

**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 10, 2023, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Mark Kuzma
Councilmember Chelsee Howell
Councilmember Debra Musgrove
Councilmember Michael Olson
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Dan Specht
Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
Planning Manager Todd Larson
City Attorney Fritz Knaak
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
IT Manager Jason Fredrickson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Kuzma called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:32 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Update Regarding Recruitment Timelines for 2024 City Positions

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the Staff report concerning the timelines for recruitment for the eight open positions for 2024 that have passed the preliminary budget.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the start date for these positions will be within two weeks of when the Council authorizes the hire.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that is how it generally works unless the applicant is not working and could start earlier.

Councilmember Riley stated that during the budget discussion they had agreed to all of the positions with staggered start times. He noted that this timeline seems to hire everyone all at once. He asked for clarification on this.

Administrator Services Director Lasher explained that the start times would be staggered. She reviewed the beginning of recruitment dates versus the start dates for these positions. She stated that they are all staggered through the first few months of the year.

Councilmember Riley asked if this timeline works with the budget and spreading out the staff coming on board.

City Administrator Hagen explained that originally all of the Public Works positions were to start January 1; however, they shifted the positions to start anywhere from January 1 to March 1 to save one full year of salary across all of the positions.

Councilmember Specht asked if benefits start right away for these positions.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that it has been the City's practice since 2005 that City benefits start on day one of being hired. She noted that if the individual comes on board after the 15th of a month then they are not charged for the benefits for the first month.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she does not support the early hiring. She noted that they have a lot of State funds in the budget that are going to cushion them this year; however, they will not be there next year. She stated that she tried to present some alternatives to the Staff hiring but it was not accepted. She added that next year they are likely going to have a more difficult time with this. She stated that she would rather wait until after the budget starts to approve this if the budget passes.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the hiring timeline as presented in the case. Councilmembers Musgrove and Howell did not agree with the timeline as presented and preferred to wait until after the budget was approved to start the hiring process.

2.02: Contract for Civil Municipal Legal Services

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report in regard to the contract for City Attorney Knaak's services. He reviewed the draft agreement and shared that this contract is the same as the two year contract that is currently in place, with a new effective date and a 2% increase to the monthly rate.

Councilmember Specht stated that he has been very happy with City Attorney Knaak's work on the issues that have been worked through. He shared support for continuing the contract.

Councilmember Woestehoff agreed. He asked if there is room in the budget for the 2% rate increase.

City Administrator Hagen said yes.

Mayor Kuzma shared that he has also been pleased with City Attorney Knaak's services and he will support continuing the contract.

City Administrator Hagen noted that they have not given formal feedback from the Council to City Attorney Knaak. He stated that in the next few weeks they can discuss this to give City Attorney Knaak some feedback.

The unanimous consensus of the Council was to move forward with the contract.

2.03: City of Ramsey 50th Anniversary

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report concerning the City of Ramsey 50th Anniversary. He noted that there have been residents asking if anything special will be done. He asked the Council for ideas and direction on ways to celebrate this milestone.

Councilmember Musgrove shared her thoughts on seeing what the EDA may come up with as far as a way to promote businesses in the City along with the 50th anniversary celebration and make this more of a day where it is acknowledged publicly but have it come mainly from the businesses in the City.

Mayor Kuzma suggested putting flags down Center Street.

City Administrator Hagen asked if this would be a unique Ramsey 50th Anniversary flag.

Mayor Kuzma said yes.

Councilmember Olson asked about the actual date of the anniversary.

City Administrator Hagen stated that he does not know the date.

Councilmember Olson noted that it would be nice to do something special on the actual anniversary date.

Councilmember Specht suggested a medallion hunt. He noted that other groups within Ramsey could also do something.

Councilmember Riley shared that this should be tied in with Happy Days, which could be the feature of the anniversary. He noted that they could do a series in the *Ramsey Resident*. He shared that they could do a display similar to the one that is currently outside of the Police Department. He added that they could also have the theme of every City event be around the 50th anniversary. He stated that none of these ideas would cost any extra money to the City. He noted that he would also be interested in a medallion hunt.

