

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Special Work Session on Tuesday, February 1, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Mark Kuzma – attended remotely
Councilmember Chelsee Howell – attended remotely
Councilmember Debra Musgrove
Councilmember Michael Olson
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Dan Specht

Members Absent: Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
City Engineer/Public Works Director Bruce Westby
Finance Director Diana Lund
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
Police Chief Jeff Katers
Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood
Planning Manager Todd Larson
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
Economic Development Manager Sean Sullivan

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: Strategic Planning Session

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report concerning the 2024 Strategic Plan. He noted they will be shifting up how this meeting has run in the past and they will be looking at how to pick up on trends and looking at the big picture of the things they are doing well and not so well. He shared they will also be discussing impacts and opportunities that will be coming over the next few years. He noted they have spent a lot of time over the past few years discussing the Values, Vision, Mission, Objectives and Strategies of the City and he does not see these items as needing many changes as they are broad enough to cover anything that may come up in the City while still being relevant. He asked the Council to think of the things that the City is doing well. He shared these things do not have to pertain to operations of the City and could be something that is not done by the City but benefits the community as a whole.

Councilmember Musgrove shared she believes the road maintenance and repair process is going well for the City. She noted this could also have to do with the level of communication for roads as well, including communication and notices sent to the residents.

Councilmember Howell agreed and said there has been a huge improvement in the road maintenance process.

Councilmember Riley agreed. He noted this is something that started badly, and they were able to fix it to get it to where they needed it to be.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she also believes that the City's budget process is something they do well. She noted that Finance Director Lund does a good job of laying out the process and giving the Council a guideline. She added she would like to have the budget earlier in the year; however, she understands that there are a number of things that have to happen behind the scenes before the Council receives it.

Finance Director Lund shared that she believes the road maintenance process is something that the City does well. She noted that because of the bonding that they have done they know they have at least three years of funding for all of the overlay and reconstruction projects.

Councilmember Musgrove added that the Police and Fire Departments community outreach is also something that is done well in the City. She noted the residents are participating in the Police Academy and the Fire Department does a good job with community engagement. She added that both of these departments do a great job serving the community.

City Administrator Hagen noted this has to do with relations and acknowledged that the community appreciates the engagement.

Councilmember Riley highlighted the Highway 10 reconstruction that is also going well.

Mayor Kuzma noted that everyone seems to be on the same page with how important the roads are. He said it is still a number one priority for the City. He added that housing is something they are going to need to stay on top of. He noted that the retail on Highway 47 in the COR area is something else they will need to work on.

Councilmember Musgrove added that the IT updates that have been made have been very helpful for communications and security. She noted that they have also updated contact information for Staff on the City's website.

Councilmember Howell shared there have been excellent improvements made on communication to the public. She noted she loves the City Council highlights that go out on the website. She added that there have been great improvements to the City's website and social media pages.

Councilmember Specht agreed that the City has improved on their communication. He added that it seems as though Staff morale is a lot higher than it has been in the past.

City Administrator Hagen agreed and said he feels as though they are in a really good spot. He highlighted the great relationship between the Council and Staff.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that the playground replacement policy is also something the City has done well. She explained that residents were very concerned in the past; however, she believes they now have a good plan for carrying out this policy.

City Administrator Hagen noted the relationship with area organizations, including the Lions, the Ramsey Foundation, and the Athletic Association.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared that he believes these partnerships in the community continue to improve. He noted that for Happy Days they had over \$40,000 in cash contributions.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan highlighted hiring and shared that there has been a lot of turnover in the Public Works department and all of the new hires and existing Staff seem to be working very well together.

Police Chief Katers noted that with the Highway 10 project it brings a lot of opportunity to the community. He said this project has been through many iterations over the years and now that there is some finality to it there is an opportunity to grow more than they have in the past.

City Administrator Hagen agreed and highlighted general growth in the City from housing, to industrial, to commercial growth. He shared there were 200 new homes last year which is great.

Police Chief Katers noted that when community surveys are done, Staff and all departments rank well as far as customer service, approachability, and helpfulness goes. He said there are always areas for improvement.

