

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Monday, November 7, 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
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
Planning Manager Todd Larson
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: Senior Housing Partners/Lord of Life Church Site - 14501 Nowthen Blvd. NW.

Planning Manager Todd Larson reviewed the Staff report and announced that Senior Housing Partners were present to give an update to Council since the last time they discussed the project with the Council.

Jon Fletcher of Senior Housing Partners came forward and gave an update to Council on the feedback from the neighbors that has been received in regard to the project. He shared the main goals of the project were to maximize a feeling of community and green space areas, re-orient zoning and traffic, develop a plan that is consistent with future land use guidance, and building low-transient housing. He shared some of the feedback that was received and that the feedback was overall positive. He added that there was support to consolidate the density to the south side of the site with green spaces buffers between, to minimize traffic to the north of the site, and to consolidate traffic to the south of the site. He noted there was mixed feedback on the expansion of

the public park area. He added there was feedback to build a 4-story building with a smaller footprint rather than a 3-story. He reviewed the preliminary site plan.

Councilmember Specht asked if the apartment homes are for senior living.

Mr. Fletcher said it would be mixed income. He continued his presentation by discussing phasing and the traffic impact study. He stated they wanted to provide the lowest traffic impact. He reviewed the alternative site plan if the apartment building were to go from the proposed 3-stories to the 4-stories in which the neighbors wanted to see as well as turning the green space into additional townhomes. He asked Council for feedback.

Councilmember Riley asked if the rentals would be managed by Presbyterian Homes.

Mr. Fletcher said that was correct.

Councilmember Riley asked for clarification on the park land dedication.

Mr. Fletcher explained the preference would be to do a park land dedication in order to meet ordinance requirements of the land on the northwest corner. It would need to be discussed with the Parks and Recreation department if they want this. Park dedication fees for the whole site would run approximately \$2,000,000 and the preference would be to invest that money into park land and trails on site.

Councilmember Heineman stated he was generally in favor of the project. He asked if this land was being sold by Lord of Life Church to Presbyterian Homes.

Mr. Fletcher explained that the land is all currently owned by the church and is tax exempt. He stated Presbyterian Homes would be purchasing the land for each phase of the development and would work with the City to form an economic development plan to bring the property onto the tax rolls over time.

Councilmember Heineman asked if Mr. Fletcher knew the timeline.

Mr. Fletcher said not yet.

Councilmember Heineman asked Mr. Fletcher to explain the mixed income housing.

Mr. Fletcher discussed that mixed income housing is thought of to be for workforce housing.

Councilmember Specht thanked Mr. Fletcher for coming out and bringing this information forward. He shared he likes the layout of the 4-story apartment to yield a smaller footprint. He agreed with Councilmember Heineman that he is a supporter of the senior living and not as big of a supporter for the mixed income housing.

Mr. Fletcher asked if the housing was the concern or if it was the income threshold.

Councilmember Specht said the income threshold is not as much of an issue. He explained he initially understood this as a complete life care facility. He would like to learn more about the restrictions and regulation of mixed income housing.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood had a chance to look at this or had any feedback in regard to the park.

Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said he has not looked at it outside of the last work session. He thinks there are some flexible options in terms of the open space. He added that this site looks like it will require a lot of ground maintenance.

Mayor Kuzma shared he likes the smaller footprint for the apartments but he also would like to see what the Planning Commission has to say about that. He added that he thinks the workforce housing is needed.

Councilmember Musgrove appreciated the work put in to show the Council the community input and some different options.

Councilmember Howell thinks the smaller footprint looks great. She would like more information in regard to the mixed income housing.

There was a consensus of the Council.

2.02: Review Final Visual Quality Recommendations for Ramsey Gateway Highway 10 Improvements

City Engineer/Interim Public Works Director Westby reviewed the Staff report and stated that Joshua Shields with Bolton and Menk and Jason Orcutt with the Anoka County Highway Department were both here to speak on this matter.

