

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, November 14, 2023, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Mark Kuzma  
Councilmember Chelsee Howell (attended remotely)  
Councilmember Debra Musgrove  
Councilmember Michael Olson  
Councilmember Dan Specht  
Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Members Absent: Councilmember Chris Riley

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen  
Finance Director Diana Lund  
City Attorney Fritz Knaak  
Police Chief Jeff Katers  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood  
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher

**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: Review of 2024-2033 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)**

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Staff report and the 2024-2033 Capital Improvement Plan.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she does not like the order that the municipal buildings are listed. She noted that she would like these to be more prioritized.

Finance Director Lund stated that these items are listed in order of when they were put into the CIP. She explained that each project is proposed for a different year which is listed in the Staff packet.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the Police Department addition was supposed to be completed in 2023 as discussed by the Council. She asked if there was not funding for this project which is why it was not completed this year.

Finance Director Lund explained that Police Chief Katers had put this request in the 2024 budget.

Police Chief Katers stated that he put this request into the 2024 budget to do some reconfiguration of the front office with the addition of new Staff. He added that the building security request was not his request and he is not sure what this is.

Finance Director Lund noted that this is a study of what would be needed for security.

City Administrator Hagen shared that they had discussed bringing in a firm to look at tightening up security within City Hall and to get cost estimates for improving security.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she remembers this being discussed in a work session and it was supposed to be done in 2023. She noted that she does not want to spend any more time on this and would like it to be done. She asked about the trail connections that are in the CIP.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that this was discussed at the Public Works Committee meeting and explained that the Highway 47 trail is the segment from 142nd and up Highway 47 from there. He noted that there is a proposed daycare that will be in this area so they will need to update the numbers to see how much of this the developer would be paying for.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she would like this listed better in the CIP and having it moved from a priority five to a priority two item. She added that the City collects both park and trail fees separately; however, they are put into the same account so it is hard to know which portion is for trails and which for parks. She stated that this is an example as to why they should separate these two so they can know how much they are collecting for trails and parks individually. She added that the Sunfish Lake aeration could be moved from a priority two item to a priority five item.

Finance Director Lund explained that the park and trail fees are combined under the park trust fund. She stated that she could go in and manually break these numbers out.

Councilmember Specht asked if there would be a benefit to doing this.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if developers are always paying for both park and trail fees. He stated that if all developers are paying for both then the amount in each fund could be figured out with a ratio.

City Administrator Hagen shared that this was also his initial thought. He noted that it is not perfect; however, it is a good way to address the funds that they already have in the bank. He added that they could also look at recent developments to figure out what percentage of the funds go to parks and trails.

Mayor Kuzma stated that this seems to be a good solution.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood noted that Staff is not opposed to having these funds separated in the future. He added that developers sometimes do get paid in trail credits

so this cash does not come to the City but rather the improvements go to the developer. He explained that trails often connect parks so the distinction between the two is already blurred as the trails are a part of the parks system.

Councilmember Musgrove reiterated that she would like to have the park trails moved from the 2025 CIP to the 2024 CIP. She suggested swapping this project with the Sunfish Lake aeration project.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the Council was in agreement with this.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked what the aeration involves.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that the aeration takes atmospheric air and pumps it down into the water to provide oxygen to the water. He stated that in shallow water lakes during the winter there is so much snow cover that there is no longer any sunlight that can penetrate through the snow and ice to keep the plants alive. He explained that when the plants die the aquatic bacteria begins to consume the oxygen in the water which take oxygen from the fish in the pond. He noted that this is similar to the stormwater pond. He added that he would not recommend bringing this forward on the CIP unless there is also a plan to restore the fish. He noted that Staff does not look at the priority number when considering the projects and it has more to do with funding and timing.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if this was an opportunistic time to put in the aeration system.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said yes.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would like to see the Sunfish Lake and the trail items switching on the schedule due to funding sources being an issue. She explained that if they move this project from 2025 to 2026 then they can use some of this funding for the trail which is a higher priority. She stated that she would like to see the trails done in 2024 and 2025.

Finance Director Lund explained that the funding for this project is listed as coming from the park trust fund. She shared that it shows \$40,000 in 2025.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared that he agrees with Councilmember Musgrove that trails should take a priority over stocking the pond for now.