Community Development Director Hanson shared that over the past year of her being with the City she has seen improvements with departments and departments working together to set up new policies and make sure that processes are streamlined. She added that she has heard this from other Staff members as well.

Planning Manager Larson thanked Code Enforcement Officer Swalchick for doing great things for Code Enforcement and shared they have been able to get results from some of the problem properties as a result of this.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that working with businesses, namely food truck vendors, has helped these businesses be a part of the community and able to make revenue while also enabling residents to get out and do something different in the community. She noted there are a lot of opportunities for these food truck vendors and the policy that the Council worked on for these vendors has helped with this.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan stated they are no longer working remotely like they were during COVID; however, the flexibility that people have been given as far as working hours has been working really well for Staff which he believes plays into employee morale being better.

City Administrator Hagen asked the Council and Staff to think of the things that may not be working well in and around the City.

Planning Manager Larson shared that the planning review software could be improved.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan agreed.

City Administrator Hagen explained they are trying to shift to a new software; however, it is not happening as quickly as they were told it would shift.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan added that he does not feel as though Staff is as engaged in the process on how this software will work and what its features will be. He said one of the components of the new software is business licensing and he does not feel as though they are a part of the process. He said it has taken longer than anticipated.

City Administrator Hagen shared they have not paid for anything yet.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared there are some policies that make things difficult for Public Works to do things cost effectively and efficiently.

City Administrator Hagen said this can be discussed during policy reviews.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby was saying that the current policies need to be reviewed and updated.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said yes and added that some were developed because of direction from previous Councils and these views may have changed. He highlighted the tree pruning policy as one of the policies that causes issues.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan noted the availability of vehicles is another area of concern. He shared there are a number of cars that the building inspectors are typically using all of the time and with more active Code Enforcement a lot of the vehicles are in use.

Finance Director Lund added that they have not been able to get vehicles because of the manufacturing delays in the market which is causing them not to be able to pass down vehicles like they typically do in the City.

Councilmember Riley noted that there have been three straight years of large tax increases in the City.

Finance Director Lund asked if he is referring to the upcoming year or the three previous years.

City Administrator Hagen said this discussion can be saved for later when they discuss impacts. He added that the tax rate has generally stayed flat over the past few years.

Councilmember Specht asked if City Administrator Hagen is referring to tax capacity.

City Administrator Hagen explained that the levy amount has had big increases over the last few years; however, due to the tax capacity growth with new development, the tax rate has remained around the 40% mark.

Councilmember Specht said this could have to do with inflated house values.

City Administrator Hagen stated this is part of the equation; however, there are so many new homes and businesses in the City that are adding new property values.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that there are some projects that are receiving TIF and noted that these are projected to decertify early which will put some tax capacity back into the general fund. He added that in 2040 the COR will come onto the tax rolls.

City Administrator Hagen asked if everyone is happy with all of the future funding planning.

Councilmember Riley shared his concerns with the future funding of improvements that do not have funding sources yet.

Finance Director Lund explained that it will help when they are able to pay themselves back for TIF-14 which will put money back into these funds and will go a long way for some of these items.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that he was out with a few Councilmembers, and they went through the old Town Hall. He noted they have not done anything with it and he feels like they will have to do something with this soon. He said they need to do something with it unless they want to lose the ability to do anything with it.

Councilmember Specht stated he is hopeful that they are putting great things into the parks with more Staff. He said there are still so many things that have not been done to keep the parks maintained and noted that he thinks they need to focus on this now that they have adequate staffing.

Councilmember Howell agreed with Councilmember Specht and noted that the maintenance of parks needs to be improved. She added that from a historical perspective it would be great to work on the old Town Hall this year. She shared she also had the opportunity to tour it and noted that with it being Ramsey's 50th anniversary, something should be done with it. She would like something to be done with this on the parks plan for this year. She noted that from a business perspective, if they are able to get weekly or bi-weekly updates of what businesses in the City are feeling this would be great for the Council to keep an eye on what is coming in. She added that she would also like the Council to be able to keep an eye on what policies Staff are thinking needs to be updated.

