

**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 27, 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
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Deputy City Administrator Timothy Gladhill

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: Fire Department Duty Crew Update

Fire Chief Kohner reviewed the staff report.

Mayor Kuzma asked if there are duty crews at both stations.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that Monday through Friday the crew staffs station one and on Saturday and Sunday station two is staffed with the crew.

City Administrator Ulrich thanked Fire Chief Kohner for bringing this forward as it has made an improvement in operations. He stated that a reduction of two minutes in response time is significant for medical and fire emergencies. He stated that this seems to be the right time to switch to this model for the community.

Mayor Kuzma asked which truck responds to calls.

Fire Chief Kohner provided additional details on the vehicle that is used for different types of calls.

Councilmember Heinrich asked the number of current volunteers.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that there are currently 38 members. He stated that currently the department requires two four hour shifts per month. He stated that there are firefighters that take the minimum while the vast majority take more hours. He stated that they continue to look at the call volume to make any necessary adjustments. He stated that some members will retire in April of 2022, therefore they will begin recruitment prior to that as six months of training is required to bring a member up to speed.

Councilmember Heinrich asked if there is a concern with members that accept more than 32 hours.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that a maximum of three shifts per week are allowed to prevent a situation in which benefits would be required.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for details on the types of calls received and response times. She stated that within the past two years the fire department was not responding to all calls, but then there was a change to increase the type of calls the department responds to.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that the department replies to high priority medical calls and there was a change in coding, which may be what Councilmember Musgrove is referring to. He reviewed some of the types of medical calls that the department does not respond to.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for details on the change that occurred in 2018 or 2019 that caused an increase in the number of calls the department responds to, which she believed led to the implementation of the duty crew model in order to improve response time. She referenced the model shift cost comparison and asked if that only includes the pay rate or whether that includes training.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that only includes the hours for calls responded to.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there is a set number of firefighters on call in the case more assistance is needed for an incident above the members of the duty crew.

Fire Chief Kohner confirmed that if additional response is needed, they would revert to the paid on call members.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that there is benefit to members participating and asked if there has been an issue with not having enough members to staff a duty crew.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that in order to remain a member in good standing, one must respond to 33 percent of the calls.

Councilmember Musgrove thanked Fire Chief Kohner for looking at this and being proactive in trying to find cost savings and provide more efficient service.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that he attempted to find a model that is most beneficial to the residents in staffing the station at the most high volume call times.

Councilmember Heineman asked if there is a percentage of calls on average that require more than two responding firefighters.

Fire Chief Kohner replied that he does not have that average but could review the calls received to determine the number of larger incidents that required more than two members. He noted that there are some types of calls that require more than two members.

Councilmember Heineman commented that this is a smart model because of the decreased response time and guarantees that two members would respond right away. He asked if it would make sense under this model to split the pagers into two categories to reduce the chances that too many members respond.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that the City is split into two sections and each section is designated to either station one or station two. He noted that a structure fire would still go out to all members.

Mayor Kuzma thanked Fire Chief Kohner for the presentation and update.

2.02: Discuss Seeking Proposals for City Attorney

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that Councilmember Howell asked her thoughts on doing an RFP for City Attorney services. She stated that she supports this idea and had previously brought up the concept as it has not been done since 2013. She stated that the services for City Attorney are proposed to increase in 2022, and therefore she would support completing the RFP prior to that time to review rates.

Councilmember Howell agreed that it would be prudent to complete an RFP to review the available options.

Councilmember Heineman asked if there were periodic increases built into the contract and extensions since 2013.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that there were periodic cost of living increases which is common for an ongoing contract and approved by the Council each January.

Councilmember Heineman asked if the rates are consistent with the neighboring communities.

Mayor Kuzma commented that when the last RFP was completed the rates were very competitive. He stated that he could support completing an RFP to review the available rates for service.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he does agree that this process should be followed periodically and believed it should fall in line with the typical January review process rather than completing it during the middle of the year. He stated that it would not seem appropriate to

delegate staff time to be used in this manner right now and would want it instead to fall in line with RFPs for other services at the end of the year.

City Administrator Ulrich provided details on the typical length of the RFP process. He believed that two Work Sessions were held previously to review the RFPs received and then interview candidates. He stated that it is a fairly time consuming process, which is why the City does not complete this process each year and instead aims for the contract to last at least three to five years, if not longer. He noted that there would also be a transition time if the consultant is changed for professional services, which does require some additional staff time.

Councilmember Heineman asked if RFPs are typically completed in January for different professional services.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that would not be the typical timing because of the magnitude of the effort. He noted that if completing an RFP for legal and auditing, those would typically done on different timetables because the same staff is used, and the process involves different details. He stated that in January it would be more reasonable to check prices with other cities when reviewing contracts to ensure the proposed increases are in line with the market.