Mr. Shields came forward and gave a presentation on the updates for this project on the Sunfish Lake Boulevard bridge.

Mr. Orcutt continued the presentation and explained that this project is held to what MnDOT will allow. He shared that it is possible that MnDOT will not allow the City to copy Sunfish Lake Blvd to Ramsey. He recommended coming back and upgrading the medallions at a future time on Armstrong.

Councilmember Musgrove asked Mr. Orcutt if the thought was to have it on the far right side on Sunfish and the far right side on Armstrong in the future rather than towards the middle.

Mr. Orcutt said that would be a preference.

Councilmember Musgrove stated the renderings had it on the far side and asked for the reasoning behind that.

Mr. Shields explained he lined it up with two full fencing panels but it can be moved.

Councilmember Riley shared he is happy with the fact that a way to do this has been figured out.

Mr. Shields continued the presentation by discussing updates on the Ramsey Boulevard bridge and roundabouts.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the roundabouts will be included in the project costs.

Mr. Shields said everything is a part of the design project and they will get into cost participation later. He added all of these items should be participating projects. He discussed that the non-participating items are the items that go above and beyond such as the benches and landscaping. He stated the estimate for the non-participating items is approximately \$50,000. He wanted to make sure Council was aware of the ongoing maintenance discussions between City, County and MnDOT.

Councilmember Heineman stated that \$50,000 for benches and minor landscaping seems like a lot. He asked Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood if there was an appetite from the Parks and Recreation team for community involvement to plant some of these things.

Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said there might be an opportunity; however, he was concerned that this would be in a traffic area and coordinating the work would take a lot of Staff time.

Councilmember Heineman asked if this work is something that City Staff could do.

Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood shared there were recently tree plants in a few parks and a contractor was hired because the Staff time was not available to do this on their own. He added that Staff has consistent vacancies and are having difficulty keeping up with core functions.

Mayor Kuzma asked if this could be kept in the budget for the time being and as it gets closer to the time it is reconsidered.

Mr. Shields recommended that.

Mayor Kuzma asked if there was already an established policy on Armstrong on who is responsible for what.

Mr. Orcutt said that the aesthetics are a little different as the roundabouts will be maintained by MnDOT but the plants will have to be maintained by the City. He added that at the beginning of this project, each city and county committed \$4,000,000 and the goal is to back spend the money at the end.

Councilmember Riley asked for clarification that the amount was split between both roundabouts.

Mr. Shields said it is split.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the park bench renderings and if there were just two benches at two sites.

Mr. Shields said yes.

Councilmember Musgrove shared she does not see the need for this many benches for people to sit by a freeway. She asked if a trail connects close to this area.

Mr. Shields stated there is a rest area on the trail to the west of Ramsey. He said the two benches could become one in these areas.

Mayor Kuzma shared that he appreciates the benches as a place to take a break when walking.

Councilmember Heineman said he is not against the bench, he just wants to make sure that these things are under the discretionary or non-participating items title so that the cost will be looked at separately.

Mr. Orcutt said the direction he heard was to put the name on Sunfish and start planting the seed for the future of it on Armstrong.

There was a consensus of the Council.

2.03: Review of 2023-2032 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Finance Director Lund reviewed her presentation of the Capital Improvement Plan including updates discussed at the last meeting. She stated this is being brought back for the Councilmembers that were absent at the last meeting.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared he looked through the minutes from the last meeting and everything seems appropriate.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for more information on the waterfront for 2023 marked with a 5 as priority.

Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that this is a placeholder for what is hoped to be engaged with in 2023. He shared that before in depth planning happens he hopes to discuss with Council and the Planning Commission relative to how important the waterfront could be.

Finance Director Lund explained that the 5 meant that it is a placeholder to be talked about later.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this will proceed forward in stages.

Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said yes.

Finance Director Lund said that the fund does not have the \$6,000,000 to spend on this project.

