

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, February 28, 2023, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Kuzma (attended remotely)  
Councilmember Chelsea Howell (attended remotely)  
Councilmember Debra Musgrove  
Councilmember Michael Olson  
Acting Mayor Chris Riley  
Councilmember Dan Specht  
Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen  
City Engineer/Public Works Director Bruce Westby (attended remotely)  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood  
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher  
Economic Development Manager Sean Sullivan  
City Attorney Fritz Knaak  
Assistant City Engineer Joe Feriancek (attended remotely)  
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson  
Recreation Specialist Marla Martinez-Flynn

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Acting Mayor Riley called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

**2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION**

**2.01: Acknowledge 2023 Happy Days Implementation Plan**

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood reviewed the Staff report and shared the request to begin planning for Happy Days 2023 in March including looking at replacing Staff time with contracted services.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared that he thinks this is a great idea to free up Staff time. He asked where this falls in the City's purchasing guidelines.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that they have looked at five firms that specialize in event management and they received two quotes.

Acting Mayor Riley asked about the cost savings.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that there would be an approximate \$10,000 savings in Staff time and the company, Lucent Blue, would provide 300 hours of planning services as well as four staff for the day of the event. He stated that the other savings are offsets from decisions made.

Councilmember Musgrove shared her support and asked about the event cost reductions.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that the golf carts are not needed anymore as there are UTVs and other vehicles owned by the City that can serve the same purpose.

Mayor Kuzma stated that the consultant may have additional ideas and asked about the plan in the event that Lucent Blue wants to increase the budget for the event.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood shared that they are excited to hear from a professional group on how to enhance the sponsorship incentives for the event.

Councilmember Specht asked if Recreation Specialist Martinez-Flynn would still be the head of the event and Lucent Blue would help with planning and staff hours. He stated that Recreation Specialist Martinez-Flynn does a great job.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that Lucent Blue will be assigned to tasks that are run by Recreation Specialist Martinez-Flynn and Lucent Blue will help by offering expertise and planning time.

Acting Mayor Riley shared concern that this may head in the wrong direction. He sees that this would take away from it being a community event. He stated he would rather see more volunteers than hiring out.

Councilmember Musgrove gave her feedback on the logo designs. She asked if volunteers would still be utilized rather than it being entirely staffed by an outside organization.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood agreed that volunteers are useful; however, there is always a large effort to find and train volunteers. He added that Lucent Blue will be mindful of volunteer opportunities and they may have better ideas on how to attract these volunteers.

Recreation Specialist Martinez-Flynn noted that there will still be volunteers that help the day of the event. She stated that Lucent Blue will help with the preplanning where there are not volunteers for this aspect.

Councilmember Specht stated that he could support this for the upcoming year to gain ideas and knowledge that could be implemented for the future to bring the planning back in-house. He asked if the reduced Staff hours is overtime or regular paid time.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that much of the time is overtime pay.

Councilmember Howell stated she sees the benefit of bringing in an outside party, while she would not like to lose the uniqueness of the event.

Acting Mayor Riley asked if the Happy Days Committee is being disbanded and not used.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that this would disband the formal Happy Days Committee. He added that there was low participation from others at these meetings. He stated they would still meet with Staff and volunteers, but not schedule meetings.

Councilmember Olson agreed that this is a good thing for the upcoming year and not ongoing into the future. He asked if they just used Lucent Blue this year if the Happy Days Committee would only be disbanded this year.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said yes.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted the importance that Staff is recommending this. He mentioned his past experience in running an event like this, with and without an outside company, and stated it was a lot more stressful for the staff when an outside company was not present and with the outside company, they were able to make more money with their event.

Mayor Kuzma stated that he liked the idea of a consultant helping with going out for sponsorships. He asked about contingencies for cost controls.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood mentioned that he expects this to come back to a work session mid-summer to update on the process and this would be the time where they would have an idea of where the budget is. He stated that it is understood with Lucent Blue that the budget is not to be exceeded.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the Council would continue to be updated on the progress of the event.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said yes.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with Lucent Blue.

## **2.02: Discuss Adding New Engineering Technician II Position**

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report concerning a request for adding a third inspector for sewer, road, and water work to keep this work in-house.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby noted that another inspection need coming up is the Highway 10 gateway project and this will create more than enough work to keep a third inspector busy.

