

**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 23, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich  
Finance Director Diana Lund – attended remotely  
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 – attended remotely  
City Engineer Bruce Westby – attended remotely  
Recreation Specialist Abby Proulx  
IT Manager Jason Fredrickson  
Communications and Events Coordinator Megan Thorstad – attended remotely

**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: Receive Update on Discussions for the Potential Expansion for Loral I Armstrong Delaney Central Park**

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Heineman commented that if the flex field is used, his assumption would be that the baseball field is not used. He asked if better positioning of the baseball fields occurred would that capture the same amount of field space utilizing open space without hampering use of the other fields. He stated that if the southern facing fields were shifted it would require less leveling of ground and less expansion area.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that the rectangles use about 330 feet, which is the largest field size. He noted that many sports use smaller fields so that could then work. He stated that there are other elements such as topography and wetlands that hamper some of the other areas. He stated that the full-sized fields could be available for fall soccer or football when there is not the same need for softball. He noted that these are simply concepts to think about possible expansion.

Councilmember Riley stated that the first question was whether the City wanted to buy land, which was not recommended by the Park and Recreation Commission and therefore this appears to be concepts based on what the City could accomplish through park dedication.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood confirmed that initially the Church asked if the City wanted to purchase 11 acres and the Commission was not comfortable purchasing the property without knowing the needs which led to the notion of ghost platting. He stated that input was then received from the Athletic Association as to its needs which led to the discussion related to park dedication through development instead.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she brought forward expenditures in the budget for last month related to \$4,800 for Central Park expansion. She asked for additional details on those costs. She asked if a wetland delineation was recently completed for all City property.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that he did hire a consultant to complete the configurations in order for the Commission to review plausible land use for the park. He stated that the time for the consultant to complete that service, review the City's wetland delineation, setbacks and other requirements had an hourly cost of \$120 and a total cost of about \$4,700.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this process would be followed for any park process and not just this instance. She stated that a while back there was discussion related to the City not needing to purchase land here and instead develop the Lake Itasca Park and asked for additional input.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that it is important to have concept plans for park planning. He stated that the potential for further developing Lake Itasca is still there. He noted that the primary question had more to do with whether to purchase raw land at a cost of \$500,000 or whether the Commission would be better served by using those funds in a different manner. He stated that the Commission agreed that planning in more of a strategic manner would make more sense. He stated that there is not real urgency to purchase more land as expansion could fit together with future development.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that this park already has more features such as irrigation and increased parking. She stated that she would like to have more accuracy on how much land would be provided through park dedication and whether there would be an additional land cost to the City.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood noted that additional details related to park dedication would be known when a sketch plan or preliminary plat is actually submitted.

Councilmember Specht commented that he is a fan of Central Park and commented on how busy the park gets during tournaments, therefore he would support getting land when available before that option is no longer.

Randy Bauer spoke in representation of the Church of Saint Katherine Drexel and stated that there is a developer interested in purchasing 11 acres from the Church in order to construct homes with 55-foot lots. He stated that the property is currently zoned for 80-foot lots and the developer is interested in whether the Council would support that change in zoning. He noted that this is a rough concept, and the layout would be changed to avoid planned uses of the parcel by the Church. He provided details on the planned development of the Church and related park dedication along with possible park dedication from residential development. He stated that the developer wants to know if the Council would be interested in rezoning of that portion of the property to rezone the property to support smaller lots before investing additional time and funds.

Mayor Kuzma commented that the consensus of the Council is not to support a change in zoning for smaller lot sizes.

Mr. Bauer commented that the developer was only interested in that option for residential development, therefore the Church will proceed solely on its development which would equate to a half-acre of park dedication and any desired land for park expansion would need to be purchased by the City.

## **2.02: Discuss Potential Ordinance Regulating Targeted Picketing in Residential Neighborhoods**

Police Chief Katers reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if picketing would cover someone setting up a tent to establish residence on a property. She stated that this would cover sidewalks and yards and asked if this would also address the street.

Police Chief Katers replied that other cities have defined this through zoning, residential versus commercial areas. He stated that there is language related to blocking street or access to driveways. He noted that a block party that blocks off access to a neighborhood requires a permit whereas an impromptu demonstration or picketing in a residential area could block access to a residential subdivision or homes. He stated that in reference to someone setting up a tent that would fall more under trespassing.

Councilmember Riley commented that he would like to see more follow up on this noting that other cities have ordinances that have been created and upheld.

Councilmember Heineman stated that he would like people to have the ability to express themselves but does not want to see misuse of the right and therefore would look into establishing rules and regulations. He stated that there are instances where people have claimed picketing rights and stayed in a residential area for days, which would cause problems.

Councilmember Specht agreed that there have been instances of extenuating circumstances in the past year. He stated that while people should have freedom of expression there should be some restrictions in place.

Mayor Kuzma asked if there are other cities that have enacted such ordinances.

Police Chief Katers provided examples of metro cities that have enacted ordinances in the past year regulating picketing in residential areas. He stated that those ordinances were prompted by demonstrations that occurred in their city. He stated that it appears that the Council would like to send the message that people have the right to express themselves but there are also rights of others to be protected as well.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that he would be interested to know if there are different standards for elected officials compared to general residents of the community.

