

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Special Work Session on Tuesday, May 18, 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
Finance Director Diana Lund
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
Deputy City Administrator Timothy Gladhill
City Engineer Bruce Westby

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kuzma called the City Council Special Work Session to order at 6:05 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Annual Planning Session

City Administrator Ulrich reviewed the intent of the planning session to identify common goals and identify the framework for the plan. He asked each member present to identify an accomplishment from the past year for the City and something they hope to accomplish from the meeting tonight. He stated that he would like to accomplish identification of common goals and stated that he is most proud of how everyone worked together through the pandemic and turnover between staff and the Council. He stated that he is also proud of how they were able to stay on track with projects and that everyone is coming together to form a new team.

Mayor Kuzma stated that he is proud of the franchise fee, as it was five years in the making. He realized that not everyone is on board with that but believed that after the budgeting process it would become clearer that the funding source is the best choice. He also welcomed the new members of the Council and hoped everyone could work together as a team.

Councilmember Riley commented that the biggest accomplishment in his opinion has been the funding that has been obtained for Highway 10, which he is very excited about. He stated that he would like to leave the meeting tonight feeling like everyone is on the same team with common goals, although everyone may have different opinions at times.

Councilmember Specht agreed that the progress on the funding for Highway 10 has been a huge accomplishment. He stated that he would like to see everyone continue to work together to do what is best for the residents.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that it has been exciting to see new projects coming forward for The COR in the past year which will soon begin construction and hoped that momentum continues. He stated that he would like to try to keep surprises to a minimum and have things more transparent for the members of the team and the public.

Councilmember Howell stated that she is most proud of coauthoring the resolution to not enforce the mask mandate. She stated that one goal of hers would be to reduce redundancy in the City Code.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that one of the biggest accomplishments of the past year in her opinion is related to the work that they did on the Nowthen Fire Protection JPA, noting that each city now has its own fire department. She stated that she is also proud of the self-assessment that was done related to the Americas Infrastructure Response Act, rather than using an outside consultant. She thanked the Public Works Department and staff for being responsive and completing the work in-house. She stated that going forward she would like to continue to bring ideas to the table and work together whether people agree or disagree.

Councilmember Heineman commented that when he ran for his position, he met a lot of residents and was impressed to see how many people were involved and interested and the length of time they had lived in Ramsey. He stated that resident retention is a great accomplishment for Ramsey. He stated that he would like to continue to bring businesses into The COR and build off that momentum.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated that his biggest accomplishment was getting the public works facility constructed. He stated that he looks forward to the water treatment plant as water has been an issue for many years.

Police Chief Katers stated that one of the accomplishments he is most proud of is the way his staff responded during the pandemic and periods of civil unrest. He stated that the department received its highest calls for service ever during the past year. He stated that tonight he would like to see high level goals for the future as well as find out things that the City is doing well and things that could be improved upon.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that he is also proud of the progress on the Highway 10 project. He noted that he is proud of the remote meeting technology that was able to be implemented during the past year and how effective the organization is going to be post-

pandemic. He stated that tonight he would like to see two or three main things identified that will define success when looking back in five years.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that she is very proud that they were able to keep everyone working during the pandemic and that everyone stayed healthy. She stated that her goal for tonight would be to have a good understanding of the direction for the next several months.

Fire Chief Kohner commented that his accomplishment would be the establishment of the duty crew this past year. He stated that he would like to find the ability to find some common goals tonight for moving forward.

City Engineer Westby stated that the accomplishment he would be most proud of is that his team was able to deliver a pavement management program that is two or 2.5 times more robust because of the funding available, even during the pandemic. He stated that they are also working to improve communications to the public. He stated that he would like to better understand the goals for his department, especially related to the pavement management program and the more robust program and related to the level of communications with the public.

Finance Director Lund stated that she is most proud of looking at the different funding sources of the past year including establishment of the franchise fee as a stable funding source for the pavement management plan and the mix of funding that was able to be used for the public works facility. She stated that tonight she looks forward to seeing how everyone works together, as this is the first time all the staff and Council have been in this type of setting.

City Administrator Ulrich acknowledged and appreciated the different points of view that were brought to that exercise. He read the organizational values, vision, mission, and objectives from the Strategic Plan. He confirmed agreement with those items.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the numbers have been updated in terms of population, anticipated growth, and number of employees.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that staff will review that to ensure those numbers are updated with the most recent data.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill led the group in a planning exercise to identify strengths and weaknesses.