Councilmember Specht asked if a third inspector is enough based on the estimates or if some work will still need to be contracted out.

City Administrator Hagen stated they are confident that the amount of work will keep all three inspectors busy and with a fourth there may not be enough work. He said there could be some strategic contracting that would be needed.

Mayor Kuzma mentioned that historically the City had three inspectors and in the mid- 2000s when things slowed down is when they utilized outside contracting.

City Administrator Hagen shared that Administrative Services Director Lasher noted that this was for building inspections, not engineering inspections.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared his concern of having enough work to keep three inspectors busy after a majority of the CIP projects and Highway 10 projects have been finished. He asked if benefits are included in the cost implications.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said yes.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained that they would never want to hire someone for a few years and then let them go because they are no longer needed. He said there will be a lot of work that is not currently being done. He added that there are new requirements surrounding documentation processes that will need to be done as well. He added that these inspectors also manage the erosion control. He shared his confidence in not having a slowdown of work in the future.

Administrative Services Director Lasher added that with recruiting struggles, it is beneficial to have some extra coverage.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the costs are averages or hard numbers.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that the numbers quoted are numbers from last year, which was a typical year.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the need for a new vehicle.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that if Council would like to defer the purchase of a new vehicle, they could defer this by buying a used vehicle and put the new vehicle in the budget for a later year.

Councilmember Musgrove said it may be beneficial to look at this further during strategic planning.

Acting Mayor Riley stated that this could be left up to Staff to determine the most cost effective way to proceed.

Councilmember Woestehoff agreed but shared concerns of spending money on a used truck to be replaced in a year.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with hiring.

### **2.03: Review HY-10 Ramsey Improvements Feasibility Study**

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby reviewed the Staff report and provided an update on the HY-10 feasibility study.

Councilmember Specht asked about street parking for 147th Avenue on both sides.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained the layout that there is very limited parking areas on 147th Avenue.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked for clarification that the property owner is not willing to participate in the Ferret Street connection and the new plan would redo the roads to new standards.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said that was correct.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated he would not be in favor of assessing anyone without the Ferret Street connection.

Councilmember Musgrove asked where traffic will move in and out of this area for the businesses and if 147th Avenue would be the main street in and out.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said yes.

Councilmember Howell agreed with Councilmember Woestehoff that a special assessment would not be a good idea on this project.

Councilmember Specht asked if the fear of a special assessment affected the land owner's decision.

City Administrator Hagen said the special assessment was not part of the reasoning.

Councilmember Olson asked if there is a possibility for a change of heart down the road from the land owner.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained that the existing street could be reconstructed and in the future it could be extended by saw cutting along the edges. He said there would be minimal costs associated with that. He mentioned that they also proposed to extend the water main and loop it into Bunker Lake Boulevard. He said the water main could be extended to the end of the cul-de-sac and in the future it could be extended with the road.

Acting Mayor Riley asked if there was a utility easement across this area.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said yes, across the first two properties.

Mayor Kuzma asked about the timeline of getting this project done.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that if they moved forward today, they could get most of the project completed by September, if bids were opened on March 14th.

Mayor Kuzma asked how this impacts the sports dome if not moved forward.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that they need the utilities for this site. He stated that something else would need to be done for the utilities and some sort of temporary paving for the street section.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked for clarification that utilities would still be extended without the Ferret Street connection.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said yes.

City Administrator Hagen asked City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby to discuss doing this project in two phases to get the project done in a timely manner.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said this could be an option.

Mayor Kuzma stated that he likes the idea of working this project in two phases and moving the regional pond to next year. He added he would still like to have time to discuss this with the property owner.

Acting Mayor Riley asked if he was talking about the southern pond.

Mayor Kuzma stated that the main issue seems to be with increasing parking.

City Administrator Hagen stated that some of the push back is related to the parking that should be had at a facility like this versus what was approved. He said that if the applicant were to maximize their parking they would need to benefit from regional stormwater ponding or identify underground storage capacity.

Mayor Kuzma stated that the regional ponding would be a benefit for the whole area.

City Administrator Hagen explained that three properties would benefit from this.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he does not think the regional pond solves the concerns of the property owner as it would only yield an additional 30 spots.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that ARAA said that they would solve their own parking and water ponding. She stated that option 2 gives them water treatment for these properties. She said she was in favor of doing stormwater ponding and going to the cul-de-sac with sewer and water.