Mayor Kuzma shared that he believes the current state of the City's website is a little cumbersome as far as navigation goes.

City Administrator Hagen shared it was recently updated; however, it was not a big overhaul of the entire website. He noted that the functionality was addressed, and certain pages have been updated as needed. He agreed that the website is cumbersome, and it can be easy to get lost in everything.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that some of the timeliness of items coming to the Council could be improved. She shared that she would like things to be more timely when Staff is bringing back more information or cases to the Council that had direction on them. She added that when they do Work Session review for policies, she finds it to be clumsy and would like to figure out a way to make this more efficient getting time as a Council to hash out the process of what they want changed and to get direction to Staff. She suggested looking at policies in smaller segments and allowing Council to have more time to talk about the policies in order to give direction.

Councilmember Olson said that they typically get agenda packets five days ahead of a meeting which is sometimes not enough time to review all that is in the packet. He suggested getting packets out a week and five days ahead to give everyone more to review and digest the information in the packets.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared there is an EDA meeting next Thursday and a lot of times these meetings are discussing purchase agreements or something that will need Council approval. He explained that if they are discussing something that is urgent then he likes to get the information to the next Council meeting for the Council to look at. He said if the packets are sent out a week earlier than they will potentially bother customers, as it would push them to the following meeting.

Planning Manager Larson explained they have worked out the Planning Commission review process so that the packet does not have a lot of changes by the time it gets to a Council packet.

City Administrator Hagen shared that there have been policies that they have discussed and ultimately it turned out to be a State law that could not be changed. He noted they can have a better focus on what parts of a policy can be changed and adjusted and what is set by the State.

Councilmember Riley noted that it is hard to have a large, hundred-page policy put in front of them that they are asked their thoughts on. He said he would like them to be presented with the certain things that Staff needs direction on rather than giving them everything.

Councilmember Musgrove gave the example of the personnel policy review where there was a statement that was required to be in the policy by the State; however, the feedback from Council was that it was different in multiple different places. She noted that some of this could be figured out ahead of time so they do not spend time on this when it cannot be changed.

City Administrator Hagen noted there could be more homework done ahead of getting the packet that would help them prepare for when they receive the actual packet.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that if she knows there is a case on the EDA or Planning Commission, she will go and listen to the meeting on QCTV so she can get some of the information ahead of time.

City Administrator Hagen shared his appreciation for the preparedness of Council and Board Members when it comes to the meetings.

Councilmember Specht said it would be helpful if the Council was able to receive high level information on some items so there are no surprises when they finally come forward to the Council. He noted it would be helpful to have a weekly or bi-weekly email that gives high level updates on businesses that Staff have been talking to and about open houses or community activities that are coming up.

Planning Manager Larson asked if this was pertaining to businesses that are interested in coming into the City.

Councilmember Specht said yes.

Planning Manager Larson explained they can only let the Council know if there is a business that is interested, and they cannot say who it is as this is confidential.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan stated that until the business is willing to be put into a packet with a site plan application or purchase agreement, they do not disclose who the business is. He said that he may discuss with the EDA the type of business that is interested, but not the business itself.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared that in regard to the open houses and community activities, he asked if the weekly update is working for everyone. He noted that these updates could include the high-level information on the type of business that is in communication with the City.

City Administrator Hagen said he is not sure if this would be something they would want to put into the weekly update; however, the update does have park, community development, and other events.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared that another positive thing is that the Public Works facility is working phenomenally.

City Administrator Hagen said City facilities as a whole are something that is good within the City. He noted that this can include the water treatment plant that is on schedule and going well.

Councilmember Olson shared that he believes when they do the community survey this year, they are going to still be hearing lots about roads as there are some roads that have not been worked on yet.

City Administrator Hagen agreed and added that part of the effort leading up to the community survey is that they can make sure to share the 10-year road CIP to bring awareness to this. He shared that he hopes residents will see that the City as a whole is in a much better spot today than they were a few years ago. He asked the Council what the City is not doing that they should be doing.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan reiterated that nothing is being done with the old Town Hall building.