The group took a short ten-minute break.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill reviewed some of the strengths identified including staff, public safety, community engagement, financial stability, park system, pavement management program, transportation, and planning and development. He reviewed some of the weaknesses identified including low tax base, image perception and code enforcement, desire for more retail and restaurants, staff resources, existing park infrastructure, roads, the website, general communication, community input/response to residents. He referenced an email that was sent out to the Council earlier today which mirrors the Strategic Plan with the intent of identifying items

that need further discussion, should be modified, or removed. He explained the different levels of the goals, strategies and actions of the Strategic Plan and the related timeframe in which that should cover. He reviewed the first high level strategy and stated that it seems there is strong consensus of the Council to keep that statement. He stated that Councilmember Musgrove proposed to add the language “while maintaining and increasing transparency and accountability” and asked for input from the Council as to whether to keep the item as written or add the additional language.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that staff understands their workloads better than the Council and was unsure that the Council would need oversight but agreed that transparency would help on a high level to explain to the Council why things work better or would provide more efficiency or cost-savings.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill suggested dropping accountability from the language, focusing more on transparency.

Councilmember Musgrove confirmed she would support that. She agreed that she does not want to get in the way of staff.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill polled the Council and there was consensus to leave the language as originally written and not add the additional suggestion from Councilmember Musgrove. He reviewed the additional action items identified from the staff survey and confirmed the consensus of the Council to add those items. He reviewed the strategy related to the pavement management plan and asked if that should remain in the plan. He stated that the discussion tonight should not focus on the franchise fee or pavement management plan but whether to leave the item in the plan.

Councilmember Riley commented that this item was already accomplished and did not expect to see it remain. He stated that pavement management is an important area, but he believed the item was accomplished and should be removed.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that the language could also be changed from implement a pavement management plan to evaluate the current pavement management plan.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she was glad to see that the item was still on the plan because it would provide an opportunity for discussion with the new Council. She stated that she would like the item to remain. She stated that there is a difference of opinion on how to fund the roads, whether that be done through the tax levy or franchise fee. She asked when the conversation would happen related to the road funding options.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that the Strategic Plan helps to populate the future worksession discussion topics based on priority. He acknowledged that this is an important discussion topic for the Council. He stated that perhaps discussions would occur along with the budget discussions which begin in July.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she feels this is very important and would want to begin discussions before the budget discussions begin.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed that evaluate would be a better word to use for the item rather than implement. He acknowledged that there would be ramifications to the budget and noted that a review was always built into the process.

Mayor Kuzma commented that some contracts have already been approved that are dependent on the current funding source. He believed that going through the budget process will be an important part of the discussion because it will provide background information on the entire financial position of the City. He agreed with changing the language to evaluate.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he would have also chosen to remove the item as currently written but agreed that changing the language to evaluate the pavement management fund would be appropriate. He stated that he supports the franchise fee and believes that it is the most efficient method of funding but would support evaluation and discussion.

Councilmember Specht stated that he would prefer to leave the language as written, even though the program has already been implemented.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that part of the statement is confusing as it does not state “a program” “franchise fee funding” or “tax funding”. She stated that everyone supports a pavement management funding source but not everyone agrees on franchise fees. She stated that there was a review built into the program through reassessment and evaluations. She stated that she would leave the item in the plan and having continued discussion on a pavement management program. She stated that most cities that had a franchise fee also had additional funding sources, similar to Ramsey.

Deputy City Administrator suggested using the language “continue discussions on a pavement management funding program”. There did not seem to be consensus on which language should be used. He noted that staff can continue to think of ideas for the language for this item. He reviewed the next action to identify and improve one organizational workflow process which could be amended to identify a new business practice within the organization.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that while this is a great goal, he would be unsure as to what that process or practice would be.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that there were two new action items identified in the last discussion and confirmed the consensus that this specific action could be removed. He confirmed the consensus of the Council to add an item related to reviewing social media programs. He moved onto the action item related to economic growth and development and confirmed consensus to leave that item and asked if there would be support to add an action to look for opportunities to increase the library of shovel ready sites for development.

