

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, August 10, 2021, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Members Absent: Mayor Mark Kuzma

Also Present: City Administrator Kurtis Ulrich
 Finance Director Diana Lund
 Fire Chief Matt Kohner
 Police Chief Jeff Katers
 Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Mark Riverblood
 Public Works Superintendent Grant Riemer
 Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
 City Engineer Bruce Westby
 Senior Planner Chloe McGuire Brigl
 Planning Technician Brian McCann
 Anoka County Commissioner Matt Look
 Anoka County Engineer Joe McPherson
 Legislative Consultant El Tinklenberg

1. CALL TO ORDER

Acting Mayor Riley called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:35 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Discuss a Date for a Joint Work Session with the Planning Commission and the Economic Development Authority

City Administrator Ulrich proposed the following dates for a joint Work Session with the Planning Commission and EDA: September 23 or 30, or October 12.

Councilmember Specht stated he is not available September 30, but he is available on September 23.

Councilmembers Musgrove, Howell and Heineman agreed they were also available on September 23.

The consensus of the Council was to hold the Joint Work Session on September 23, 2021.

2.02: Discuss Interview Date and Process for Civil Legal Services

City Administrator Ulrich stated applications were submitted by 5 firms to provide civil legal services. He added City Staff is requesting that the Council hold a 45-minute interview with each of the firms in one evening during a 4-hour time frame, on August 18, 19 or 23, with a proposed start time of 5:30 p.m.

Councilmember Specht stated Wednesdays are difficult for him.

Councilmember Musgrove stated Wednesdays and Thursdays work for her, but Mondays are difficult.

Councilmember Howell stated she would prefer August 23, but she could make the 18th work.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated he would prefer a Monday or Wednesday.

The consensus of the Council was to interview firms for civil legal services on August 23, 2021 starting at 5:30 p.m.

2.03: Review U.S. Highway 10 Funding

City Administrator Ulrich stated the Highway 10 project is considered fully funded by the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) and Anoka County, with additional potential grant funding from MnDOT of \$31 million. He added an application for \$20 million in federal infrastructure grant funding is getting a lot of attention, as there are questions about whether the grant is needed, and whether the County is considering other projects for the funds.

City Administrator Ulrich welcomed County Commissioner Matt Look and County Engineer Joe McPherson, as well as legislative consultant El Tinklenberg, to discuss the grant and reasons why the City may wish to consider keeping or dropping the grant.

El Tinklenberg reviewed the legislative funding process. He stated members of Congress are allowed to indicate priority projects, or “congressionally designated spending”, and applications are required to be submitted within 1 week. He added there have been assurances that the Highway 10 funding application is being considered positively, but no projects have been approved to date.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated, with regard to rescinding the application, it is important to consider the City’s best interests, and the importance of Highway 10 to the community. He added there are supply chain issues on a worldwide scale, and general uncertainty regarding availability of materials and increasing costs. He noted holding onto the application hedges against cost overruns and could provide an opportunity to look at enhanced aspects of the project to which additional

funds could be applied. He noted it is his recommendation to continue with the application and find ways to redefine the project to use or reallocate extra funding.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether the Ramsey Gateway project is fully funded.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated he believes the project is fully funded, with regard to current cost estimates. He added cost overruns have not been identified at this point.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether the Gateway project could be expanded 5 or 6 miles to the east.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated he is unsure, as there may be some challenges with that. He added, however, funding would come from the State, and there is some flexibility in terms of how the project is defined and how funds are used.

Councilmember Heineman stated, at the last City Council meeting, Mr. Tinklenberg stated that MnDOT is backing the project.

Mr. Tinklenberg confirmed this, adding MnDOT is a big supporter of the project, and has helped secure funding. He noted, under the Trunk Highway Bond Projects, the number one project is Ramsey Gateway.

Councilmember Heineman asked what will happen if costs increase and there is insufficient funding, whether MnDOT would withdraw from commitment to the Gateway Project.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated MnDOT would find a way to fund the project, as there is already too much funding allocated from the federal government which will have to be relinquished if construction does not begin in 2023. He added there may be opportunities for additional funding to reduce the City's commitment to federal funding.

Councilmember Specht requested feedback and comment from the County representatives.