Councilmember Specht said there are gravel roads that need to be paved.

Councilmember Musgrove shared the trail maintenance policy has been out there for a while; however, nothing is being done about it.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said they need to develop a written policy for trails. He said they are already fixing trails; however, they need to have an identified program for this.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared that they also need to write a stormwater pond maintenance policy. He added that a coordinate acid management system is another item that has been on his to-do list for a while.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that through the Lower Rum River there are different stages where permits are in the process and the aspects of the project have been completed but the project is not closed out. She noted there are still some projects that just need to be closed out for their permits.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said they are working through this and it is on their to-do list.

Councilmember Riley shared that he believes the community needs to be more engaged in Happy Days and suggested putting together a committee that would help with this.

City Administrator Hagen asked if this community engagement means more volunteers or more people in attendance.

Councilmember Riley said he is thinking of the engagement as more volunteers.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that they have tried to go this route of getting volunteers for Happy Days but they just do not get anyone to volunteer.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she has experience of being on the Happy Days Committee and noted that there were very few volunteers that would come forward. She said she does not know if the committee is too much of a time commitment to people or if it is too involved. She suggested that each Councilmember could attempt to round up more volunteers for the event.

Councilmember Riley stated that he does not think that having everything for Happy Days fall on Staff is the right way to do it, nor is hiring someone out. He added that they have also gotten comments that people do not know how to volunteer to help with the event. He said that they need to have a positive committee for this.

Finance Director Lund asked if they would be looking for volunteers or a partnership for Happy Days. She shared that she lives in Coon Rapids, and they have their outside agencies partner with them and they take over a big portion of events like Happy Days.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that the City has a partnership with some of the churches in the area. She suggested that some aspects of the event could be taken over by these partner churches.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that there are a number of volunteer entities that are involved in the day of operations of the event.

Councilmember Olson added that Ramsey does not have an ambassador program, which a lot of communities in the area do have. He noted there would not need to be a lot of financial investment from the City for this. He shared this would help promote the community and would be a fun addition to Happy Days.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the Council thinks that Happy Days needs to expand from just an event to having many things to do at the event. He noted that if it gets too large, they will struggle with where to put it.

Councilmember Riley stated they should continue to improve Happy Days.

City Administrator Hagen asked if there is anything that anyone has seen in other communities that the City is not currently doing that would be nice to try to bring to the City.

Councilmember Specht asked about Anoka's front porch revamping program.

Planning Manager Larson shared they do not have any home improvement type programs that are City based.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that it is a grant that can be applied through the County or the State. She asked if this would work through the EDA.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said it could be managed by a number of different entities, including the EDA. He shared they just had a meeting with the County where they were talking about some of the legacy funds that are being collected in sales tax. He added that Coon Rapids has a curb appeal program as well. He explained that the County may be the funding source for this program; however, they would have to use these dollars to do something that the County is not already doing. He stated this can be done, they just need a funding source.

City Administrator Hagen said Staff can look into this further to bring back some discussion.

Councilmember Musgrove said she would like to look into this to see if they could find an outside funding source.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan reiterated the need to do something with Town Hall before it is too late to fix it.

Planning Manager Larson added that they need to also work on maintenance for all historical sites and preservation.

Councilmember Musgrove asked City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby if there are any stormwater management opportunities that would fit into some sort of facade improvements.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said that the Anoka Conservation District has the Rain Garden program.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that he has had more negative comments about the front of City Hall in the past two years than he ever has. He noted this is the front door of the City and it would be nice if they could fix it.

Councilmember Musgrove stated this is in the CIP.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared they do not have funding for this, but they are going to try to work on it.

Community Development Director Hanson shared that she has also received comments from residents about the landscaping on Sunwood on the City Hall side.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said this would be a part of the work for the front of City Hall.

City Administrator Hagen asked the Council what they think the City is doing that they should not be doing.

Councilmember Specht said they can look at what areas in the City they do not need to mow and can be kept natural.