The consensus of the Council was to ask for a public hearing on tonight's consent agenda at the City Council meeting.

2.04: Continued Review of Proposed 2023 Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges

Finance Director Lund reviewed the staff report and gave an update on what was discussed at the last meeting.

Mayor Kuzma asked if there was still going to be a change to the fee structure.

Finance Director Lund said yes there is a plan to increase both sewer and water 10%.

Councilmember Musgrove asked when the rates and charges fee would start in 2023.

Finance Director Lund stated this is on as an introduction on the regular council agenda, making it effective January 1, 2023.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if some of the charges could be left on and others go out.

Finance Director Lund stated the first quarter billing does not go out until April 25, 2023 and January bills would be at the 2022 rate.

Councilmember Howell asked about the fees for the coffee pots being \$5 and if that accounted for the increase in coffee costs.

City Administrator Hagen stated that renters are charged \$5 if they request a coffee pot and that is all he knows.

Interim Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained the intent to discuss rental policies and fees later in the month.

Councilmember Howell stated she thinks costs need to be covered here.

City Administrator Hagen suggested telling renters to bring their own coffee.

Councilmember Howell asked about copies being \$0.25 per page whereas Andover charges \$0.35 per page.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if this could be billed for.

City Administrator Hagen stated most of the copies charged for are related to something happening with the City.

Councilmember Howell asked about window replacement permits and wondered why this is charged for.

Councilmember Woestehoff explained he experienced a situation similar to this and it is not just for replacing the windows, it is to make sure the right type of windows were in the right place.

Planning Manager Larson stated that last year there was a change in how building permits are charged because the Building Department saw the City was losing a lot of money on permits.

Councilmember Howell asked about the non-traditional animal license and why it is so high.

City Administrator Hagen stated this likely ties back to the City Code and there is likely an application and site visits that would be involved in this.

Councilmember Specht asked if it is a one-time fee or a yearly fee.

City Administrator Hagen said he would need to look at this Code.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that dog licenses were not every year. She wondered if it could be a biannual fee. She shared she sees value in having this fee higher in the first year.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that in the Code it is valid without renewal.

Councilmember Howell pointed out that under miscellaneous fees on the last line there was a typo missing the times wage.

The consensus of the Council was to put this on as an introduction on the regular council agenda in tonight's meeting.

2.05: Continued Discussion of 2023 Budget/Levy

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Staff report and shared she just received the numbers from the County right before the meeting so she has not been able to calculate the total effect. She stated the County has the tax rate at 40.679%.

Mayor Kuzma said that he does not see anywhere that funding needs to be cut.

Finance Director Lund stated the general fund is increasing over 12%.

Mayor Kuzma said the roads are what is driving the increase.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked about where revenue comes from, if it is just due to an increase in rates and fees.

Finance Director Lund said this is the transfer in funds which is likely the ARPA funds related to the road patching.

Councilmember Howell asked when health insurance packages are reevaluated.

Finance Director Lund shared that as part of the contract language the increase will be 60% based off of the \$2500 premium plan. She said this is locked in until 2024.

Councilmember Howell asked if an employee does not take health insurance if they get paid that dollar amount.

Finance Director Lund said yes.

Councilmember Howell asked why that is.

Finance Director Lund explained that when they have the money to work with it changes things for the employee.

Councilmember Specht asked how often they work with different groups to find the most efficient plan.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that the LOGIS group goes out every five years for RFP. The next opportunity for this will be leading into 2025.

Councilmember Musgrove thanked Finance Director Lund for all of her hard work.

Finance Director Lund shared that the proposed taxation notice should be coming out in the next week or two from the County.

There was a consensus of the Council.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the future topics. He asked Council if they wanted to see the budget one last time before it is brought forward for adoption.

Finance Director Lund stated that once she prepares the schedule of the net effects on the taxpayers she can send it to City Administrator Hagen and he can send it out to the Council.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

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

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Rokosz
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.