Councilmember Specht commented that he would not want to see The COR become a flat dirt surface in preparation for unknown development timelines. He stated that if cost effective opportunities present themselves, he would support that but would not want to see the entire area flattened and dirt.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that shovel ready does not always mean the City preparing the site but can also mean knowing what would be needed by a developer to eliminate unknown elements.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for input on the availability of staff to complete that action and whether the cost would be recouped through development.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that the activity would be to eliminate the unknowns and make it clear to the expectations, which is built into the role of the Economic Development Manager. He stated that if the City were going to complete infrastructure improvements, the EDA and City would work to develop the funding mechanisms.

Mayor Kuzma stated that there could also be grant opportunities that could help to support those activities.

Councilmember Riley commented that the Council is not approving these expenditures and would approve each item as it comes ahead, noting that the cases would provide the additional details in terms of staff time and funding.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that it sounds like this is already the job of staff and asked why it would then need to be included in the plan.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill used the example west of Armstrong where the EDA and Planning Commission are working to support redevelopment of that area. He noted that discussion involves policy direction. He stated that this action item would indicate that the Council supports having those conversations, but the policy items would still continue to come to the Council for direction. He confirmed consensus of the Council to add that action item. He moved to the action item related to business retention and confirmed the consensus of the Council to keep that item as written. He identified a potential action item to complete a comprehensive City Code audit and update and the Council agreed. He identified a new strategy to create a positive image for residential neighborhoods, business districts and key corridors and confirmed the consensus of the Council to support that addition. He asked if there is support from the Council to move the streetscape plan to the parking lot list at the end of the plan.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this would include the node near the Rum River Hills golf course area. She stated that she would like to see the item remain on the list but agreed that it would be low level. She stated that she would support placing the item on the parking lot.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill noted that there are two developers interested in potential projects in that area, so perhaps that would be the time to bring that back. He confirmed the consensus of the Council to move the item to the parking lot. He moved to the next strategy related to the development master plan for The COR and asked if the Council would like to keep the item on the plan until the joint meeting with the Planning Commission occurs.

Councilmember Riley commented that this item has been thoroughly discussed.

Councilmember Specht agreed.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she agrees that The COR Master Plan should be reviewed but the multi-family housing policy has been discussed at length and a decision has been made by this Council.

Mayor Kuzma commented that housing needs to be provided for all levels of residents and if businesses are desired, housing would need to be provided for the people that work there. He stated that when multi-family housing is constructed, it immediately fills up and therefore would like to leave the item on the plan until the discussion occurs with the Planning Commission.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed sufficient consensus to leave the item related to review of The COR Master Plan and removing the language related to the multi-family housing policy. He moved to the item related to a multi-family property management program and noted that staff would suggest moving that to the parking lot list because that type of program would be resource heavy. He stated that there has been a new code enforcement officer added to staff and therefore a review could be done after one year to determine what kind of progress has been made with the code enforcement officer and with the crime free housing program.

Councilmember Riley commented that there might not be a good understanding of what this means. He stated that there are apartments within The COR and the City needs to make sure that they stay well maintained in terms of code enforcement, aesthetics and that they do not become a burden on public safety. He stated that he would like to address that proactively rather than reactively.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill agreed that it does make sense to stay ahead of that type of issue but noted that the City has high quality housing. He provided an example of a project that used rockface block that is eroding after ten years.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if that project has an HOA.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill provided input on different ownership and maintenance capability for different housing projects within The COR.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this type of program would go above typical code enforcement. She commented that she does not want to put too much burden on the City to regulate those issues but also doesn't want something to get to a point where it negatively impacts The COR.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill explained that typical code enforcement is reactive whereas this type of program would be proactive. He stated that perhaps staff reaches out to make contacts in addition to enforcement, using an example of an annual meeting with multi-family property owners.

Police Chief Katers provided additional details on the crime free multi-housing program. He stated that in his experience, the property owners that are more engaged and active tend to have less

issues. He stated that crime free multi-housing is specific to crime, whereas the other program being discussed is more related to ongoing maintenance. He stated that in order to have compliance on that type of program it would need to be mandated within City Code, as low-level property owners will not voluntarily comply.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he views this as two separate issues that he would support. He stated that he would be interested in learning more about the resources that would be necessary to have a crime free multi-family housing program. He agreed that the more the police department is involved in community engagement, the safer the community is. He stated that he also agrees with the property management program but believed that is a completely different issue.