Police Chief Katers shared the Police Department is constantly evaluating its programs. He noted that it is important to hear from the elected officials which programs work, and which do not. He added there are new programs coming out daily, so they are constantly evaluating these programs. He shared that the Police Department is going to start looking at the solvability index to determine which investigation cases they are going to put their time, resources, and efforts into solving. He noted that a lot of the cases they come across can be solved; however, they do not have an infinite number of resources. He asked the Council what they see the Police Department could be wasting their time on.

Councilmember Riley said he does not think they would know where the Police Department may be wasting their time. He added that the Council would love to hear policy ideas if Police Chief Katers has any.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she would rather have resources going towards solving cases rather than funding Coffee with a Cop.

Police Chief Katers stated if the Council ever does hear feedback on how the Police Department is using their resources, he would love to hear this feedback as well.

Councilmember Olson suggested that Staff could bring items to Council to see if they are still worth putting resources towards so they can have awareness into this.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan noted that something that has occurred a few times in the older industrial districts is that those who have septic systems that want to hook up to City water and sewer and are paying a high price to do so. He said it would be great if there was something they could do to offer an incentive or help mitigate this cost to help these businesses if they choose to hook up to City water and sewer.

Community Development Director Hanson agreed.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this is something a resident could have an assessment on their property taxes for.

Finance Director Lund shared they have done assessments in the past.

Community Development Director Hanson shared these current concerns are in regard to businesses that want to hook up to City sewer and water because their septic is failing; however, the hook up is way too much money and it is cheaper to put in another septic system.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan noted he does not have a solution for this; however, he believes it is something they should be encouraging. He said this comes down to sewer hook ups in redevelopment areas and noted they will have a lot of these on Highway 10 coming up.

Community Development Director Hanson added that they are missing the opportunity of recouping some of these costs and these businesses are having to go back to septic and are not able to utilize City services.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared there are financial benefits to this because commercial systems are a lot larger, and this would allow for more room on the site to build more buildings or get adequate parking that these businesses need rather than having a mound septic system that needs to be so far away from the buildings.

City Administrator Hagen asked if they are listening to people when they should not be. He gave the example of watching the community Facebook page and noted there are a few users who just

seem like they want to ‘poke the bear’ on social media. He asked if they are listening to the people who truly represent the community.

Councilmember Musgrove said she does not feel as though she is listening to people who do not represent the community or people who will never be pleased with anything the City does. She shared that the people she hears from are not people she hears from over and over again and is normally on one specific issue.

City Administrator Hagen shared that there was a Code Enforcement case in the past where one resident was calling with complaints every day and he wondered if they could have managed time better for this situation or similar situations.

Councilmember Musgrove explained that there was an interaction in the past where they met with a resident and were able to come to a great resolution and they have not heard anything from the residents since. She suggested communicating with these residents together as both Council and Staff.

City Administrator Hagen noted that it has been helpful when Councilmembers forward him emails that they receive from residents with concerns so that Staff can give the Councilmember more background information on the situation.

Councilmember Musgrove stated if things are on the CIP and are more than two to five years out, she believes there should be less focus on these items and more focus on the items that are within the next two years.

Finance Director Lund mentioned data requests which can be very time consuming.

Councilmember Riley stated that with this they need to figure out what the law requires them to do and not do.

City Administrator Hagen shared that there is a clause that they can use as a reply for data requests that are too broad.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood shared that they saw such low participation at the Ramsey Elementary skating rink and the pause that they put on this for the 2023-2024 winter was a good decision and allowed them to use this time to address the EAB tree removal program.

RECESS AND RECONVENE

The Council took a 10-minute break.

2.01: Strategic Planning Session (continued)

City Administrator Hagen discussed the impacts over the new year one to five years in the City to be forward thinking and so that everyone can have a general understanding of what is to come.

Councilmember Riley used the example of Highway 10 which will have construction for the next couple of years which will be bad and businesses and residents will be affected; however, once the project is finished, everyone will be happy with the outcome of this project.

Councilmember Musgrove agreed.