Councilmember Specht asked if there would be a way to make Ramsey 50th Anniversary items to sell on the City website. He noted that he is not sure of the interest in this.

Mayor Kuzma suggested a sub-committee for this.

Councilmember Specht stated that if Staff feels confident with this then he does not see a need for a committee.

City Administrator Hagen shared that Staff can work through some of these ideas and come back to the Council to discuss and consider a sub-committee.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood added that in September, the Ramsey Foundation had expressed an interest in supporting the 50th anniversary.

The unanimous consensus of the Council was to have staff take the suggested ideas and bring them back for discussion on more specific ideas for potential implementation of ways to Celebrate the City of Ramsey 50th Anniversary.

2.04: Zoning Code Update Discussion

Planning Manager Larson reviewed the Staff report in regard to the zoning code updates, including updates for home occupation permits.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that there was a bit of redundancy that she shared with Planning Manager Larson.

Planning Manager Larson shared the updates that were made to make it less redundant.

Councilmember Howell asked to revisit the changes on the prohibited list.

Planning Manager Larson shared the home occupations that are not allowed have to do with internal combustion engines and dispatch and transportation centers.

Councilmember Specht asked if there are any restrictions on weapons.

Planning Manager Larson stated that ammunition manufacturing is not allowed by the fire code due to the explosive nature.

Councilmember Howell asked if retail sales were prohibited before and how this would affect someone who sells something out of their home. She gave an example of a resident selling eyeglasses out of their home.

Planning Manager Larson explained that his interpretation of this is that if they are selling something that is a product where the seller is working with the client on creating it for the client then he would not consider it retail sales. He stated that if someone was just selling off-the-rack items out of their homes then this would be an issue as they do not want people running stores out of their homes.

City Administrator Hagen asked if this could be worded to state that retail sales and pre-manufactured products are not allowed.

Councilmember Howell suggested changing this to address appointment only sales. She stated that she does not see it as a concern for what people sell out of their homes but rather the traffic of having a store run out of their home. She noted that she does not want to be overly burdensome on residents. She shared that there was a situation in a different city where a man selling eyeglasses out of his home was going to have his business shut down.

Councilmember Specht gave an example of his neighbor who had a very successful Etsy shop who would have an open house a few times a year at their home to sell some of their products. He noted that this was not consistent retail sales out of the home with customers coming and going.

Planning Manager Larson stated that this would likely fall under the garage sale code.

Councilmember Howell asked about excluding occasional sales through multi-level marketing.

Planning Manager Larson explained that retail sales have the in-person qualifier. He noted that if it is sold online then it would not be restricted. He stated that if someone is selling products and are constantly hosting parties out of their home to sell their products then the neighbors would be calling the City to step in.

Councilmember Howell stated that she does not want to make this overly burdensome, especially since side-gigs are becoming increasingly popular.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that a lot of this seems to come down to Staff's interpretation of allowed uses. He asked what happens when it is both an allowed use and prohibited use and which of the two would take priority.

Planning Manager Larson noted that they would fall back on looking at the other aspects of the Code and the totality of the circumstances.

Councilmember Woestehoff gave the example that firearm repairs and sales are considered an allowed use while retail sales are prohibited. He stated that he likes the clarification of these being by appointment only. He suggested that if it is something made in the home then it can be an allowed use; however, if it is shipped from a bulk order then it would be prohibited as retail sales.

Councilmember Howell reiterated that her appointment only suggestion would cut down on traffic as people would be aware that the intent is not to have people constantly flowing through their homes. She noted that it should not matter to the City what people choose to sell.

Councilmember Musgrove asked for more clarification on sales or storage yards. She asked if this refers to cars. She also asked about the use table and if the things that are allowed still need to get the qualifying permits.

Planning Manager Larson said yes and explained that these are broad terms that most of the permits would fall under.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the Council is in agreement to add the appointment only component.

The Council was in agreement.

Councilmember Howell asked why palm reading and fortune telling is a prohibited home occupation.