Anoka County Commissioner Matt Look thanked the City Council for their hard work and efforts on this project, which has been 16 years in the making. He added one of the contributing factors to the success of the proposed project is that local communities understood the significance and came together to form the Highway 10 Coalition. He noted this effort attracted positive attention, and led to decisions regarding a sequence of projects, including Armstrong Boulevard, Fairoak/Thurston, and Third Lane in Coon Rapids.

Commissioner Look stated support for the 3rd lane project is the next project in line. He added now that Ramsey is fully funded and a partner in the Highway 10 Coalition, the projects are competing with each other, and it becomes a reputational issue.

Commissioner Look stated the City of Ramsey has already committed \$4 million to this project. He added he was happy to see this support from the City for a federal project but hopes to reduce that number to \$2 million through cost savings.

Commissioner Look stated the Mississippi River Bridge is the next project, and it will take more support from MnDOT than they have probably ever given, but also more federal support. He added it is important to have a successful bridge project without discouraging and alienating other communities. He noted the bridge is necessary, and federal support is required to get it done. He noted, if there are overruns, the project must be finished to use the money, and MnDOT will not return it to the federal government.

Commissioner Look stated, when we started the year, we had a \$46 million gap. He added \$31 million was awarded in the State legislative session, as well as federal funding capped at 80% for eligible items. He noted BNSF has shown up at the table because of federal funding, and their participation could be \$3-4 million. He noted the project is fully funded but there are additional sources that can be sought if necessary.

Commissioner Look stated the final design is not complete, but right of way impacts are being reduced. He added originally it was thought that 160 parcels would need to be bought, but that was reduced to 20-30 parcels, and now the number is less than 15 total takes. He noted the \$37 million right of way funding could be reduced, which will affect the total budget.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether any of these funds could be eligible for use on the third lane in Coon Rapids, if the Ramsey Gateway is fully funded.

Commissioner Look stated he does not believe the funds can be transferred as bond funds and federal funds are allocated to a specific project. He added the only funds that could be eligible for transfer are local participation.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated the \$50 million that Mr. McPherson talked about is flexible funding which could be used someplace else.

Acting Mayor Riley stated the City has heard that the Ramsey project is on the Senate list. He asked whether there are other funding requests on the list or is there a good chance of getting that funding.

Mr. McPherson stated the third lane request was supported at the congressional level, but he is unsure where that project is in the process right now.

Councilmember Specht stated the City had talked about adding upgrades to the project that were left out and the City wanted to add.

Commissioner Look stated the grade on Sunfish was discussed, which was \$20 million. He added he was able to convince the other Commissioners that grade separations are necessary. He noted project design is still ongoing and it is turning into a great project.

Mr. Tinklenberg reiterated that \$15 million from MnDOT is very flexible. He added they have different scheduling in mind for the third lane in Coon Rapids, and they have been an impediment to the discussions. but it is possible that money could be redesignated to the third lane.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated he is a little stuck on this one, as it is difficult to pull back on the grant request, but he understands that it is an important coalition. He asked whether there is a way to get the grant by offsetting the City's contribution under an agreement to transfer funds to the third lane project or another Anoka County project, due to the unexpected win of the grant. He noted it has been recognized that having the 3rd lane in Coon Rapids has an impact on the Ramsey project. He added he realizes the City Council should focus on the COR and funding projects in Ramsey.

Councilmember Musgrove asked whether the third lane is on the MnDOT list. Mr. Tinklenberg stated it is not.

Councilmember Musgrove asked whether the \$15 million from CRRSAA could potentially go to the third lane project if the City of Ramsey withdraws its funding application. She added she supports pulling the funding to support the third lane and the bridge crossing, as she is a member of the Mississippi Bridge coalition.

Councilmember Heineman stated he likes the idea of being creative, but it does not resolve the issue of competing with neighboring cities. He added if the City wins the grant and hands it over to Coon Rapids, and if that damages the chances of winning the funding, then neither City will benefit. He noted he would support pulling the funding.

Councilmember Specht asked what the ramifications are of pulling funding since it has already passed the Senate. He asked whether it will make it harder to ask for future funding.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated he is not sure where the list is right now. He added they have been assured that it was reviewed positively. He noted the funding still needs to go to the House, so that might make a difference, as he is not sure how the vote will go.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated he is unsure whether future funding will be an issue. He added many people have supported this funding, and have had to make important decisions, including not supporting other projects. He noted it will be an embarrassment to them to have the project funding go this far, and then have the City say they don't really need it.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether CRRSAA funds can be used for a third lane in Coon Rapids.