City Administrator Hagen asked if they wanted to include their own road projects with the Highway 10 project as these other road projects will also have a large impact. He added that the County does not have any road projects scheduled for Highway 47.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said that Highway 47 is proposed to be overlaid in 2028.

Councilmember Musgrove noted the trunk highway improvements, as well as gas emissions and vehicle miles traveled impact projects. She noted this starts February 2, 2025. She said this will affect projects that are not in queue now. She asked how this works.

City Administrator Hagen shared that he and Councilmember Musgrove attended the Anoka County State Officials meeting last week and one thing that was mentioned was new legislation related to greenhouse gas initiatives and how trunk highway projects are now going to have to be scored against the greenhouse gas reduction and vehicle miles traveled reduction. He noted that depending on how the project scores there are certain other improvements in the area or other communities that agencies will have to do. He shared that the state of Colorado has a similar program and it drove project costs up by 20-50%.

Planning Manager Larson noted the labor shortages for businesses in town.

City Administrator Hagen shared that over the next one to five years they are going to be seeing retirements of management Staff in the City.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan mentioned the tax-exempt status of daycare properties having an impact over the next five years.

City Administrator Hagen asked if there is any indication that it may go beyond this and other uses that may get this same status.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said no; however, there is always going to be a need for more daycares so they will be seeing more tax-exempt properties in the City.

Councilmember Musgrove asked why daycares are tax exempt.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan explained that daycares are considering themselves as schools. He stated that each daycare has to apply with the County Assessor for this tax exemption. He noted there could be an issue with this when it comes to home-based daycares.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they should do a hold on daycare development.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that when they went through zoning, they removed daycares from certain districts for this reason.

City Administrator Hagen noted the supply chain issues with getting vehicles.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that one of the members of the election body at the Anoka County policy meeting stood up and said that cities could consider sharing equipment or having some type of mutual aid to help surrounding communities meet their needs with supply chain delays.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby stated that they are currently doing this to some degree with Anoka.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said it was his understanding that when the water treatment plant goes online, they will have some water chemistry changes that will be perceived by consumers.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained that when they fire up the lines it will dislodge contaminants that are in lines so it will get worse before it gets better. He noted this will be a communication piece that will need to go to the residents.

Finance Director Lund discussed some of the upcoming financial impacts, including the union contracts being opened this year. She noted the last time these were looked at was three years ago and there have been a lot that has happened since then with the employee field. She added that the residential tax capacity rates are either flat or decreasing at the County left for what they are setting for values. She also noted the supply issues with vehicles and what these vehicles are costing.

Fire Chief Kohner shared that the fire calls are increasing off the charts and there was a 26% increase in the last year. He noted the first step will be to increase the time of the duty crew; however, they will get to a point where they need more nights, and they are not set up for this. He added they may need some facility upgrades.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this would mean they would also have a duty crew at night.

Fire Chief Kohner said yes; however, it would likely be closer to the end of the five-year timeframe they are discussing.

Councilmember Riley asked what is causing the 26% increase in calls for service.

Fire Chief Kohner said it is the increase in homes in the City as their main calling source is from residential homes.

City Administrator Hagen asked if the same increase in calls for service has been seen by the Police Department.

Police Chief Katers said yes and explained that their calls have slightly decreased after hitting an all-time high in 2021. He noted that medical calls are off the charts as people are calling for everything. He added that they are included for mental health calls which have increased by 48%. He shared they will need to look at the future for their building to anticipate areas in the building that are going to have to start being replaced since the building was built in 2006.

City Administrator Hagen asked if anyone foresees any major impacts in the demographic or age of the City over the coming years.

Police Chief Katers shared that they have diverse pockets in the City where his officers have seen quite a bit of change in the demographics and are seeing an increase in migrants from Eastern European countries.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how this is an impact.

Police Chief Katers explained that they need to make sure they are reaching these groups and the City needs to have an understanding that demographics are changing in the City.

City Administrator Hagen noted this could also lead to a change in culture in the City, especially if these migrants are all settling in similar neighborhoods.

Councilmember Musgrove shared she does not know how this is an impact.