Police Chief Katers explained that the Governor's residence is a public property and agreed that definitions could be added.

### **2.03: Acknowledge Resignation of the Part-Time Recreation Specialist and the Recruitment Process**

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the staff report.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood commented that this was reviewed in depth in 2018 and 2019 and there are efficiencies and cost savings in using a part-time employee rather than a temporary intern.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this position is still considered revenue neutral between the part-time position and intern.

Administrative Services Director Lasher commented that if the question were whether it would be budget neutral to bring on a temporary intern while recruitment is done for the part-time position, she would reply yes and noted that it could even be a cost savings.

Councilmember Musgrove clarified that her impression in the previous discussions was that the two interns have the same cost as one part-time employee for the position.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated that would be correct noting that two interns would have a higher cost than one part-time employee. He provided additional background information on the time staff spends onboarding each intern. He stated that as part of the 2022 budget discussions staff may ask to increase the position from 20 hours to 32 hours but believed that discussion would be better suited during the budget discussion.

Administrative Services Director Lasher replied that the cost of hiring interns has increased because the City has a hard time bringing on interns at the lower hourly wage. She stated that the

recruitment process for the Recreation Specialist position would take 10 to 12 weeks and therefore staff would like to pull from a current list of administrative interns to help will those duties temporarily.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for clarification. She asked if there is already someone being recruited for administration that would be used in this position in the interim or whether their hours would be expanded.

Administrative Services Director Lasher replied that staff is already underway in recruiting for the Administrative Services Intern, which is included in the 2021 budget. She stated that there are 18 applicants for one position and therefore one of the candidates may be interested in this role temporarily until the new part-time Recreation Specialist begins.

Mayor Kuzma asked if that would be temporary until the new employee comes on board.

Administrative Services Director Lasher replied that is correct.

Councilmember Heineman commented that hiring is expensive and therefore he would avoid a rotating cast of interns. He believed the part-time position would be more efficient and a better use of staff time.

It was the consensus of the Council to support the staff recommendation to begin recruitment for the part-time Recreation Specialist position and help fill those duties temporarily utilizing a candidate from pool of Administrative Services Intern applicants.

#### **2.04: Direction on Whether to Continue Waiving Late Fee Penalties on Quarterly Utility Bills**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley commented that he would support waiving the late fee at this time. He asked and received confirmation that past due bills are still assessed to properties.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that still occurs, this would simply waive the late payment fee.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would tend to go back to normal. She asked if the recommendation would be to continue through the first quarter or the remainder of the year. She stated that she does not want people to get in the habit of paying late without penalty.

City Administrator Ulrich commented that utilities are billed quarterly. He confirmed that this could return in June for additional direction on the remainder of the year. He stated that perhaps the policy return to normal beginning July 1<sup>st</sup>. He stated that the waived late fees are considered lost revenue and therefore federal relief funds could be used to recoup those costs.

Finance Director Lund stated that she spoke with Andover and that city is currently waiving the late fees until everything is reopened to 100 percent capacity. She stated that the second quarter bill is mailed July 25<sup>th</sup>.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed the consensus of the Council to continue to waive the late payment fees for quarterly utility billing and bring this item back to the Council in June.

## **2.05: Review 2021 Planning Session**

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Riley commented that as much as he dislikes this exercise, he agrees it would be important because this is a new group of people. He stated that he would not be interested in wordsmithing the mission and vision and would not find that productive. He believed starting with the document would be a good place to begin and adding input from there. He stated that the City has not used an outside facilitator for a while but agreed there could be benefit if someone is available from the League of Minnesota Cities.

Mayor Kuzma agreed that a lot of time and effort were put into the document and that should be used as a starting point.

Councilmember Howell commented that she agrees with Councilmember Riley and would like to see it done internally with staff rather than using an outside facilitator.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that the last time the Council went through this too much time was spent on the beginning as stated by Councilmember Riley. She believed there would be more benefit in reviewing the action plan and those elements. She believed that it could be done internally. She suggested that two meetings be allocated for this purpose as the last review was quite lengthy.

Councilmember Heineman commented that an outside facilitator would take time to get to the business, and therefore if the purpose is to get right to business, he would suggest using staff and completing this internally.

Mayor Kuzma commented on the process that has occurred over time to develop and update the Strategic Plan and believed that is a good format. He confirmed the consensus of the Council to complete this review in house.

City Administrator Ulrich commented that there will a higher-level review of the mission and vision and more focus on the goals and action items. He provided additional details on the anticipated scheduling.

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

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

City Administrator Ulrich stated that a list of topics was developed based on the previous feedback of the Council.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the fire department needs analysis would be an update.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the duty crew was put into place during the pandemic and information was provided related to efficiencies and response times. He stated that staff would like to present those numbers and provide an update if that is going to be considered a permanent change.

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

Mayor Kuzma stated that the regular meeting will most likely be long tonight and there will be more security in place during Citizen Input. He stated that he wants everyone to have a fair chance to speak but if someone is using vulgar language or being disrespectful, he will stop the speaker. He stated that if a speaker is repeating themselves, he will also stop them in attempt to provide an opportunity for everyone to speak. He reviewed the exit strategy should a problem arise.

#### **5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:42 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Kurtis G. Ulrich  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

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Katie M. Schmidt  
Deputy City Clerk

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