

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, March 9, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
Deputy City Administrator Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby – attended remotely
Senior Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl – attended remotely
Economic Development Manager Sean Sullivan – attended remotely
Elwyn Tinklenberg, The Tinklenberg Group

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: Update on Highway 10 State Legislative Action

City Administrator Ulrich introduced Elwyn Tinklenberg.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that the decision was made by the Highway 10 partners at a recent meeting at Greenhaven to request the remaining funding for the entire project from the legislature as a way to indicate that these are the last dollars needed to complete the project. He stated that at the legislature there was a hearing about one week ago with the Senate Transportation Committee at which he testified along with a representative from Anoka County and Senators Hoffman and Abeler. He stated that at the hearing the \$12,500,000 Bill was introduced by Senator Hoffman and Senator Abeler introduced an amendment to request the full \$46,000,000. He stated that the Bill has not been amended in the House as of yet and remains at \$12,500,000. He stated that this is traditionally not a bonding year but there could still be a potential for funds. He also provided an update on an infrastructure Bill in Washington that represents a significant opportunity. He noted

that additional funding may be available through MnDOT as well, noting that MnDOT continues to support the schedule of the project being slated for 2023 with construction to begin in 2024.

Councilmember Riley asked for an update on the potential for a third lane in Coon Rapids.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated that Senator Newton introduced that Bill requesting \$25,000,000 for the third lane in the Senate.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that the report states that the City funding is flexible and asked if that should be shown more concrete in that the City has funds set aside for the project.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that the City contribution of \$4,000,000 is proposed to come from the public improvement revolving fund and MSA funds, noting that the projected City contribution has actually been reduced to \$3,500,000 because the City has already contributed \$500,000.

Mr. Tinklenberg commented that it is great to see this project moving along and see the progress that has been made over the years.

Mayor Kuzma referenced the properties that were purchased using RALF funds and asked for additional details.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill noted that RALF funds are not grant funds and are loaned funds through the Metropolitan Council. He stated that the properties that will not be needed for the highway project will be sold and those funds will go back into the RALF fund. He stated that once the layout is locked in for the highway, they could discuss selling the properties that will not be needed.

2.02: Discuss Updating the Council Committee Appointments to Include the New Ward 1 Councilmember

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Mayor Kuzma commented that during the last discussion related to appointments, it was decided to hold off on the appointment to the EDA until after the special election results were known. He commented that Councilmember Heineman was a member of the EDA before joining the Council but noted that Councilmember Howell is also interested in that appointment. He stated that he would not support having three members of the Council on the EDA. He explained that the intent of having advisory Boards is to provide additional input and opinions to the Council and stacking a group with three members of the Council would seem counterintuitive. He recommended that Councilmember Heineman continue to serve on the EDA.

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the proposed changes to the appointments.

Councilmember Howell asked if a majority of the Council could change the number of Council appointments on the EDA to three.

Mayor Kuzma replied that he believes that a majority vote of the Council would be needed to change that ordinance.

Councilmember Howell commented that during the Council worksession in January the Mayor commented that he would prefer Councilmember Heineman remain on the EDA, if elected, and that Councilmember Woestehoff be the liaison to the Planning Commission because of the previous experience of those members. She stated that it was generally implied that veteran Councilmembers would receive preference over new Councilmembers for assignments, with the exception of the EDA where the seat was being held in case a current EDA member won the special election. She commented that because she won her seat on the Council in November, she would be more of a veteran Councilmember than Councilmember Heineman. She stated that while the Mayor appoints that position it is voted on by the Council for adoption. She stated that the Mayor made a statement at a previous meeting that he comes to the meeting without making a decision but did not receive that impression from the previous discussion. She asked why she would be unqualified for the EDA position simply because she was not a prior member.

Mayor Kuzma stated that the EDA position is the only appointment that he makes the recommendation on.

Councilmember Heineman stated that he did suggest allowing three members of the Council on the EDA because of the vacant seats but noted that he has since spoken with staff and is aware that there have been applications submitted for those seats. He was no longer interested in allowing three members of the Council to serve on the EDA because there are residents interested in serving. He stated that as much as he has loved serving on the EDA, he would give up that assignment and instead serve as the Park and Recreation Commission liaison. He stated that he would also serve on the Happy Days Committee. He noted that Councilmember Howell is an At-Large member and would most likely receive additional calls from residents. He reviewed some of his background experience with the armed services, public safety, and working with members of the youth as those could help to identify potential assignments.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he would be happy to give Councilmember Heineman the Anoka County Fire Protection assignment.

Councilmember Heineman agreed that he believed he could add value to that position.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked that Councilmembers Howell and Heineman review their business experience as related to the EDA seat.

Councilmember Heineman commented that while he has not owned a business, he is the number two at his current company which has grown very rapidly, and he does provide input to the CEO. He stated that he has experience in many areas of how a business is run. He stated that running a business is not a prerequisite for the EDA but business experience in general is beneficial.