Councilmember Heineman stated that if the efforts cannot be duplicated to save staff time, then it would not make sense to wait until January. He stated that he would appreciate the ability to readdress this at this point.

Councilmember Howell stated that it sounds that this is a cumbersome process and therefore she would prefer to begin this now rather than waiting.

Mayor Kuzma agreed that it is a cumbersome process and therefore if they begin this process now, it could allow for any change that may be made to occur in line with the beginning of the next year and with budgeting. He recognized that typically the City has maintained longer relationships with attorneys and believed that the current representation has served the City well.

City Administrator Ulrich asked if the Council would want to complete an RFP for prosecuting services as well. He noted that sometimes a firm provides both services.

Mayor Kuzma asked for input from Police Chief Katers related to prosecuting services.

Police Chief Katers replied that in the past there was one firm that provided both prosecuting and civil services. He stated that during the last RFP separate firms were chosen for the two services. He stated that the prosecuting services were changed again since that time and are currently under a three-year contract. He noted that there is a benefit is having access to both prosecuting and civil advice for the police. He stated that he is pleased with the prosecuting firm they are currently using and would prefer to keep the two services separate but would understand if the Council decided to go with one firm for both services.

Councilmember Heineman stated that he would support leaving prosecuting services as they are and moving forward with an RFP for civil services.

Councilmember Specht agreed that it would make sense to complete the RFP process to ensure the City is receiving the best value.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that an RFP was more recently completed for prosecuting services and therefore would support leaving that service out and completing the RFP for civil services.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that if this purely related to budget, he would support this but if there are other concerns driving this request, he would want those to come out now.

Councilmember Heineman stated that he did not bring this request forward so he cannot speak to the motives of others. He stated that he has his own opinion on the advice of the City Attorney and is not fully satisfied with that input. He stated that his decision is based solely on the reasoning that an RFP has not been completed since 2013.

Councilmember Howell agreed that this should be reviewed because of the length of the contract and time since the last RFP was completed. She stated that she was concerned with discussions related to franchise fees in the past and feels that the City opened itself up to possible legal problems that were not brought forward by the City Attorney. She stated that she has not been fully comfortable with the input received from the City Attorney on different topics, beginning with the franchise fee discussions.

Mayor Kuzma confirmed that there is consensus to complete an RFP for civil legal services.

2.03: Review Citizen Survey

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the staff report.

Councilmember Howell asked if an online survey would be sent to the City email list as well.

City Administrator Ulrich replied that the distribution could be done as desired and could include that list. He stated that the survey list recommends that a base of respondents be built over time and sampled to provide a better representation of the community.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she believes that placing the survey online would skew the results and the intent of completing this process to provide a random sampling. She stated that if the intent is to provide the survey to the entire community each year, she would then not see value in completing this random survey process. She asked if the survey was sent to individuals over 18, noting the statement that the person with the most recent birthday was intended to fill out the survey.

City Administrator Ulrich believed the oldest adult in the household was meant to answer the survey but confirmed he could follow up on that.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she found it interesting that QCTV is decreasing as a point of contact for residents to receive news. She stated that it will be interesting to hear about viewership trending information from QCTV. She was thankful that the public stands behind public safety.

Councilmember Heineman stated that he found it interesting that two of the lowest scoring areas were education, arts and culture and inclusivity and engagement. He commented that whether people volunteer with the City or engage with Councilmembers also seem to tie together. He stated that perhaps more volunteers could be recruited along with having more arts and culture activities.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that viewership of QCTV has increased in the past year due to sports coverage. He noted that over the air broadcasting is down because of the trend of people cutting the cord with cable. He stated that he likes the idea of the random survey the best but believes there would also be an opportunity to post a few questions online and keep that data separately.

Councilmember Heineman stated that social media engagement could be used to gain additional input related to the answers from the random survey questions.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that he agrees that a random sampling of residents provide a more honest answer as to how the City is doing. He believed that the opportunity should still be provided to the overall community and simply completed as a separate activity.

Mayor Kuzma commented that the random survey also has historical data that can be used for comparison.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he did notice that this is a fairly lengthy survey. He asked how the survey is administered.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that a postcard was mailed which provided a link for residents to complete the survey online. He stated that if it was not completed, a paper copy was mailed.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that perhaps there should be an option to skip questions on the related topic if a resident responds that they are happy with the services.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Mayor Kuzma commented that he would like to discuss insurance at an upcoming meeting. He referenced the City's current available insurance limits and the risk that could leave if there was an incident similar to those that other cities have recently experienced.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the quarterly fund update could occur in conjunction with the May 11th Work Session.

City Administrator Ulrich confirmed that could be done. He commented that the City is still awaiting guidelines on how the American Recovery Funds could be used and therefore May 11th may be too early to have that discussion.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that perhaps the discussion of funds scheduled for May 11th wait until the 25th to better align.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:50 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.