City Administrator Hagen said this impact is not something that is negative for the City, it is just something that is changing and will play into maintaining the connected community feel that Ramsey has. He noted that if they are aware of this now, they can implement processes to make sure they are reaching these groups. He added that there could be language barriers with these individuals, and this could be an issue with communication.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they would be able to lean on the County for support for this.

Police Chief Katers explained that for public safety they have a language line and options for this. He noted he brought this up for an awareness that some of these individuals are first generation migrants and only speak a language that Staff may not speak.

Councilmember Musgrove said this would just be a language concern and not necessarily a cultural concern.

Planning Manager Larson said it could be a cultural concern and gave an example of how someone may be expected to keep up with their property and how that may differ from what was expected of them in other parts of the world.

City Administrator Hagen said it is good to be aware of this. He gave an example of when they go into the census every 10 years and larger cities had an emphasis on connecting with community leaders and changing demographics may respond differently to this.

Finance Director Lund noted that they have people who come into the finance office concerning their utility bills who have a very difficult time understanding how water bills work.

Community Development Director Hanson added that the impacts of the City growing will create a need for additional Staff in some departments, such as the Building Department.

Police Chief Katers asked if they rely on the Met Council's number. He shared that when they have tried to do projections in the past, they have been relying on Met Council's numbers which have been very off.

Community Development Director Hanson said the Met Council's numbers are still off.

Planning Manager Larson explained they can do their own projections by multiplying the housing units by the average number of household members.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby noted the County will also be working on the west end of Highway 10 in the coming years.

Councilmember Musgrove mentioned Highway 5 and shared that the County has some potential roundabouts coming in the next five years.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared they just approved the letter of support for these three applications.

Councilmember Musgrove noted the bridge with Dayton.

City Administrator Hagen said they will keep this on the list for the legislative agenda as they would like to collect some funding for this.

Planning Manager Larson said it would be nice if they looked at the corridor for Highway 5 rather than just the intersections.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she knows the County improved Alpine and Highway 47, as well as the crosswalks in this area. She added they also improved crosswalks and traffic flows on Bunker.

Planning Manager Larson shared he was referring to a full-fledged reconstruction on Highway 5.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared he has not heard any plans for the bridge over the Rum River just east of Highway 47.

Planning Manager Larson shared that a developer is going to be making their development application in the coming weeks, which will be for 480 units.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they were doing this project in phases.

Planning Manager Larson said yes.

City Administrator Hagen asked Council and Staff about opportunities they see over the next one to five years.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that RALF properties are an opportunity as there will be special rules that may apply with these.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the RALF program is potentially going away.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan explained that the way the RALF program is set up is that once the Highway 10 project is complete, these properties are supposed to be sold. He shared they will need to get appraisals and sell the properties for this amount or higher. He noted the City gets no proceeds for this and the funds go straight to the RALF funds. He added they are receiving RALF revenue, and they are allowed to use this for property maintenance. He reiterated the opportunity these RALF properties will be in the next few years.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that future growth, both residential and commercial, can also be an opportunity for the City.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared that smart technologies could be an opportunity. He noted they are currently utilizing some technologies, but not a lot. He said this could be helpful when it comes to communication with residents.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if some of these technologies could also be used to help with some of the language barriers that were discussed earlier.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said it could potentially help with this.

Councilmember Riley noted the opportunities in the COR.

Councilmember Musgrove added that the water treatment plant is also an opportunity for education and for management of the water program. She asked if they would need another water tower or well.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said they will need another well.

Councilmember Riley noted that the City's identity is an opportunity. He said they are growing and cleaning up Highway 10 so they can begin working again to define what Ramsey is.

Councilmember Olson added that public art is another opportunity.

Councilmember Musgrove said trail connections are an opportunity as there are already some they have been talking about and others that also need connections.