Councilmember Howell commented that she is a small business owner, noting that she has run a music studio for the past 17 years. She reviewed some of her other related business experience in Indiana and for a food service business in Osseo.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that each member seems to have equal amount of experience and could serve the role well. He stated that originally, he was interested in the EDA but would be happy to have one of these members serve that position.

Councilmember Riley commented that if Councilmember Heineman is willing to defer, he would suggest Councilmember Howell be the member with Councilmember Heineman as the alternate.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that Councilmember Heineman could be the liaison for the Park and Recreation Commission and she could change to the alternate. She stated that she would also be willing to give Councilmember Woestehoff the liaison position for the Planning Commission and she would become the alternate for that as well. She commented that the Joint Powers Board for the Ramsey Nowthen Fire Board will most likely dissolve and therefore that appointment will no longer be necessary.

Councilmember Howell stated that she could be the alternate with Councilmember Specht as the lead for the Law Enforcement position.

Councilmember Specht commented that he would be fine remaining as the alternate with Councilmember Howell as the lead.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill reviewed the proposed changes to the appointments and confirmed the consensus of the Council.

2.03: Discuss Request from the Anoka Area Ice Arena Association Board (AAIAA)

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley asked why the City only collects at three locations.

City Administrator Ulrich replied that the City collects from any location that conducts charitable gambling but recognized that some were not shown on the chart.

Councilmember Heineman asked for background information on the five percent tax on charitable gambling and when it began.

John Lichter, AAIAA, replied to his knowledge AAIAA has always paid that tax.

Councilmember Heineman asked the reason for the requested change.

Mr. Lichter replied that they are not charged that tax by Anoka. He advised of upcoming infrastructure improvements that are needed at the arena, noting that cost will be \$4,000,000. He stated that if the tax were suspended, it would assist the organization in making the monthly

payment on that debt service. He stated that there are over 200 Ramsey residents that skate in the Anoka organization. He noted that Ramsey residents are also members of Anoka High School and the Elk River organization, which both use ice time at the arena. He stated that turf was also installed to provide soccer and lacrosse use.

Councilmember Musgrove asked why the tax came about. She stated that the organization receives revenue from the ice time it rents, and the fees paid by members. She asked if the high school pays for ice time.

Mr. Lichter replied that the high school does rent ice time at a lower rate because it uses off-peak ice time, and the remainder of the time is sold to the Anoka and Elk River associations. He stated that those funds cover a portion of the operations for the facility. He stated that the remainder of the operation costs and capital needs are funded through charitable gambling.

Councilmember Musgrove asked the precedent that would be set in giving these funds back as a contribution.

City Administrator Ulrich replied that the City has not typically given contributions outside of its boundaries so this would somewhat set precedent. He noted that the City has been asked to participate in City wide events in that manner in the past which it chose not to participate in. He stated that while this would set precedent, it would not necessarily be a bad precedent because of the number of Ramsey residents that use the facility. He stated that there is a benefit in keeping the fund solvent as it can be used to offset general fund expenses as well. He stated that the five percent tax ensures that some of the funds earned through charitable gambling go back to the community.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for details on reducing the tax to 2.5 percent rather than the five percent. She asked the duration AAIAA is requesting the five percent tax be waived.

Mr. Lichter replied that AAIAA would like to see a period of 20 years to align with the payment of the debt services for the infrastructure improvements.

City Administrator Ulrich commented that \$69,000 are collected annually through the five percent tax therefore reducing that to 2.5 percent would reduce that by half.

Mayor Kuzma commented that he does not support lowering the five percent tax as he would be concerned that would set a precedent to open to the door for requests from other entities.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the \$69,000 is generated through only the AAIAA charitable gambling.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that his reply was if the tax were reduced across the board for all charitable gambling entities, not just AAIAA.

Councilmember Riley commented that he did not believe the City could play favorites and tax one entity one amount and another entity another amount, therefore he would not want to change the

tax. He stated that the organization could be added to the list that the City contributes towards with its charitable gambling funds.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would agree with those statements but asked if AAIAA would meet the criteria for receiving those funds.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that AAIAA could submit an annual request to be considered during the annual budgeting process similar to the other organizations the City contributes towards. He stated that the criteria are not specifically defined and therefore under the current criteria AAIAA would qualify as it serves Ramsey residents.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that the organization does serve Ramsey residents and therefore he could support a contribution but does not support lowering the tax.

Councilmember Heineman asked if the ice is completely sold out or whether there is additional ice time available.

Mr. Lichter replied that ice is sold to the public but only after the main customers reserve their ice time. He confirmed that almost all of the ice time can be sold.

Councilmember Heineman agreed that he would not want to set a precedent on this issue, choosing winners and losers by changing taxes for different organizations. He stated that if the organization could use assistance in marketing perhaps the City could assist with that.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she would like to further discuss this issue during the budgeting discussion. She stated that if the tax were lowered perhaps more organizations would participate in charitable gambling which could increase the overall amount of funds.

