

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, July 27, 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
Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
City Engineer Bruce Westby
Senior Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl
IT Manager Jason Fredrickson

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 Presentation on Anoka County's 2023 Armstrong Boulevard/County State Aid Highway 83 and Alpine Drive Intersection Improvements Project

City Engineer Bruce Westby stated County representatives are present to provide a summary of the preliminary proposal for intersection improvements at Alpine Drive and Armstrong Boulevard. The City and County would both pay a total of \$150,000 and the total estimated project cost is \$1.5 million. County representatives are ready to go out and make contact with residents and wanted to bring the plans to the City Council for review and feedback. He introduced Nick Dobda, Elizabeth Markose and Jason Orcutt from the Anoka County Highway Department.

Nick Dobda stated he is a Design Engineer for Anoka County. He introduced Elizabeth Markose, Project Engineer, and Jason Orcutt, Program Manager.

Mr. Dobda gave a project status update on Alpine Drive/Armstrong Boulevard intersection improvements. He stated County representatives are ready to reach out to adjacent property owners with information on the project and to give them the opportunity to ask questions and

provide feedback. He noted an upcoming remote open house is being planned for residents who live within one mile of the project, and it is anticipated that City Council and City Staff will begin to receive phone calls and comments.

Mr. Dobda stated Armstrong Boulevard is a major north/south route to U.S. Highway 10 and the metro area. In 2018, there were 11 reported crashes at the intersection including one accident involving a bicycle. He added it is a rural, dimly lit intersection with a skewed angle and a volume of approximately 6,000 cars per day on the north/south route. He noted a roundabout would be a good candidate for this intersection.

Mr. Dobda stated, in 2018, the County reached out to the City and successfully applied for federal funding of \$1.35 million from a national tax base fund for projects that reduce fatalities on public roads. He added standard cost sharing will apply, with the City and County making up the remaining funding for the project.

Ms. Markose reviewed the proposed roundabout layout, which is appropriate for this intersection and the County's goal to improve safety and minimize impact to adjacent properties. She added roundabouts are becoming very popular as they are safer than stoplight intersections with an 80% reduction in crashes. She noted the southern quadrant of the intersection has more right of way, and might be a good location, and Alpine Drive would be realigned to enter the roundabout at a 90-degree angle.

Ms. Markose stated property impacts would be minimal, so that was a deciding factor. She added an area on the east leg of Alpine Drive would need to be reconstructed if that area were to be used, which would be an additional cost. She noted a property on the northwest corner has some impact, but everything else fits within the right of way.

Ms. Markose stated the roundabout design was laid out to slow traffic and increase safety. She added roundabouts are specifically designed for urban use with a raised central median, to slow traffic as it enters the roundabout. She noted the entry narrows to one lane with no shoulder.

Mayor Kuzma stated the City has generally had a problem with semi-trucks using this intersection to avoid the weigh station on Highway 10. He stressed the importance of being able to get safety vehicles through the roundabout but limit the movement and speed of semi-trucks.

Ms. Markose stated the roundabout will definitely slow things down.

Councilmember Howell stated that there are online comments that people who have joined the meeting cannot hear what is being said.

Ms. Markose stated the project will be started in early spring 2023 and will take 3 months to complete. She added it may be necessary to close the whole intersection while the roundabout is being constructed because it is done in one stage, and it will be concrete.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked whether there will be a grade change from the east side of Alpine Drive to the west of the intersection. He expressed concern about traffic hitting that area too fast.

Ms. Markose stated there may not be much of a grade change in that area as it is not very long. Mr. Dobda stated roundabouts are designed with physical cues for drivers to get them to slow down. He added it is impossible to navigate a roundabout at a speed faster than 15-20 miles per hour (mph). He noted, in roundabouts, drivers only have to look to the left, instead of all four ways. He noted roundabouts are more efficient in that they produce conflict points to slow people down.

Councilmember Riley stated this is a 55 mile per hour road. He asked whether traffic will be slowed to 15 mph. Mr. Dobda confirmed that within the roundabout the traffic will be 15-20 mph. He added the speed limit on the road does not change, but there will be advisory signs as drivers approach the intersection.

Councilmember Heineman asked whether there will be a raised flowerbed or something in the center, as he has seen in other cities.

Mr. Dobda stated there are standard roadway structures, and the center median is raised to obstruct oncoming headlights. He added some cities do plantings. He noted the City of Ramsey will be able to decide on plantings, grass or signage later in the design phase.