Mr. McPherson stated that is a possibility, but it would be MnDOT's decision, based on their list of priorities. He added there is no guarantee the funds would go to the third lane project. He noted, for instance, \$60 million in federal funding was recently secured for Highway 494, so they are looking for additional funding for that project.

Councilmember Howell stated, to the point about potential embarrassment, it could be difficult for them after they have advocated for this project. She added if the City of Ramsey does not need the funding and still takes it, and funding is needed for another project, that does not seem right just to spare someone's feelings. She noted she does not think that is a good reason to go forward with pursuing the funding.

Councilmember Heineman agreed, stating it would be embarrassing if the City goes forward with the request and creates excess funds, and does not return it. He added, if there are multiple competing cities, the funds will get used. He noted he would not be worried about the embarrassment issue.

Councilmember Musgrove stated the City was not fully funded when this application was submitted, but now the project is fully funded. She added we can pull the application and express our thanks and appreciation for their hard work and dedication, but the funding which is no longer needed by the City of Ramsey can be used for another project. She noted the City of Ramsey could respectfully request that the funding go to the third lane in Coon Rapids.

Councilmember Musgrove stated the City can be purposeful and respectful, and appreciate the good work that has been done, and it does not have to be an embarrassment. She noted it is actually a good decision.

The consensus of the City Council was to pull the funding application.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated he is in the middle.

Mr. Tinklenberg stated the project funding is a remarkable accomplishment. He commended the team for their hard work and effectiveness.

Acting Mayor Riley asked about funding for a railroad crossing at 47.

Mr. McPherson stated \$110 million has been secured for that project, which is proposed to be a 2-lane bridge over the railroad, with an additional \$55-60 million if they have to purchase the metal recycling center. He added previous layouts are still being reviewed and evaluated. He noted the County has not seen any formal plans, but an open house will be planned soon, and the project is scheduled for 2024.

Acting Mayor Riley thanked the presenters for coming to the Work Session.

2.04: Review Draft Ordinance #21-11 Amending Chapter 10 of City Code – Animal Regulations

Acting Mayor Riley stated the City Council is scheduled to have a public hearing on this issue tonight. City Staff is recommending that the case is tabled to allow time to review this issue further and come back with a new Ordinance.

City Administrator Ulrich stated City Staff started this process as a simple revision to regulate the number of cats, and it has expanded into a comprehensive review of all animals in the city. He added City Staff would like to take a step back and spend some additional time gathering input, have some open houses, get the feel from the community. He recommended that the public hearing be held tonight since it was published, and incorporate any comments into the deliberation, and come up with an Ordinance that is the best approach.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked whether the public hearing will be a procedural point in terms of passing the Ordinance.

City Administrator Ulrich stated City Staff recommends scheduling a new public hearing.

Councilmember Howell asked whether Chapter 10 could be revised and simplified, since it covers so many different animals. She added it should be streamlined so it is easier to read and understand.

City Administrator Ulrich agreed, adding the Ordinance should be simplified for interpretation and enforcement.

Acting Mayor Riley stated that is the direction of the City Council, to rewrite the Ordinance and make it easier to understand and enforce.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed, adding there was confusion about whether a resident can have a rooster. She added the Ordinance should also be easier for City Staff to interpret.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked whether the duck portion of the Ordinance went through.

City Planner McGuire Birgl stated a special animal license permit application was offered to the family who spoke at the last meeting about keeping ducks.

Councilmember Howell asked whether an ad hoc committee could be created to work with City Staff on this Ordinance to get the process moving forward faster.

Acting Mayor Riley stated the City Council can email City Staff with their thoughts and comments about a potential committee and the process as a whole. He added City Staff can provide a revised draft for City Council consideration. He asked whether that would be a suitable alternative to a committee.

Councilmember Howell agreed.

City Administrator Ulrich stated City Staff is good with that.

Councilmember Musgrove asked whether City Staff are receiving City Council's emails. She added she sent an email about the animal Ordinance and never heard back.

City Staff confirmed they are getting emails.

Councilmember Musgrove asked who the emails should be directed to.

City Administrator Ulrich stated emails should go to Planning Technician Brian McCann.