Councilmember Heineman commented that as things start to deteriorate over time, it tends to create a spiral and environment for less than desirable activities. He agreed that the item should remain in the plan.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed the consensus of the Council to keep that item in the plan with additional clarification related to separate programs related to code enforcement and maintenance and then for crime prevention. He provided a brief summary of additional comments received including whether a strategy should be added to create volunteer opportunities to engage the community.

Councilmember Woestehoff provided an example of street cleanup projects that were organized by residents recently. He noted that perhaps the City could help to create additional opportunities for residents to take care of their property and neighborhoods.

Councilmember Specht commented that he is not against volunteer opportunities and programs but believed that sometimes those are more impactful when developed by the community itself rather than the City.

Councilmember Heineman stated that he simply had a question related to resources and whether it is already being done by the community. He noted that perhaps it could be included with community engagement or communications.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed the support of the Council to add that concept as an action item at this time. He reviewed the strategy related to enhancing community engagement which did not have specific action items and noted that staff believes that is more part of the everyday duties and therefore could be placed in the organizational culture section of the plan. The Council supported that change. He reviewed the strategy related to improving safety and mobility of the transportation corridors and confirmed consensus to leave that item as a high-level strategy.

City Engineer Westby stated that no traction has been gained with the County related to the CR 5 corridor. He confirmed that the item has been included on the plan for more than one year. He explained that as development proposals come forward, they include a portion of improvement to CR 5 as needed to support the development. He explained that the study looks at the corridor as a whole to project needs for the future and development projects impact how long the study will be

accurate for the corridor, therefore it is important to get the timing right for when the study is done. He stated that the County offered to assist with the study but noted that the County has other priorities at this time as well, including Highway 10.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill noted that while the City can continue to work with development projects as they come forward, that only looks at those sections piece by piece rather than the corridor as a whole. He stated that he would recommend keeping the item with a date on the plan as it puts more urgency on the item. He stated that if the City parking lots this item, the County would most likely do so as well.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that the study will take into account the future land use plans and what those would add to the corridor. He noted that a consultant study would use some staff time and hoped that the County could cost share that study.

Councilmember Riley commented that the City has made commitments to residents and neighborhoods over the years about doing this study each time additional development is added. He stated that this has been pushed down the road for a long time and felt it important to keep the item on the plan. He noted that if a consultant is needed to complete the study, he would support that.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed with Councilmember Riley to leave the item on the plan and also supported using a consultant.

Mayor Kuzma noted that he would support the item and would also like to see Anoka buy into the concept as well.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed the consensus of the Council to keep the CR 5 corridor within the plan as well as the Ramsey Gateway/Highway 10 project. He stated that each year Highway 47 is discussed and whether that should remain on the plan. He noted that there are currently improvements occurring at Highway 47 and Bunker Lake Boulevard, therefore this would not be an ideal time for a study and confirmed consensus to move the item to the parking lot. He reviewed a staff idea for a new strategy to enhance the priority streetlight plan to improve lighting intersections and promote pedestrian safety. The Council supported that addition.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she spoke with a resident that had concerns related to pedestrian safety and crossings and confirmed that she supports the addition.

Mayor Kuzma commented that the Public Works Committee received a presentation related to the value of signs in the past.

Councilmember Riley commented that along Highway 47, south of Xkimo there is a section missing of trail and asked if that trail section could be prioritized.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that staff completed a trail gap analysis and that could be added as a priority. He noted that there is a development proposal south of the Holiday Stationstore to convert the property from retail to residential townhomes that may come forward,

which would be an opportunity to provide that trail gap. He confirmed that trail gap analysis could be added to that new strategy. He reviewed the new strategy that had been added related to connecting the community to destinations and services, noting that there seems to be some confusion. He stated that staff is suggesting adding an action item to review the parks capital plan with the Council.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that the strategy seems to be poorly written.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that perhaps this is more related to recreation.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that this comes from the objective to have an active and connected community, using trailways and roads but also through events and recreational opportunities. He stated that it is a broad strategy that embraces physical connections and connecting the community through events. He stated that it could be split into two strategies, one focusing on physical connections and the other focused on culture.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that the strategy could be left as connecting the community to destinations, services, and activities and then action items could then be split into physical connections and recreational planning.