Councilmember Musgrove stated she appreciates this project moving forward, and that there will be funds for the project. She asked what the anticipated start date is, and whether there will be one lane throughout the roundabout.

Mr. Dobda stated those types of details will be worked out in the design phase over the next few months. He added the plan is to keep one lane open and not have a firm shut down.

Councilmember Musgrove stated her question was whether the finished roundabout will have one lane. Ms. Markose confirmed this will be a single-lane roundabout.

Councilmember Specht asked whether there would be a public input session. Mr. Dobda stated it is an iterative process, and the designers and engineers are still looking at different designs. He added they will provide details for individual property owners and have meetings in the next few months to get public input. He noted meetings will probably not be in person, as they have a lot of experience with virtual meetings now which work really well as they capture a broader audience.

Mr. Dobda stated any questions or comments from residents can be directed to him or Ms. Markose.

2.02: Discussion Regarding City Council Minutes

City Administrator Ulrich stated, for quite a while, the City has contracted with a secretarial service to do meeting minutes. He added the minutes of the May 18, 2021, Strategic Planning session

were completed by the transcriptionist in an executive summary fashion, and the City Council indicated that they would like to see more detailed comments. He noted City Staff requested that the transcriptionist provide a more detailed summary of the minutes, which City Staff received and is providing at tonight's meeting.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the more detailed version is longer than a summarized version, but less detailed than a verbatim record. He added the more detailed the minutes are, the more expensive the cost in terms of secretarial service. He noted the most efficient way has been to get an executive summary, and if a City Councilmember has a concern or wants additional detail, they would make corrections or statements when minutes are being approved.

City Administrator Ulrich stated a detailed summary would be normal for a strategic planning session, and that has been the City's practice and policy. He added a verbatim record can also be provided. He noted Councilmember Howell had some concerns about how this was portrayed in the discussion.

Mayor Kuzma asked what the difference is in cost between executive summary and a detailed summary.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated a typical work session would be approximately \$181, and near verbatim is estimated at approximately \$300. She added she would want to confirm those numbers with the owner of the secretarial service.

Councilmember Howell asked whether the audio recording could be uploaded and made available to the general public.

IT Manager Fredrickson stated he is unsure whether audio is made available to be stored forever. He added it would depend upon whether City Staff keeps the audio files. He noted he is unsure of the cost of data storage through Logis.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated data retention is guided by Statute.

Councilmember Howell stated, at the Environmental Policy Board meeting, some members had questions about the strategic plan, but information was not available. She noted City Staff had to listen to the recording again, which is a waste of time. She added everything should be available to the public for transparency purposes.

Councilmember Howell stated she would like the conversation between herself and Councilmember Woestehoff to be transcribed verbatim. She added she takes issue with his profiling of her which is racist, and he is pushing tenets of critical race theory that should be made available to the public. She noted she was not comfortable with the abbreviated minutes because they did not encapsulate the entire conversation.

Councilmember Specht asked whether the meeting recording could be made available to the public. He added that would be his suggestion.

Councilmember Heineman asked whether there are any procedural rules or laws that would prevent Councilmembers from recording meetings.

City Administrator Ulrich stated anyone can record a regular meeting, but closed sessions should not be recorded individually.

Councilmember Musgrove stated she would support having strategic planning minutes done in verbatim style because she would like to have more detailed information, specifically for an important issue like strategic planning. She added it is helpful for City Staff, the City Council, and the entire community to be able to watch and listen, and determine what points and issues are of importance. She noted some cities put their regular meeting videos on YouTube.

City Administrator Ulrich stated he can check all these options and add this issue to a future work session for discussion.

Councilmember Riley stated QCTV cable television could host it on their website, since they are already doing City meetings.

City Administrator Ulrich stated City Staff presents the detailed summary minutes for City Council review and approval. He added he will explore auto recording, Zoom, YouTube, and QCTV as potential options.

Mayor Kuzma stated he understands it is necessary to have additional detail for the strategic plan, but for work sessions, he would not be in favor of spending the extra money. He noted the City is trying to cut costs.

Councilmember Heineman stated there seems to be a consensus that strategic planning meetings and other similar meetings should be transcribed with more detail as it is beneficial.

Councilmember Musgrove asked whether City Council can get the minutes earlier rather than later. She asked when the minutes are available.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated City Staff receives draft minutes from TimeSaver approximately 2-3 days following a meeting, and after doing necessary follow-up and review, depending upon staff availability, the draft minutes are usually available 5 business days after a meeting.