Councilmember Howell asked whether the animal unit per amount of land could be changed to 1 acre. She added it is currently 2.5 acres, which can become a complicated formula.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether there is a reason it is done that way.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated she would prefer to specify types of animals rather than animal units.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked what the cost issue is for bee keeping.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated the license fee is \$200 plus a public hearing, to be approved by the City Council. She added a permit fee of \$25 is proposed, similar to a home occupation permit.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked whether it has been a license process so neighbors can participate in the public hearing.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl confirmed this.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether additional direction is needed for roosters and the number of cats.

Councilmember Musgrove stated, there was originally a consensus for roosters on 5 acres instead of 3.5 acres. She added she does not support a noise requirement for lots greater than 5 acres, as the setbacks are sufficient. She noted she does not support having 1 rooster on 5 acres with a noise requirement.

Acting Mayor Riley stated it was his understanding that the rooster noise issue falls under public nuisance, similar to loud music. He asked Councilmember Musgrove whether roosters on 5 acres would be exempt.

Councilmember Musgrove confirmed this. She added there are lots in the City that are 5 acres that are not zoned R-1, and that would exclude people that would be able to have a rooster.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated he does not support excluding roosters as a nuisance on 5 acres.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated the City cannot technically exclude anything from the nuisance provisions of the Code, as it is set forth by the Department of State.

Councilmember Heineman asked whether rooster crowing would be enforced the same as loud music.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated it is based on duration, so it would have to be a really bad rooster.

Acting Mayor Riley stated there was discussion about adding a total number of dogs and cats.

Councilmember Howell stated some cities have a hoarding section of their Ordinance that would address multiple cats above a certain number. She added that might be a solution, rather than targeting everyone who has 5 cats, and making them get a kennel license.

Acting Mayor Riley asked what the definition of hoarding would be.

Councilmember Howell agreed to forward her research and information to the City Council and City Staff.

Acting Mayor Riley stated this issue is related to a specific problem, and the City does not want to seek out people who are not a problem. He added this gives the City a way of addressing the ones that are a problem.

Councilmember Howell asked whether other Councilmembers would support no penalties for crowing hens. She added City Staff would end up spending a lot of time and effort measuring noise. She noted the decibel levels are not going to be the same for all chickens.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether crowing roosters is really a problem.

Senior Planner McGuire Brigl stated City Staff receives approximately 1 complaint per month about roosters, but she does not believe there has ever been a complaint about chickens.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated, if roosters are allowed, then crowing hens should be considered the same thing. He added roosters and hens crowing could be regulated the same way, except roosters would need to be on 5 acres.

Councilmember Howell stated the problem is how to measure the crowing. She added it could end up creating a lot of work.

Councilmember Musgrove stated she would support removing “crowing hens”.

The consensus of the City Council was to remove “crowing hen”.

Acting Mayor Riley stated the City Council will send emails with feedback and comments to Planning Technician McCann to be consolidated and presented at a Work Session in 90 days.

2.05: Continued Discussion on 2022 Budget/Levies

Finance Director Lund reviewed City Staff’s request for positions to be re-classed as well as positions with increased hours. She added 3 new positions were discussed at the City Council’s last Work Session.

Community Development re-class: Senior Planner to Planning Manager - City Engineer Westby stated this request for a re-class would be commensurate with the duties that the staff member is currently performing.

Engineering Department re-class: Engineering Technician to Senior Engineering Technician - City Engineer Westby stated this staff person has taken on many additional duties since the previous Senior Engineering Technician retired a few years ago. He added the staff person has performed admirably and management wants to keep them challenged.

Public Works Department re-class: Street Lead to Streets Department Supervisor - Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated he is currently doing the Supervisor job as well as his own job, and the existing Street Lead has taken on a lot of responsibilities. He noted his intention is to set up his own succession which is a wise move.

Public Works Department re-class: Maintenance Worker to Street Lead - Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the maintenance worker would take over the open Street Lead position created by the hiring of a Supervisor.

Public Works Department re-class: Building Maintenance Worker – this is currently a part-time staff person working 25 hours/week, and they would increase to 40 hours/week. Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated this position was delayed last year, and staff got an estimate of \$32,500 for hiring a contractor to clean the Public Works facility. He added increasing this position to full-time would cost \$33, 686, which would be a greater benefit as the staff person could be used in other facilities and for snow removal.

Police Department - Police Technician, increase from 25 hours/week to 40 hours /week. Finance Director Lund stated the Police Department currently has 2 full-time Records Technicians and 2 part-time Records Technicians, and the request is to increase one part-time staff to full-time. She added this is due to the increased work related to body worn cameras.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether the new full-time Technician would require insurance benefits.