Councilmember Specht commented that based on some of the feedback he has received, he feels that sometimes residents feel that the current parks are neglected. He stated that he would prefer to maintain the parks infrastructure that the City already has rather than creating new things.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that perhaps the strategy includes both parks capital and the recreational programming. He stated that the park plan will deal with new and existing parks and the recreation plan will deal with programming.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would like to see what that would look like separated. She believed that maintaining existing parks and trails is important and then specific projects could be listed as action items. She stated that she did not believe the City has the job of ensuring people have things to do all the time.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that staff will work to develop language that supports the consensus. He asked if the Council would support a review of the current recreation plan and confirmed agreement. He stated that another action item could be to complete a parks system plan, which would address ongoing maintenance of existing parks infrastructure.

Councilmember Riley commented that it seems to be clear that people believe that this language should be tweaked.

City Administrator Ulrich commented that it appears clear that the Council would like to see action and implementation related to improvement of existing park equipment. He stated that perhaps the language is not related to planning but implementation of neighborhood or city-wide park improvements.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed that staff would develop the exact language but there is support from the Council to add that type of action item.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that she would like to include some type of funding for that activity. She recognized that new development supports the creation of new parks but there would need to be a funding source for existing park improvements.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed that a funding plan would be included in that action item. He reviewed additional advisory comments received. He reviewed the customer service process improvement strategy noting that it is another item that does not have action items and could be moved to the organizational culture portion of the plan. He reviewed some additional advisory comments noting that an additional action item could be added to review existing metrics and the system to track customer/resident interaction.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked the number of calls received per day from residents.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill was unsure of the number, but staff agreed that there are a lot of calls from residents. He noted that community development has received less calls since the implementation of the online permit system.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that perhaps there are additional ways to reduce the number of resident calls by increasing awareness of how residents can find the information they need.

Councilmember Specht commented that perhaps a feedback space could be created on the website as well for residents to submit comments.

Councilmember Musgrove suggested perhaps including a chat feature on the new website but realized that would most likely be more work for staff.

City Administrator Ulrich stated that there is the ability for residents to find answers on the website and that can be tracked. He stated that a good well-designed website could answer 80 percent of people's questions efficiently and could provide data on response times as well.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed the consensus to change that action item to introduce an interactive request feature as part of the redesign of the website. He moved to the next strategy related to enhancing sustainability and efficiency and asked for input from the Council.

Councilmember Heineman asked for input on what the word "enhance" would mean.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that the intention would be to do more than what the City is currently doing related to sustainability and natural environment.

Councilmember Heineman commented that the City does this well but does not market it well enough and suggested replacing the word “enhance” with “spotlight”. The Council agreed with that language change.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that staff would recommend adding an action item related to solar, electric charging stations and other opportunities.

Councilmember Howell commented that the Environmental Policy Board places electronic charging stations as a high priority on its Work Plan.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would prefer private industry making those improvements rather than the City.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed that there is not consensus from the Council to add that action item. He confirmed the consensus of the Council to keep the water treatment plant in the plan and to remove the public works facility from the plan. He stated that Andover set aside dollars for the sole purpose of locally funding open space preservation and asked if there would be an appetite from the Council to look into that type of opportunity.

Councilmember Musgrove asked what is meant by that and if there are any areas that the City would have in mind.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that Andover went out to its residents with an advisory ballot question to determine if they supported levying public dollars to set aside to acquire and preserve open space property to protect it from development.

Councilmember Specht asked if those dollars could have been used for the tree area within Riverstone South.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed that the funds could be used for that type of purpose.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that while she thinks it could be a good idea, it would be difficult to ask for taxpayer dollars to secure land that they may not ever visit and could eventually be sold for another purpose.

City Administrator Ulrich clarified that if land is purchased in this manner, it could not be sold for a future purpose and would be dedicated similarly to park land. He stated that the property would not generate taxes but would also preserve areas from development.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that he would support that concept as the land could not be sold for another use in the future. He believed that most residents would support that type of use, as long as the intent is clearly communicated. He stated that there is a “park” on Variolite that he would consider a good concept of open space. He stated that perhaps this could provide funding to protect land sources of that nature that have a value outside of development.