Councilmember Howell asked whether Mr. Kurak's case could be reviewed before the budget discussion since he was present. City Administrator Ulrich agreed.

2.03: Request for 60 foot Right of Way thru Williams Woods Plat and Subdivision being considered by the City of Ramsey by Owner Tom Kurak (This case was moved from 2.06 to 2.03)

City Administrator Ulrich stated Tom Kurak has brought an issue to City Staff regarding access to his 40-acre property which is landlocked. A subdivision to the south of his property has gone

through the preliminary plat process and the final plat will be reviewed by the City Council, at which time Mr. Kurak's could bring forward his concerns regarding access to his property and modification of the final plat.

Senior Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl stated the property owner of the easement to the property being discussed was notified of this meeting but was unable to attend. She added the property owner respectfully requests that the City Council hear their side before any decisions are made.

City Administrator Ulrich stated no final decisions of the City Council are made in work session.

Mr. Kurak stated he is requesting a 60-foot right of way through Williams Woods plat subdivision for his 40-acre landlocked property. He added there is a 40-foot property line between his property and Williams Woods, and the exercising of applied easements is appropriate at this time. He noted the 40 acres, including Thorn Lake, has been explored, hunted and enjoyed by neighbors for over 100 years, with men and boys telling him about the land and the lake, which are pristine.

Mr. Kurak noted, if a right of way is not added now, it will be necessary in the future to add a street and parking lot for access in the southwest corner of the Williams Woods development, or through one of the 200-foot-wide lots that landlock his 40 acres on the other side. He noted the creation of a 60-foot public right of way would be a nuisance and inconvenience now, but it will be a blessing in the future.

Mr. Kurak asked the City Council to ease the distance of these lots adjacent to Caroline Acres Park, as they only have 1 access off 178th Avenue, and it is 1600 feet to the County Road. He added the easement could run through the cul-de-sac in Caroline Acres to relieve them from having one access.

Mr. Kurak stated he spoke to Mr. Gladhill 3 months ago and was told that he would pass Mr. Kurak's information to the City Council.

Mr. Kurak stated the City could consider having a public access or park trail to Thorn Lake. He added a sewer and water extension might bring 500 new homes to this area, and many people would want to get out there to Thorn Lake. He noted access for fire trucks and snowplows would be easier.

Councilmember Musgrove stated there was discussion at the Planning Commission meeting about parks fees, and where they would go. She asked whether a trail could be done similar to the Brookview development, using parks fees.

City Administrator Ulrich stated it would be premature to create a paved public easement on what is now private land. He added the City does not want to encourage the public to use private property. He noted a trail could be paved someday if the land is developed.

Councilmember Riley asked about Mr. Kurak's comments about connecting existing streets to the new development, and whether that requires further discussion.

Senior Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl stated this issue was heavily discussed at the Planning Commission meeting. She added there was overwhelming consensus from the neighborhood to the north that they do not want public access to the property.

Mr. Kurak stated many people in that neighborhood have access from their own backyards. He added they don't want anyone else to go back there, but they have paths from their own properties that lead into the property.

Councilmember Heineman asked whether it would make more sense to add a public easement on the southwest corner of Caroline Acres Park. He asked whether a park dedication could be done when the development is completed, to create a park connection.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated the City does not typically take land in lieu of park dedication fees, and wetland is unbuildable. She added the majority of the site to the east is wetland and would not be suitable for park dedication.

City Administrator Ulrich stated the Park & Recreation Commission noted that the park dedication for Williams Woods would be satisfied with cash in lieu of land. He added one Commissioner wanted to waive the park dedication fee. He noted the Planning Commission understood the highest and best use of the park dedication money would be for a future community park.

Councilmember Specht asked what the City's position is regarding another way to rectify the problem of this land-locked property.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated City Staff have consulted with the City Attorney and recommend that Mr. Kurak pursues a cartway petition under State statute to determine the best place for a 30-foot driveway to his private property. She added City Staff did not feel it was appropriate to involve the adjacent private property owners, especially if Mr. Kurak decides to develop the land or dedicate it for public purpose. She noted the cartway petition process is preferable to providing a full easement to unbuildable property.

City Administrator Ulrich stated this issue will be reviewed by the City Council as a final plat. He encouraged Councilmembers to contact City Staff with any questions or concerns.

2.04: Continued Discussion on 2022 Budget/Levy

Diana Lund, Finance Director, stated City Staff were planning to hold a full budget discussion tonight, but due to the late hour, two topics will be addressed: new personnel positions and Councilmember Heineman's road funding proposal. She noted three new personnel positions are proposed and will be addressed first.