City Administrator Hagen noted that they will work to turn the impacts into opportunities. He asked if there are any action items that the Council would like to discuss. He shared there are a number of items from the 2023 Strategic Plan that are ongoing. He shared that there are some projects that having accomplishments under these projects is really good. He added that there are also big projects that are going on which take a fair amount of Staff time, including Highway 10 and the water treatment plant. He noted he would be hesitant to add a ton of items to the action plan as there are a lot of items ongoing.

Councilmember Riley discussed the 50-year anniversary of the City and noted it should be a recurring theme through everything the City does in this year. He shared they got a great start to this with the article in the *Ramsey Resident*. He noted it should be tied in every chance they get.

Councilmember Musgrove said she would like to see some of the park projects that the Council has discussed in the past come forward more, including the dog park in the COR. She added that they had previously had a discussion around the trees in Sunfish Park. She shared that in regard to the Lower Rum River, they are having to redo their JPA which the board is going through. She thinks this needs to go on for a future topic at a Work Session.

Councilmember Riley asked if they would be able to have Police Chief Katers bring the Council Police Department updates at certain times. He shared that residents have asked about the crime in Ramsey, and he did not know how to answer as he did not have the pertinent information. He noted this would also give Police Chief Katers the opportunity to share with the Council the needs that the Police Department has.

Police Chief Katers shared they typically do the Police and Fire Departments annual reports in June. He recommended looking at the crime mapping in the City which goes out the next day after a crime is reported. He shared that he encourages residents to look at the crime map as it shows everything that is happening in the City. He noted he can give more updates on trends they are seeing in the Police Department. He shared they typically have more property crimes than personal crimes. He added that crime in Ramsey is lower than both the State and national averages.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she believes they were ranked 14th for crime a few years ago.

Police Chief Katers explained that some of the criteria that these sources use is different at times. He reiterated that they are relatively low in property crimes. He said he will think of something he can do to keep the Council more up to date on the happenings of the Police Department.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that he gets asked about crime on business visits as well. He noted that he has received feedback from businesses that they would like more individual interaction with officers to develop relationships with these businesses.

Police Chief Katers said this is an important aspect of the job and shared that in the past they have had a specific unit that works on these business relationships; however, it is important for all officers to work on this. He noted there are over 400 businesses in the City which is a lot to keep

track of. He added that they have some of the best data as far as who the key holders are for businesses in the City as the City has required this information.

City Administrator Hagen noted if the Council thinks of any other action items after the meeting, they can send them to him. He asked the Council if they were in agreement with moving the process forward for the resident survey.

Councilmember Riley explained that the streets have been terrible in the past and he would like to ask the residents if they think the roads have improved.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the Council would get a chance to review the questions that will be asked on this survey.

City Administrator Hagen said yes.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that if they do not ask the same or similar questions on each of the surveys then they will not have a good way to measure trends.

City Administrator Hagen shared that Staff has had over 40 new hires over the last three years. He noted that the processes for hiring have changed. He shared he would like to bring in a book author who wrote a book called 'Homerun Leadership' which is all based on a decision-making process that they are doing everyday as Staff. He shared his goal behind this all-Staff training is to help decisions be made at the lowest level possible and getting Staff to understand the vision of all departments, not just their own. He noted they have funds available for this. He said they would bring in the book author and they would meet all day with a deep dive into his concept of decision making. He noted he would then bring back the book author for a second, half-day session. He added that they would be able to manage Staff coverage while Staff is in these meetings.

Councilmember Riley shared that if City Administrator Hagen thinks this is a good idea, then he will support it.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that she has found value in having smaller groups in these all-Staff meetings. She agreed that if City Administrator Hagen thought this would help leadership, then she would also be in support of it. She added that these kinds of opportunities where Staff get to learn together are very valuable.

Councilmember Olson shared that he finds it very helpful for Staff to all get on the same page. He shared his support for this.

Mayor Kuzma shared his support as well.

City Administrator Hagen shared he can get the Council a copy of the 'Homerun Leadership' book. He shared that the Staff would meet to work on everything that has been discussed this evening to bring back an updated Strategic Plan to the Council with proposed new action items and outcomes that will go along with them.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the discussed changes to the Strategic Plan and direct Staff to implement these changes.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The Special Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Major
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.