

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, October 11, 2022, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember Ryan Heineman (attended remotely)  
Councilmember Chelsea Howell  
Councilmember Debra Musgrove  
Councilmember Chris Riley  
Councilmember Dan Specht  
Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen  
City Engineer/Interim Public Works Director Westby  
Finance Director Diana Lund  
Code Enforcement Officer Craig Swalchick  
City Attorney Fritz Knaak

**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: Update on Issuance of \$12M Reconstruction Bonds**

Finance Director Lund gave an update on the issuance of the \$12 million reconstruction bonds and stated a public hearing will be held during the City Council meeting later that evening. She shared the importance of November 15 is that there is another proposed interest increase in December that could cost the City an additional \$500,000 in interest. The actual adoption and sale of the debt would take place on November 15, 2022, making this final.

There was a consensus of the Council.

**2.02: Overview of Abatement Regulations and Process**

Code Enforcement Officer Swalchick reviewed the staff report and gave an overview of the abatement regulations, processes and changes.

Mayor Kuzma asked about the habitual offenders.

Mr. Swalchick said that every community has habitual offenders and the result of this is administrative penalties and abatements; this part does not change. Education is the first line of defense.

Councilmember Riley asked about those people who state that they need more time to comply with the code enforcement and it is normally approved with the idea that work will be progressing. He asked if this changes. He also asked about putting notices on front doors and added that they should also be also put on the back door as some people do not use their front door.

Mr. Swalchick believed the allowance for a City official is only granted for a primary entrance. The notices can still be mailed or placed on the garage door.

Councilmember Howell asked about the high dollar amount of work done to remove these items.

Mr. Swalchick said those costs are what the company charges for everything involved in removals. He added that in some cases reaching out to Habitat for Humanity can help remove cost burdens for residents.

City Administrator Hagen added that part of this Code has a provision that if the owner wants to get rid of the removed item they can do so and not store it for 15 days.

Mr. Swalchick said there is also an option for disposal onsite by bringing a dumpster to the home and removing the item right away rather than having to pay to haul it off, store it, and then dispose of it.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about entry onto public and private places and if it should be added that these would not take place on weekends and holidays.

Mr. Swalchick said absolutely.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the abated property storage and when the items are reclaimed by the property owner and are found to be in violation of the article and should be abated immediately by the City without the need to begin a new abatement process. She asked if a new abatement process does not begin, are there costs that would be recovered.

Mr. Swalchick explained that once the abatement is approved, the City is allowed to continue to remove these items and the fees have already been charged.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the \$750 charge continues even with these habitual offenders.

Mr. Swalchick stated these would be cited. He added most items actually get disposed of. He shared that if they take the items back and they are in violation again, he would not start another abatement process, rather he would just start the court process.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if it would be of value to add that verbiage.

Mr. Swalchick said it is throughout the ordinance but it can be added to this section.

Councilmember Musgrove gave her suggestions on the pronouns.

Councilmember Woestehoff likes the idea of these being teaching opportunities and agrees with Councilmember Howell in terms of the pricing. He asked about the timeline and flexibility of the inspection investigation over the abatement.

Mr. Swalchick stated that in the event of a hazardous material spill or a crime scene and a tough property owner that does not want to address the issue, the City needs to be able to fix this promptly.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this Code Enforcement will be worked on weekends and holidays.

Mr. Swalchick said that is not ideal.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that a crime scene would have other people investigating a crime scene but not with a public safety concern.

Mr. Swalchick gave an example of a crime scene involving two deaths in an apartment building he had seen in another city and the property owner used a bottle of vinegar to clean up the mess. He said that this situation would require a professional cleaning service to come in and clean up the biohazard so the other residents can get back to their home.

There was a consensus of the Council.

### **2.03: Discuss Local Candidate Forums**

City Administrator Hagen gave an update on information concerning candidate forums.

Councilmember Musgrove continued the discussion on the candidate forums and shared her concerns of communication and consistency.

Councilmember Specht asked if they planned to keep the forums closed.

Councilmember Riley shared that he had noted his displeasure with the forum being closed as the government should be open and they told him they intended to go back to regular meetings.

Mayor Kuzma stated he did not think it would hurt to send a letter and share that it would be the Council's preference that they have open meetings.

Councilmember Heineman agreed with Councilmember Riley and Mayor Kuzma and added that the letter should state that if the City Council chambers are being used for a debate forum, then it needs to be public.

Councilmember Woestehoff disagreed and said that as a City, they are not the first or second party in the debate and they are a venue to be utilized. He does not want to tell them that if City space is being used it has to be an open meeting.

Councilmember Heineman stated that the resident's best interests need to be in mind and if someone wants to use the City funded building then the public should be open. He asked City Administrator Hagen if there are other times a non-government entity has been allowed to use Council chambers as a venue and closed it off to the public.

City Administrator Hagen stated he did not know.

Councilmember Specht shared an example of a PACT Charter School meeting that had to be legally closed for an employment issue.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the League of Women Voters pay to rent the space.

City Administrator Hagen stated he did not know.

City Attorney Knaak stated there should be a policy in place for this.

Councilmember Woestehoff said rather than sending a letter, maybe a policy that covers this situation or another meeting that could be held in the Chambers.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there were any policies that discuss rentals of the Chamber.

City Administrator Hagen stated there is a facility use and rental policy where this could be incorporated.

There was a consensus of the Council.

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

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

City Administrator Hagen discussed future topics and added the water treatment plant discussion to the list with the new project manager. He said this would go to the next work session, which currently has a full agenda. He requested that the discussion of future Happy Days be pulled and go to the work session in November. He asked if there were any other discussion ideas the Council was interested in.

Councilmember Specht shared that zoning for Armstrong Boulevard and Highway 10 and discussed there used to be a landscaping company here and one of the businesses owners from the building behind expressed interest in expanding but was unaware if it was zoned for expansion. He asked if this discussion can be had.

City Administrator Hagen said that everyone was happy with the existing zoning framework and asked if they wanted to expand some uses for the zoned area. He discussed The COR zone requirements.

Councilmember Howell asked if the non-conforming use was prior to the rezoning or after it was rezoned.

City Administrator Hagen shared that when something is rezoned they cannot just be kicked out, so it was from before the rezoning.

Councilmember Specht said he would like to have a discussion on this.

City Administrator Hagen stated that Staff is currently doing an overall review of the zoning ordinance to clean it up.

Mayor Kuzma asked if this should go to the Planning Commission then to the Council.

City Administrator Hagen said it would go to the Planning Commission for a public hearing and then Council.

Councilmember Woestehoff said his opinion on this has not changed and he would not like to rehash this. His idea was for the interested business to talk to the Planning Commission to figure out the next best step.

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

None.

#### **5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:31 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Brian S. Hagen  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

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Katie M. Schmidt  
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Rokosz  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*