Colleen Lasher, Administrative Services Director, reviewed a potential part-time receptionist/secretary position that is proposed for the Administration Department. The administrative Intern position would be eliminated. This new position would be scheduled Monday – Friday from 12:30-4:30 p.m. at the front desk, and would also assist with the Happy Days event, absentee voting, all lunch breaks, and be on hand to cover half of any needed sick time

or vacation days. Currently, all second floor administrative staff members cover the receptionist for lunch breaks and vacations, which is not a good use of City resources.

IT Manager Fredrickson, reviewed a potential full-time AIS Security Administrator position in the IT/Data Processing Department. This security position would perform credit card compliance checks, public safety training with the Police Department, security training for staff, as well as IT duties. The Administrator position would eventually become an IT Security Analyst.

Mayor Kuzma asked a question about body worn cameras and if this new position would be responsible for redacting information from the police cameras.

IT Manager Fredrickson stated the Administrator would not do redacting for body worn camera video, but rather would go out to training with the Police Department for public safety policy and regulations.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked whether any of these services are contracted with Logis. IT Manager Fredrickson stated this position will be the contact person for any network infrastructure changes, which is currently provided entirely by Logis. He added City Staff would have the ability to do infrastructure changes at any time without incurring extra costs.

Councilmember Riley asked whether this position would make a total of three F/T staff in IT. IT Manager Fredrickson confirmed that is the plan, although Calvin has given his two weeks' notice.

Councilmember Riley asked whether other similarly sized cities have three F/T IT staff members. IT Manager Fredrickson stated he has spoken to City Staff in other cities including Coon Rapids and Elk River. He added Elk River is a similar size to Ramsey, and they have four F/T IT staff, as well as an employee for the former energy plant.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated he works with 14 municipalities as part of his day job in IT, and none of the cities have less than four IT staff.

Councilmember Howell asked what the City's costs are for Logis. Finance Director Lund stated all of the City's applications are with Logis – general ledger, permits, special assessments, GIS, internet, and server backup.

Councilmember Howell asked whether costs could be cut by hiring a private contractor for a much better rate.

IT Manager Fredrickson stated he agrees that it would be difficult to replace Logis because they maintain all the City's infrastructure. He added, however, that is definitely something that can be considered. He noted he believes the City spends approximately \$9,000 annually for Logis.

Councilmember Specht asked whether there are other groups or services to which these responsibilities could be outsourced, and what that would cost.

IT Manager Fredrickson stated he reached out to a few companies who provide IT security services, and their fees were approximately \$15-25k annually. He added they did not seem interested in doing any leg work.

IT Manager Fredrickson stated he spoke with the security team at Logis, and they have connections with students in the U of M's security programs that want to get into the field as IAS Analysts. He added he believes there will be many interested candidates.

Councilmember Musgrove asked whether the City is offering a good starting rate, and whether the City should consider 32 hours instead of 40 hours. She asked whether the City should be planning for a fourth position, and whether that will need to be added to the Capital Improvement Plan (CIP).

IT Manager Fredrickson stated a fourth employee would be a discussion for next year.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated the job salary is in alignment with pay equity.

Councilmember Riley stated City Staff indicated that Logis is doing the work. He asked, if this position is not filled, what responsibilities will not get done.

IT Manager Fredrickson stated some items that are not currently getting done, network testing, can be contracted out to Logis. He added, as part of his job, he goes over network intrusions. He noted he would like someone who can come in and give that process the attention it deserves, ensure no damage has been done, and look for potential future damage.

Finance Director Lund stated the third F/T position that is being requested is Parks Maintenance Worker.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood stated the F/T Parks Maintenance Worker is required as population and maintenance demands increase every year. The position is necessary to fulfill expectations and meet the needs of the public. The City does not receive enough applications to fill these positions, as it is difficult to get people to commit to be on-call for lift stations, sewer issues, and snow plowing.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how many staff are doing this type of role. Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood stated four staff are dedicated to parks maintenance, with 1 person on the large mower for 30 hours per week. He added a dedicated irrigation staff person handles irrigation issues and is not available for other duties or activities.

City Administrator Ulrich stated this discussion can be continued on August 10, 2021.

2.05: Discuss Mississippi River Cities and Towns Initiative Membership

No discussion.

2.06: Discuss Interview Date and Process for Civil Legal Services

No Discussion.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

No Discussion.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
Deputy City Clerk

Drafted by Mary Mullen
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.