.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that it would also be helpful to know the additional cost that would be incurred if the City does not work within the timeline of the County project.

Councilmember Specht agreed that if the initial planning can fall in line with the County project, he could support that.

Mayor Kuzma confirmed the consensus of the Council to move forward with the first step as outlined by staff.

City Engineer Westby stated that staff will attempt to place all the requested information within a case and asked if the Council would be comfortable with staff placing that item on the Consent Agenda.

Councilmember Riley stated that he believes he could be comfortable with the number but that has not yet been provided. He asked if the City is moving too fast.

City Engineer Westby replied that the County is moving at a fast pace and the desire is to keep up with that. He stated that if there were unanswered questions, staff would not place the item on the Consent Agenda. He stated that the desire is to move with the County pace in order to provide efficiency and save funds. He stated that staff will continue to provide updates as available and hopes to bring this forward as a case on February 23rd. He noted that if the answers are not known at that time, staff would not bring the case forward at that meeting.

2.02: Discussion Regarding the City's Draft Strategic Communications Plan

City Administrator Ulrich provided brief background and introduced the case.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad reviewed the communications plan included within the staff report.

Councilmember Riley referenced the content calendar and asked if that was simply provided as a format tool that has not yet been populated.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad confirmed that to be true. She stated that staff did not want to get too specific and simply provide an overview of the topics covered through all communications platforms.

Mayor Kuzma asked who manages the social media and Facebook.

Communications and Events Coordinator Thorstad confirmed that she does manage the City Facebook page while the Police and Fire pages are managed by CRO's for those departments.

Mayor Kuzma commented that it is important that there is a clean and consistent message going out.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that the whole idea of this discussion came about in 2019 and 2020 and the role of the Communications position and whether the role could be absorbed into regular staffing. She stated that this does not appear to be the direction that staff took as this is simply reiteration of the communication goals and strategy. She did not feel that staff took the

appropriate direction. She asked how these job tasks could be done using other staff members. She commented that some of the things included are a part of normal staff duties that have been expanded. She stated that the City does not have to be available on every platform and should focus on directing residents to the City website for information. She preferred a simpler strategy and did not want to see it overcomplicated.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that there were some discussions about the position during the budget process. He stated that his interpretation was how this position can be used to enhance communication rather than backfilling with other staff. He stated that there is a desire for a focused and consistent message, and therefore they are attempting to better define the duties. He stated that the work requires someone to pay attention to the details and is not something that would be covered by another staff member doing this in addition to their job. He stated that staff believes that this position adds value and opportunities to enhance communications efforts using the budget resources allocated to the position. He stated that there have been issues with communications in the past and did not believe less resources would be the answer. He stated that staff took the direction that the budget is tight and how those resources and efforts can be best directed.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that staff and leadership should use the strategic goals and priorities of the Council to make this work. She stated that she has had several conversations related to accuracy, which she feels is important. She believes that staff already knows the position of the Council related to communications and thinks these things should be done in-house and did not believe specific direction is needed for every little thing. She stated that the Council already knows these things about communications and the task is implementing this within City staff.

City Administrator Ulrich appreciated the input from Councilmember Musgrove. He stated that staff was looking for feedback on this strategy and noted that if this format seems acceptable, staff will proceed to fill in the additional details. He noted that staff simply wanted direction before placing more effort into this strategy.

Mayor Kuzma commented that he would view this as a guiding tool.

Councilmember Howell stated that she was not present for the budget discussion. She stated that perhaps the Council could review the newsletter before it goes to print to ensure there are not errors. She did not see a purpose for a Communications Committee or the additional people or tasks. She stated that the goal should be to streamline and focus on accuracy.

Councilmember Specht commented that there would be value to a discussion about the position itself and whether it is needed. He stated that he likes that there was this opportunity for a more in-depth discussion on the communications strategy. He stated that he would like to see short blurbs on different platforms that direct people to the website for additional information. He stated that he is interested in communications and would encourage multiple platforms and again a focus on accuracy.

Councilmember Riley stated that part of the previous discussion was whether the position was needed, and he believed the takeaway was not to get rid of the position but instead that communications was vital, and it needed to be refocused. He stated that from this information he

took away the added accountability and measure, the calendar of what would be done and the strategic measures.

2.03: 2021 Legislative Platform

No comments.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

No comments.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
Deputy City Clerk

Drafted by Amanda Staple
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.