Councilmember Specht commented that he could support this if it is put on the ballot and supported by residents.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there would be a provision that would protect the residents from having to purchase property because a neighbor wants the vacant lot next to them protected.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that the City would make the choice on which properties to acquire most likely choosing properties that rank highly on the natural resources inventory. The Council supported further exploring the concept. He confirmed the consensus to keep the overarching strategy to strengthen and enhance the overall brand of the City. He stated that perhaps image is added to make the strategy more well-rounded. He confirmed agreement to keep the zip code strategy and summarized some of the advisory comments.

Councilmember Specht stated that he believes it would be a cool idea to have a holiday lights competition city-wide. The Council supported adding that as an action item. He continued to review items that have high support to remain in the plan related to communications. He reviewed the high-level strategy related to organizational morale and the proposed action item related to the balanced scorecard and updating of the telecommunications policy.

Councilmember Musgrove asked the definition of high in terms of morale as different employees have different needs in terms of morale. She asked if it would be unrealistic to desire high morale.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that it is important for the City to have high employee morale and that has been a goal and focus for many years.

Administrative Services Director Lasher replied that the metric used is 70 percent or greater employees rank as high organizational morale.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed the consensus to keep that strategy and again reviewed the action items proposed related to the balanced scorecard and telecommuting policy.

Councilmember Woestehoff commented that when he onboarded for the Council, he received feedback from staff that questions should be asked early to ensure those questions can be addressed in the case and/or presentation. He believed that having those answers presented in the case and/or presentation also helps to inform residents that may have questions related to the agenda items.

Councilmember Musgrove commented that would be a good objective but also understands that the Council does not receive the packet until Thursday evening and may not have the ability to thoroughly review the information prior to the meeting date.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he would not suggest having it included as an action item but instead woven into the culture side to attempt to be as well prepared and transparent prior to meetings.

Councilmember Howell stated that idea sharing is a good concept. She stated that she sometimes has residents reach out to her late in the day prior to the meeting which requires a case to be pulled from consent.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill stated that during the pandemic staff got used to completing meetings virtually. He stated that there is an idea to have additional events to strengthen relationships with staff and the Council, using the example of cookies with the Council. He confirmed agreement to add that action item.

Mayor Kuzma stated that in the past when they were able to hold that event it was always a great event.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill reviewed the strategy to strive to reflect demographics in the community and confirmed agreement to add that item to the culture section of the plan. He reviewed a comment related to unconscious bias and asked for clarity on the intention and whether it should be added as an action item.

Councilmember Woestehoff: “That was me again if you couldn’t tell, thanks for laughing Riley. I think it is important and I don’t mean any disrespect by this at all, because I fully understand the case and your comments were not meant to be derogatory by any means, that wasn’t anything to do with it. I hope you realize that. But I feel like in my past 5 years, I’ve gone through a handful of unconscious bias training and other things that really helped me as person reflect on the way that I speak and the tones that I use and the listening that I have participated in, and using that as a methodology, because one, there wasn’t really a reason for all that conversation around you to happen related to the Japanese American conversation. I don’t know that that needed to happen, if, not saying that it was preventable, but at the same token there are potential opportunities for us to just open our eyes up a little bit and that was just one example, and again I mean no disrespect by saying that, I think it just is an opportunity maybe we all can spend a little time understanding that because Asian Americans are a big small chunk of this community and many others, and I wouldn’t want the things that have been said to be taken out of context or inappropriately. So, that’s kind of where this came from and feel free to yell at me.”

Councilmember Howell: “So, can you explain what unconscious bias means.”

Councilmember Woestehoff: “Yes, so for me a lot of the things that I’ve been trying to focus on, are really around the fact that as a middle age, middle income, white dude, I have a certain perspective on what the world is, and that’s not always the case, and it has allowed me to at least take a step back and realize that in talking to you, you may have a very different perspective of that world. It’s not necessary a conscious effort when I may say something inappropriately by any means, but it is just the unconscious state of my historic life, being who I am, the experiences that I have, I have specific biases toward certain things or what not, around, you know, I used to talk over women quite a bit, and that was a bad thing, I have worked really hard on that, and that was part of the last 5 years of my life has really been focusing on not doing those things and listening. To me, that’s an opportunity for us, perhaps not an action item, perhaps it’s just a conversation, not necessary needing to outline in the strategic plan, more a conversation point that I feel is valid for us all.”

Tim Gladhill: “The Chief does some unconscious training with PD, if you want to go first, Chief.”