City Administrator Hagen explained that option 1 was to have regional stormwater ponding and option 2 was to have only the road rainwater go to a pond and the private property would have to identify ponding on site. He reiterated that this project can be done in two phases, starting with option 2 and then making it into option 1 in the future.

Acting Mayor Riley stated that the roads need to be redone regardless of ARAA.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if option 2 includes the west side of 147th Avenue and 146th Avenue up to the cul-de-sac.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said yes.

City Administrator Hagen stated that the long term goal is to have the connector between Ferret Street and Bunker Lake Boulevard and they will continue to work on this.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with amended option 2 without the Ferret Street connector.

#### **2.04: Review COR Analysis Update**

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby reviewed the staff report on the COR analysis and request for Council to provide direction on their priorities of infrastructure projects.

Acting Mayor Riley stated that Public Works met and discussed this in length.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the timeline for the TIF 14 has been extended.

City Administrator Hagen gave an update on this and stated that nothing has been decided yet. He added that there are some cities that have TIF asks that will likely be rolled together in one bill and they will likely not have an answer until the end of the session. He explained that there have been many funding sources identified and bits and pieces would come from multiple places. He noted that when looking at available funds in the Ehler's fund, this incorporates sticking to the policy that was approved in 2014. He added that this policy could be changed.

Councilmember Specht asked if the representative from Capstone could share input.

Heather Lorch, Capstone Homes, came forward and shared Capstone's interest in how the City moves forward with this land.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the policy changes and stated that she would like to have a robust conversation concerning this. She asked who regulates the wetlands and if they can be filled without a plan of how they will be used.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained that the DNR regulates the wetlands and that a plan is required for mitigating the wetlands. He noted that this is not a quick process.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they can be filled if there is no plan.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that there has to be a plan that shows that they did all they could to not impact the wetland.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked about the grade changes and if the reconstruction could be deferred.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that this would depend on the surrounding development and their needs.

Acting Mayor Riley added that this was built as a temporary road.

City Administrator Hagen explained that there is about \$5,700,000 to maximize this district and that the question is how much does the City want to or be able to spend by the end of November 2023. He stated that wetland mitigation is likely not realistic. He reviewed other options that were discussed at the Public Works meeting.

## **RECESS AND RECONVENE**

Acting Mayor Riley recessed the Work Session at 6:55 p.m. to Regular Session.

The Work Session reconvened at 7:21 p.m.

### **2.04: Review COR Analysis Update - continued**

City Administrator Hagen reintroduced the discussion of spending TIF revenue that can be generated through 2040 for future development and how much money can be spent in this construction year.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked to see the list of the projects and their dollar values.

Acting Mayor Riley noted what Public Works had recommended.

City Administrator Hagen asked if this included wetland mitigation.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said no.

City Administrator Hagen asked if this includes clearing or trees.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said yes.

Councilmember Olson asked for clarification on the wetland areas in red on the map and if it only applies to the areas that need the mitigation and they can proceed with the blue areas on the map.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said that was correct.

Councilmember Specht asked if the mitigation prevents Capstone from wanting to develop in this area.

City Administrator Hagen explained that if the mitigation was not done now this would be put on a future developer to either design around it or go through the process on their own. He stated that the mitigation affects the cost the land is sold for.

Acting Mayor Riley stated that this is new information about these wetlands which has impacted this discussion.

Councilmember Olson asked if this changes the plan or the timing of the excavation for the pond.

Acting Mayor Riley explained that it can be spread around in the areas that are not labeled in red on the map.

Councilmember Specht asked if they are looking at what parcels to work on first.

Acting Mayor Riley stated that this all needs to be done at once.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that Public Works discussed that in Area C, the developer would be doing some of the landscaping which would reduce the need for excavation and moving of dirt to this area.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan reviewed this and shared that Hilton will be having to bring the dirt in early and they will likely want to place dirt on their own site. He stated this will reduce the costs as they will not need to pay for the removal of trees and compacting soil. He explained the costs and work associated with the other areas of the site.

Acting Mayor Riley stated that Public Works focused on the timing of these projects.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan noted that there has been interest on this site from multiple areas and they have asked these developers to hold off while they deal with the wetlands. He added that once this is approved they would like to engage developers right away in this area to see where the dirt may be placed. He stated it is more difficult to go after natural wetland areas.