Mayor Kuzma commented that the consensus of the Council is not to change the tax on charitable gambling and to instead direct the organization to submit a funding request that could be considered during the budget discussions.

2.04: Review and Discuss the Remote Attendance Policy

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley asked how the City would know when the pandemic has ended.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that would refer to the emergency declaration by the Governor.

Councilmember Woestehoff referenced the public remote attendance noting that can be challenging for staff but appreciates that it provides additional opportunity for residents to participate. He suggested that perhaps that be allowed to continue for six months post-pandemic and then be reviewed after that time.

Councilmember Specht agreed that he would like to see the limitations put back in place following the pandemic. He stated that he also agreed that this should be left open to allow remote attendance for the public.

Mayor Kuzma asked for input from staff.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill provided details on the staff work that is necessary for remote attendance. He stated that QCTV is available for residents to watch the meeting broadcast live and asked if the remote element would be desired for participation as well. He noted that if participation is desired, there should be additional consideration for IT needs.

Mayor Kuzma asked if there are additional CARES Act funds that would be available for equipment needs.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that additional funds may be available but believed that was slated for staff time and ongoing resources rather than equipment.

Councilmember Musgrove recognized that Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stays late to assist with remote meetings and asked if IT staff is also staying late. She asked if staff is being compensated for that time. She noted that some of the items in the policy are being waived because of the emergency declaration. She stated that she would like to return to normal as soon as possible as there is no guidance from the Governor as to how long this will go on.

Councilmember Heineman asked when the pandemic would be considered over. He stated that he liked the recommendation of staff and suggested that this be reviewed in three to six months rather than linking this to the pandemic terminology because that is ambiguous.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that people are getting more comfortable as more people become vaccinated. He noted that some Commission members will not be comfortable returning until more people are vaccinated. He stated that staff can continue to engage the Commission members to determine their level of comfort for in person meetings.

Councilmember Howell suggested that this policy be brought back in three to four months to determine what works for the City and removing the language that muddy the waters related to the pandemic.

Councilmember Heineman agreed that the timeframe would allow the evaluation to be based on the City and conditions and comfort levels at that time rather than linking it to restrictions. He suggested this be reviewed in 90 days.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that being vaccinated is a medical issue. She stated that it is the choice of an individual as to whether to be vaccinated and the City cannot require proof.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that the City is not going to ask individuals whether they have been vaccinated and it would be more based on the comfort level of individuals.

Mayor Kuzma confirmed the consensus of the Council to reevaluate this in 90 days. He noted that there also seems to be interest in continuing to allow public participation remotely but recognized that would place an additional burden on staff and resources that would need to be discussed in the future in terms of budgeting and allocation of resources.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the Commission members participating remotely still receive a stipend.

Administrative Services Director Lasher commented that most Commission members receive a stipend of \$25 per meeting but a large number of members waive that payment. She noted that those members are using their own equipment to attend remotely.

Councilmember Woestehoff referenced Section G, under exceptions, and stated that perhaps language be added that allow a Commission or Council member to attend remotely if they have a medical condition. He noted that would get away from the linkage to the pandemic.

Councilmember Specht commented that it is important that people attend in person under normal circumstances.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that there are rules around remote participation under normal circumstances outside of a pandemic and reviewed those guidelines.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that because of the pandemic the State is reviewing rules for remote attendance and there will likely be changes coming down in the future. He stated that staff will bring this back for evaluation in three months.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the future topics calendar.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

Councilmember Howell asked if the worksession recordings could be made available to the public.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that could be discussed when the remote attendance policy is discussed as that would require additional resources.

Councilmember Riley commented that there was previous discussion related to ensuring agendas are ready from staff the Thursday before the meeting to ensure proper time for review. He stated that the agreement was made that would also apply to members of the City Council that wanted to move items from the Consent Agenda or add cases.

Councilmember Howell stated that she would prefer that it remain flexible.

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the process for considering resolutions and noted that typically staff uses discretion but agreed perhaps there should be additional discussion on that process by the Council.

Councilmember Howell stated that it was her understanding that the Council has the option to add ordinances if seconded by another Councilmember. She assumed the discussion was related to the request by herself and Councilmember Heineman to add resolutions to the agenda.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that his comments were related to resolutions brought forward by other groups, using the examples of Black History Month or Daughters of the American Revolution.

Mayor Kuzma agreed it would be helpful for the Council to have a discussion on the policy.

Councilmember Heineman agreed that while it is good practice to have as much time for review as possible, the Charter also gives the Council the ability to amend the agenda at any time. He stated that while it would be a best practice, the Charter allows for amendment of the agenda at any point.

Councilmember Howell stated that if the Council does not like the process it should look to amend the Charter. She stated that she would prefer for proclamations to come through worksession before appearing on the regular agenda. She believed that the flexibility should remain for Councilmembers to amend the agenda.

City Administrator Ulrich noted that he will add the topic to a future worksession agenda for discussion.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:57 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.