Councilmember Howell: “I actually do. I’m aware of what unconscious bias is. So here’s the thing. You’re looking for a ghost of a ghost. You look at someone and you say, you have unconscious bias. You don’t know that you are biased, but you are. And I can’t pinpoint what it is, but I have the right with my immutable characteristics to judge your immutable characteristics that I’m looking at and I’m assuming are there, because I actually didn’t ask you. I’m just looking at you and I’m making the assumption that my immutable characteristics are superior to yours and can judge your immutable characteristics and what you really mean even though you never said it.

There is a problem with that. I never said what I was accused of saying. We’ve had the discussion. I do not have unconscious bias, you can’t... so unconscious bias. What do you know about me? What do I know about you? Why if somebody who shows up that looks a certain way, do their immutable characteristics supersede somebody else’s immutable characteristics? It makes absolutely zero sense.

I gave an example of basically executive orders. I have always my entire life been against executive order powers being abused by anybody. I don’t care what office they are in, it’s problematic; what party you are, it’s problematic. That is what I brought up. I gave an example. Because I don’t look at people for the color of their skin. I don’t. I haven’t my whole life. And you can say I have unconscious bias because I don’t know that I look at people that way, but I don’t?! You don’t even know what my heritage is!

I gave an example in history where people were treated absolutely atrociously. You can laugh at me, or mock the fact that I think there’s a problem with masks. I never compared them to what the Japanese people experienced. What I did say is, I do really have a problem with executive power. You can admire the governor; I do not admire what he has done. There are people who have suffered under those policies and who has stood up for them? Who has stood up for the 5 or 10 or 15 people in our communities, or 100 or 115 who have struggled and have been castigated for their experiences? And then you know that dear lady. You know, I was so disappointed Mayor. You invited her for political buttons pushing against me, to push back on me. You used her and Mr. Taguchi used her as well. You guys used her and she allowed herself to be used. That was not the appropriate place for her to give a history lesson. She does have a lot to share with all of us. What an experience to go through! We can’t relate to that. But you guys used her in bringing her here in a session and caught me off guard and tried to accomplish something. I will never apologize for something I did not do. I do not have unconscious bias. You don’t know my heritage. You are looking at my skin color and deciding that you know who I am based on what I look like because you are determining that someone who looks different from me is superior. And the fellow who came in and talked, Mr. Kent, the same thing. He tried to chide me and humiliate me in front of everyone. What are we doing to each other?

And, I’m sorry this is like completely awkward for all of you I am sure, but this is inappropriate. You cannot pinpoint, you can’t look at someone and say you are racist, you don’t know you’re

racist, you have unconscious bias, I can judge your unconscious bias, but you can't see; you don't know you have it; its just subconscious, but I am superior enough to you that I can actually judge that in you because I've been trained in it.

What gives you that authority? What gave that authority to those people to come and judge it? Because you know, I looked at all the comments and all the trash written about me on the community pages. And Mr. Grimmer, who is a CD6 DFL chair who I saw you liked the post he put up with the letter condemning me from the group on the CD6 DFL page. He was arguing with a lady in the community who has suffered tremendously from this mandate. And who has stood up for her? She has been abused by people in the community for not being able to wear a mask. Her children have been screamed at. Who stood up for them? When did you stand up for them, Mayor? When did you ever stand up for the people who have suffered? Because that's what I didn't hear. Nobody's comfortable standing up for the minority; were only comfortable standing up for the minorities that are socially acceptable to stand up for and that is the problem that we have here. And Mr. Grimmer made a point because he was arguing with her on the pages. He said, "It's not what Chelsea didn't say, it's not what she said; it's what was implied."

We can look at what each of us say and we can make our own judgments and look at it through our own lenses, but do not tell me to ever apologize for something I never said. Conscious unbiased; anyway. It belongs on a dung heap!"

Councilmember Woestehoff: "I hear you, I didn't mean to bring up any of that, I want you to understand that I don't believe you meant to imply that Japanese Internment was a mask mandate, we can talk about that at a later date. My point was more around the fact that you say the color of someone's skin doesn't matter and, I understand that, but from my perspective it has to matter because we don't understand what some other people go through. My only purpose in this is to identify the fact that perhaps there are opportunities for us to take a moment and hear from other people and learn from them, which I know you agree with, however perhaps my wording was poor in both what I wrote and my presentation now, as it's, I don't mean to offend you by any means and I hope you don't take it that way. This has derailed quite a bit, but I think there is an opportunity for us to hear from Chief when he's back if there is an opportunity for Council to have a discussion about it at some point in the future. I don't think it has to be a strategic goal by any means but I do think it would be an important topic for us to visit at some point. I apologize that I equated it to that whole incident, it was a bad example, but honestly it is an example of where perhaps we are not listening to different perspectives as well as we could and I think that you did get more than you deserved on that one, I apologize."