Finance Director Lund stated the staff person who would be increased to full-time would most likely waive their insurance benefits as they are covered under their spouse.

Finance Director Lund stated a Building Permit Technician is proposed to be increased from 32.5 hours/week to 36 hours/week. She added the staff member reduced her hours after maternity leave, so this increase brings the staff member closer to her original hours.

Parks & Recreation – Rec Specialist, increase from 20 to 29 hours per week. Finance Director Lund stated the position would be limited to 29 hours so no health benefits would be triggered. Parks and Assistant Public Works Superintendent Riverblood added a request for a full-time position is anticipated for 2023. He noted this request would cost approximately \$250/week.

Councilmember Musgrove requested clarification regarding training courses listed under the Engineering Tech position, and whether they are finishing up the remainder of classes.

City Engineer Westby stated the staff person completed half of the course offered by the League of Minnesota Cities before the pandemic, and then the classes were suspended and eventually

cancelled. He added the intent is not to apply this re-class until the staff person has completed the training.

Councilmember Musgrove asked whether the numbers are projected, and when increases will happen.

City Engineer Westby stated the pay increase would go through on July 1. He added they are still waiting to complete the course.

Councilmember Musgrove stated she would support a pause on the re-class positions until the Community Development positions are filled. She added it will be important to get input from the incoming management staff.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated, based on the job descriptions, most of these staff are already doing the job, and it makes sense to re-class them, especially with Public Works Superintendent Reimer's comments about succession planning. He added he agrees with the increase of hours for the Technician due to the increased amount of work related to body cams.

Councilmember Howell stated she supports the request for a Police Tech position. She added she does not see a problem with pausing everything else for now and instruct staff to work on cutting expenses across the board.

Acting Mayor Riley asked whether the meeting attendees can stay after the Regular Meeting to address the last Work Session item. The consensus was to address the last agenda item after the Regular Meeting is adjourned.

Councilmember Heineman stated the proposed increases will actually offset expenses. He added, for instance, the maintenance worker to be upgraded to Street Lead will be able to perform other duties.

City Administrator Ulrich stated outside consultants can be used for some staff positions, including planning and engineering, but the rate is quite a bit higher. He added keeping the work in-house will be a cost reduction.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer stated the City will have more control over a staff person designated to clean the new Public Works facility than hiring a contractor.

Councilmember Heineman asked whether that staff person could also perform preventive maintenance.

Public Works Superintendent Riemer confirmed this, adding it is a very big building.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated staff retention is an important issue. She added, in the case of the building maintenance worker, the City will be recruiting 2 additional staff if that position is not brought to full-time, because he will leave. She noted we have talented people who are ready to advance and grow into their new titles.

Councilmember Heineman stated he supports saving money, but also wants to ensure that staff is taken care of. He added hiring is expensive, and retention is important. He noted he would rather have a higher paid staff do more work with less, than lower paid staff maintaining what the City already has.

Acting Mayor Riley stated the City Council has expressed concern regarding parks maintenance. He added he would like to revisit adding an additional parks staff.

Finance Director Lund requested direction from the City Council regarding whether to bring forward some numbers, as presented by Councilmember Heineman, to have something to start with. She asked whether the 5% general fund levy increase is a starting point.

Councilmember Heineman agreed, adding the 5% general levy increase vs. 12%, and 50% levy to offset the franchise.

Councilmember Howell requested additional information regarding the cost of outsourcing, and what the City would be saving. She added she would like to see what these requests would look like if each department cut their budget by 10%.

Councilmember Musgrove requested information regarding the Logis contract, and how that compares to the hiring of a new systems staff.

Finance Director Lund stated the Logis contract is for applications and is a yearly budget. She added the hourly rate with Logis is not under contract.

2.06: Discussion Regarding Union Contract Negotiations for AFSCE, LELS-Patrol, LELS-Sergeants & LELS-Captains (Portions of this Discussion Closed to the Public)

This agenda item was postponed and discussed following the Regular Meeting.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

None.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. RECESS

Motion by Councilmember Specht, seconded by Councilmember Musgrove, to recess the Work Session at 7:00 p.m. and reconvene after the Regular Meeting.

Motion carried.

Respectfully submitted,

Kurtis G. Ulrich
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
Deputy City Clerk

Drafted by Mary Mullen
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.