Acting Mayor Riley noted that Area D has a small wetland area in red that they would definitely want to mitigate.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for more information on the dollars given for the roads and if it just includes the design or the roads themselves.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that this is for the entire project cost.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they think they can get down with just the designs this year or also the roads.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said it depends on the segment that they are looking at and how much work is needed for the construction. He said they could definitely get design work done but physical work depends on the segment.

Councilmember Musgrove suggested making the fill the first priority and the design of the roads the second priority.

Councilmember Specht asked about the interest in different areas of the land.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan reviewed the interest in Parcel 46.

Councilmember Woestehoff agreed that the fill and design should be the first two priorities. He said he would be more ready to invest in Areas D and E rather than A. He thinks that the focus should be on C, D, and E as well as the waterfront with the short timeline.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan explained that Area A has lots of interest so he would recommend engaging the interested parties soon to get the projects started to know what needs to happen with the fill.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the purchase agreement in Area D and if that includes the City filling the dirt and doing the road.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan stated that Area D does not have as much trouble with fill and he anticipates that the developer would incur these costs.

Councilmember Specht agreed to get the interested parties involved.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said the interested parties have been very patient.

Councilmember Olson agreed that getting developers involved is a good direction.

Mayor Kuzma stated that he is in favor of making the movement of dirt the priority.

The Council agreed that the movement of dirt was the first priority.

City Administrator Hagen reiterated that the costs need to be incurred by the end of November 2023; however, if the legislation passes, this would extend the deadline to the end of 2026. He said this would give more time, not more money. He stated that \$34,000,000 has been incurred to this point. He explained that the grading, excavating, and design plans are more than the \$5,700,000 that they are looking to spend.

Acting Mayor Riley asked about changing the policy and the City reimbursing themselves for money already spent.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan added that getting the wetland sites ready for development could help expedite the speed in which development can move forward. He stated that the order of priorities seems fitting to move things along. He asked if the Council would like to see multiple plans from multiple developers in work sessions.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the developers were interested in Lot A, C, or the area between the two.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan explained that the line share of Lot A is for some sort of single family housing. He stated that between A and C is in limbo as there was an apartment complex looking at this site but they decided that they were interested in a larger site. He said that having the developers come to a work session would help give the Council direction on the route they would like to go.

Councilmember Specht asked if there was still a pause for the apartments.

City Administrator Hagen shared that the City is currently sending this message when developers call.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan added that they are not trying to solicit apartment buildings on these parcels. He reiterated the message that they have been giving to developers interested in the site.

Councilmember Woestehoff said it would be great to see the developers come forward to a work session to help with the discussion. He shared that the Planning Commission has been discussing rezoning, and the discussion has included this area.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that there is enough information that they can share information with the developers so that they know what to expect to help make their decision. He mentioned that instead of having developers come to a work session and share their ideas to have the developers submit plans to the Staff and they can discuss with Council at a meeting.

City Administrator Hagen explained that the whole process to begin construction will take a long time and the 2023 construction window has likely already passed.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she is interested in hearing from the developers to see their plans.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said that Lot A and C would need a lot of discussion especially if changing zoning is involved.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked how big Lot B is. He asked if it would be possible to mitigate the wetlands by putting the waterfront on Lot A and fill Lot B.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said this cannot be done as mitigating on site is no longer allowed.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that it would be easier to integrate the wetland if Lot A is a park.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that the apartment owner would not be happy with this. He added that if the park is next to Armstrong and Bunker Lake, sound could be an issue.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan added that if the waterfront is incorporated into Lot A there will be no beach. He said that if it is moved it will limit the potential of the waterfront.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood stated that they are looking at a 24 foot water column and are hoping to have fish in the water. He noted that the water column depth does not have sunlight penetration and therefore does not have the aquatic plants that contribute to algae. He said that if the depth was built around the wetland they would have to maintain slopes and the six foot depth of the wetland which would move away from the aesthetic goals.

Councilmember Howell stated that this will have a huge impact on the taxpayers and she does not think that they owe it to the apartment building for the splash pad area to be in the exact location that they want and the City should do what is best for all of the residents.

There was a consensus of the Council.

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

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

Noted.

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

None.

### **5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 8:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Brian S. Hagen  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

---

Katie M. Schmidt  
City Clerk

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