Planning Manager Larson shared that a lot of cities have prohibited this as there have been instances where palm readers have been caught doing nefarious acts and swindling customers out of large sums of money.

Community Development Director Hanson asked if the Council would like a definition for a sales and storage yard.

Councilmember Musgrove said yes as this would be helpful.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if it is common for home occupations to require something that has a different level of building permits. He suggested adding something about if the space is so large that it requires a commercial building permit then it would be a prohibited use.

City Administrator Hagen shared that there is a statement in the code that says there should be no other exterior evidence of the existence of a home occupation, including outdoor storage of materials or commercial vehicles.

Councilmember Howell asked about limiting instructional classes to having no more than four people in attendance. She shared that she knows of someone in another city who teaches 15 kids a week and asked how this would affect someone in Ramsey attempting to do the same.

Planning Manager Larson asked if this is something that the Council would like to allow. He shared that he has dealt with something similar years ago that was run through the public hearing notice and neighbors of the individual running the classes out of her home showed up and were not happy with the traffic that it caused.

Councilmember Howell asked if it was a full time school or just something that happened once a week.

Planning Manager Larson stated that it was something that occurred a few evenings a week.

Councilmember Howell asked how this would affect someone who tutors kids out of their home, hosts a bible study, or has a home based church.

Planning Manager Larson stated that the home based church could become problematic under building code. He noted that religious institutions are already called out in the code. He added that people getting together for a bible study would not be affected as it is not a business.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how they differentiate a home based church versus someone who has a lot of people living in their home that are also causing traffic concerns. She asked why

someone could not host church in their home once a week but someone else could have multiple non-related people living in the same home and coming and going everyday.

Planning Manager Larson explained that the home based church would be turning the home into some other use altogether. He noted that people can have their friends over to practice religion together as long as it is not an organized church.

Councilmember Howell stated that she knows someone who volunteers to teach kids once a week out of his home. She added that she can see not allowing schools for profit to run out of homes; however, people getting together to learn or volunteer together should not be restricted.

Planning Manager Larson noted that if it is volunteering and not a business then it would not be a home occupation.

Mayor Kuzma stated that it would become a problem when someone applies for a tax exempt status and uses their home as the official address.

Councilmember Woestehoff related this to someone having friends over to their home and drinking versus someone wanting to run a bar out of their home, the first is acceptable but the second creates the problem.

Councilmember Specht stated that churches met in homes during COVID. He noted that the church still had its building but was meeting at different homes because of the times. He stated that they need to put some kind of caveats to this.

Planning Manager Larson said this would get very messy to try to write something about this; however, if they just leave it out and people have home churches or bible studies in their homes and they are not disturbing the neighbors then the City won't know about it. He stated that there is always the option for a special event permit if a church is hosting a service in someone's home.

City Attorney Knaak stated that this is getting into a gray area. He shared concerns with directly calling out religious gatherings as this can run into constitutional issues. He noted that these religious gatherings would likely be sporadic and incidental and he believes this should be allowed.

Councilmember Howell agreed that the City should stay out of the way of these religious gatherings. She noted that there also do not seem to be existing problems with this.

City Attorney Knaak stated that education is another circumstance where the City would not want to be involved in. He explained that if someone is homeschooling their children as well as children from other families then he would not want to get involved with this unless it is causing issues.

Councilmember Specht asked how they write this so that future Councils and Staff would know how to follow this.

City Attorney Knaak stated that the Staff the City has is very well trained. He said that he does not think that they have to worry about continuity on this issue.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the Council was in agreement with the current wording.

Councilmember Howell said yes as long as what City Attorney Knaak is saying meets what she is saying.

City Attorney Knaak stated that this ordinance does just that as long as it is enforced intelligently.

Planning Manager Larson reviewed the updated zoning map. He discussed the Lord of Life Church requests.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this would not be conforming to the comprehensive plan.

Planning Manager Larson explained that in the proposed zoning district religious institutions are allowed in the R-1 district so this would be fine. He reviewed the requests from Voice of Hope Church for their property on Armstrong Boulevard as well as the requests for the non-residential properties on the south side of Ramsey and the COR parcel 46.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the parcel 46 changes would be proactive changes so that the developers would not have to come back in the future for a zoning permit change.