Councilmember Howell: "Tremendously more is what I would say. If you go and look at the JACL website, its problematic. I'm going to put it out there. you know what, I look at people, I realize the direction critical race theory goes. I've done some reading on it, you know you have unconscious bias if your skin looks a certain color you're lower on the totem pole and you don't understand anything about oppressed people. It's baloney. I realize I'm being completely unprofessional right now. It is a bunch of baloney. Whose to judge it? Its theories that belong in a classroom. And applied to real life they have terrible results; terrible results."

Councilmember Specht commented that he does not think the Council should worry about this topic at this time. It was the consensus of the Council to move on.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill reviewed the existing parking lot list beginning with the development fee impact study, noting that it could move forward when time permits or when appropriate.

Councilmember Specht commented that he could see that this would take a lot of staff time and would prefer to see the ordinance review completed first. He stated that perhaps a comprehensive fee review is done every five years, or similar time period.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that it is very difficult to compare apples to apples in terms of fees because of the different types of development fees that cities use. He suggested leaving the item in the parking lot and noted that staff could share the robust development fee impact study that was completed in 2011 for more background for the Council. He noted that staff still completes periodic informal checks of different fees. He referenced the organizational staff plan that deals with high organizational morale that is found on the parking list.

Administrative Services Director Lasher provided additional background on the organizational staff plan study. She stated that she could attempt to complete a review internally or the Council could choose to hire a consultant to complete that action. She commented that she feels that each department is aware of their needs for staffing.

City Administrator Ulrich provided additional details on the interim approach that the City has taken with the departments reviewing their needs and presenting staffing requests in a manner to show the staffing that is needed to meet certain service metrics. He stated that if that method continues to be used, the Council should take into account that each department best knows what their staffing needs would be to address the items within the Strategic Plan.

Mayor Kuzma commented that sometimes the items within the Strategic Plan place additional burden on staff and therefore the Council needs to consider that when prioritizing goals and strategies in addition to the level of service that is able to be provided by City staff.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill confirmed the consensus of the Council to remove that staffing plan study from the plan and continue to follow the interim process to bring staffing requests forward through the budgeting discussions.

Mayor Kuzma asked each person to share one thing they will takeaway from the session.

Councilmember Riley commented that this has been paired down more than added to which will make the group more likely to succeed.

Councilmember Specht commented that he is excited to do the ordinance review.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he enjoyed the sticky notes as it helped to show that there is alignment on a lot of issues.

Councilmember Howell commented that the group will really miss Deputy City Administrator Gladhill.

Councilmember Musgrove appreciated the way everyone was able to speak freely and openly. She stated that even though everyone has a wide political background each person represents their residents independently. She appreciated the time to speak with everyone tonight.

Councilmember Heineman echoed the comments of thanks to Deputy City Administrator. He stated that it was great to see that even when there were disagreements, most times common ground could be found.

Public Works Director Riemer stated that he was pleased to see the agreement the group was able to reach on most items.

Police Chief Katers commented that there are many different opinions and the different perspectives helped to change his opinion on some items.

Deputy City Administrator Gladhill commented that he is always pleased to see how well aligned everyone is, even if the approach may be different.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that she enjoys these sessions. She noted that while everyone has passion, everyone wants the best for their employees and residents.

Fire Chief Kohner stated that it was nice to see the agreement on certain items between staff and the Council related to strengths and weaknesses.

City Engineer Westby commented that he noticed many more strengths than weaknesses.

Finance Director Lund commented that this helped to show that staff and the Council are on the same wavelength on the majority of topics.

City Administrator Ulrich also thanked Deputy City Administrator Gladhill and noted that he will be missed. He stated that the group discussion was great and thanked everyone for their willingness to participate. He commented that he looks forward to working together on the common goals identified.

Mayor Kuzma thanked Deputy City Administrator Gladhill as well and everyone that participated tonight.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The Special Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 9:20 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.