Finance Director Lund asked what priority number they would like the aeration project to be.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that this could be moved to a priority four project. She asked about the new electric utility vehicle and noted that it seems to be way under budget. She suggested removing this item and getting a regular utility vehicle rather than an electric vehicle.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if Councilmember Musgrove is opposed to an electric utility vehicle.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that if it is going to be used for parks she does not think that electricity and water go well together. She added that these electric vehicles do better in climates where there is less snow.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that this request entered the CIP a while ago and it was proposed that they would have some sort of cost shared grants to afford this. He shared that they did look at one electric vehicle that had a dump box on it. He stated that the benefit of the electric vehicles is that they are small and would be ideal for some of the park maintenance that they do.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that there may be a cost savings if they do not go with an electric vehicle. She stated that she also heard that they were having difficulties with some of the electric vehicle grants through the State. She noted that she does not support this item at the time being.

Mayor Kuzma shared that he drives an electric vehicle and he would be in support of this.

Police Chief Katers shared that the Police Department uses hybrid vehicles. He added that Ford has cancelled their vehicle order and they will not get the vehicles that they ordered in 2023. He noted that he has been told that they will not be able to order any electric or hybrid vehicles until November of 2024.

Finance Director Lund noted that this vehicle is a 2025 item and the funding source is the general fund property tax levy and would come forward as part of the 2025 budget discussion next year. She hoped that they would have a better idea of what is on the market for vehicles next year when this is discussed.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the Council was in agreement with purchasing a utility vehicle in the amount of approximately \$35,000.

Councilmember Musgrove said yes.

City Administrator Hagen stated that they can change this to be a small utility vehicle and they can discuss more later to determine what kind of vehicle it would be.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the lift station on the CIP for 2025 with a zero dollar cost.

Finance Director Lund explained that this project is listed twice in the packet but only one is for the real project and she could not delete the project with the zero dollar cost.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the City acquiring lots.

Finance Director Lund explained that this has been in the CIP since 2006-2008.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that these lots are not buildable lots but they are very attractive lots that they would like to acquire for parks.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if they have the capacity to turn down one of the water towers while it gets refurbished.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said yes and explained that the new water treatment plant will have a 1,000,000 gallon water storage with pumps to bring the water up to City pressure which is more than the capacity of the water towers.

Finance Director Lund explained how this process will work moving forward and shared that she will bring this to the Council for introduction at their next meeting.

Councilmember Specht asked if they are going to continue to move forward with the playground replacements next year.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said yes and noted that they should be able to get two done by the spring.

The consensus of the Council was to prioritize trails over the aeration at Sunfish Lake and to direct Staff to move forward with the CIP.

## **2.02: Continued Discussion of 2024 Budget/Levies**

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Staff report and gave updates on the 2024 budget and levies.

City Administrator Hagen discussed the closing of the Ramsey Elementary skating rink. He explained that they ran the numbers on the savings and the only thing that this adjusted was the seasonal worker wages. He shared that they sent out a survey to other cities about their Public Works departments so that the City can compare this information. He noted that they are still waiting on the information from all cities.

Councilmember Woestehoff thanked Staff for their work on collecting this information.

Councilmember Musgrove also thanked Staff for their work. She asked about Lino Lakes and if they have parks staff as it was not listed in the information provided.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that some cities pool their maintenance resources together for both parks and streets. He added that Lino Lakes also has substantial County park land. He noted that he can gather more information on this while they wait for the additional cities to respond.

Administrative Services Director Lasher added that they are still waiting on a greater response on this with more data coming in. She noted that they will try to put some charts together once they have collected all of the data.

Councilmember Musgrove discussed the funding totals in the September financial reports that are on the Consent Agenda for the Council meeting this evening. She noted that the format of this is not the same as the budget format. She added that she was not able to find all of the information

that she needed on the Council and commissions report. She asked for more understanding on this information and if there is a way to reduce this number.

Finance Director Lund explained that this was due to the Council contingency. She noted that there is funding in case of emergencies in this. She added that some of these funds need to be transferred internally which will be done at year end.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she would like to find more savings in the budget.

Finance Director Lund shared that if the budget does not pass then it goes back to the 2023 levy.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the budget and wait for Staff to come back with some more information on other cities public works departments.

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

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

Noted.

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

Councilmember Woestehoff asked when the current contracts would be up for negotiations.

City Administrator Hagen stated that the current contracts run through the end of 2024 and they will begin negotiations in August.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they always start negotiations in August.

Administrative Services Director Lasher noted that she always tried to start this process early but it typically ends up being in late July or early August.

### **5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:27 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.*