Planning Manager Larson explained that part of the developer's application will be the plat and site plan reviews and adding a rezoning on top of this would be another thing that they would need to pay for and an extra step in this process. He noted that the Council has already given direction on both of these projects to move forward so Staff figured that this was enough direction to move forward with the rezoning. He stated that it is a proactive change. He shared that there is an interactive map that allows anyone to click on any property in town and it will show what the property is currently zoned and what it is proposed to be zoned.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if this was able to be viewed by the public.

Planning Manager Larson said yes and shared that it is available on the zoning code update website since earlier this year.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there were any residents that had any feedback regarding the zoning for some of the properties east of Variolite. She noted that some of these residents have come to speak at meetings and have been very frustrated with the zoning and developments.

Planning Manager Larson explained that basically nothing has changed in that area.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that the residents who he has talked to over the years are more of the mindset of wanting to split their lots into multiple lots.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this limits them based off of the number of houses.

Councilmember Woestehoff said yes as the lots would have to be kept above two and a half acres.

Planning Manager Larson discussed the urban reserve and how this would help satisfy the larger property owners in the City.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that this does not seem to match the nature of the comprehensive plan. He asked if they would also update the comprehensive plan with a new map.

Planning Manager Larson said no and explained that this is tied to the staging map in the comprehensive plan where they are saying that development will happen somewhere down the line, just not right away which is when it would be rezoned.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if this is an opportunity to look at some of the density requirements in this area or if they will look at this later because it concerns future use.

Planning Manager Larson stated that since it is future use they do not need to look at it now.

Councilmember Riley added that he understands the purpose of the urban reserve. He asked if they can call it something else without the word 'urban.'

Planning Manager Larson explained that part of the goal is to keep it consistent with all of the terms in the zoning code and the 'U' in MUSA stands for urban. He added that 'urban' can also have a very broad definition.

Councilmember Woestehoff suggested calling it the MUSA reserve.

Councilmember Riley suggested just calling it the reserve.

Community Development Director Hanson stated that the MET Council also calls it the urban reserve.

Planning Manager Larson added that this is a common term.

Councilmember Riley stated that he is always happier with the word 'suburban' rather than 'urban' as it fits better with Ramsey. He also suggested calling it the future reserve or the development reserve.

Councilmember Specht agreed.

Planning Manager Larson suggested keeping this as the urban reserve for consistency with other communities and the MET Council.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how this is defined in the definitions.

Planning Manager Larson reviewed the definition of urban reserve.

Councilmember Howell suggested just calling it the reserve district which should keep residents happy.

City Administrator Hagen suggested calling it the MUSA reserve.

Councilmember Riley agreed.

Planning Manager Larson explained the goal of consistency with keeping these terms lined up through the document.

Councilmember Specht noted that people may not know what MUSA means.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the Council was in agreement with calling it the MUSA reserve.

The Council was in agreement.

Planning Manager Larson asked if the Council was in agreement with this to be brought forward for adoption on October 24.

Councilmember Riley stated that he has additional comments on the updates. He noted that he can send them directly to Planning Manager Larson. He added that they also discussed the R-1B and R-1C at the last meeting and asked if these areas are on the map.

Planning Manager Larson stated that they are on the map in certain areas. He showed them on the map.

Councilmember Riley stated that he does not want to see this on the map; however, he understands that it is allowed.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the other comments that Councilmember Riley has would generate more discussion.

Councilmember Riley said they are not big discussion items, just clarifying questions. He noted that this is a bigger discussion to be had around what is driving the decisions that the R-1B and R-1C be on the map. He noted that if it is being driven by the comprehensive plan then they need to discuss if the comprehensive plan should be adjusted.

City Administrator Hagen added that it would be beneficial to discuss this at the special work session next week to work through these last questions.

There was a consensus of the Council to hold a special work session on October 17, 2023 to further discuss the zoning code update.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there was some more information that they could get on the recycling program when that will be discussed.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Rokosz
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.