

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, April 23, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Acting Mayor Chris Riley
 Councilmember Chelsee Howell
 Councilmember Debra Musgrove
 Councilmember Michael Olson
 Councilmember Dan Specht

Members Absent: Mayor Mark Kuzma
 Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
 Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
 City Attorney Fritz Knaak
 City Clerk Katie Schmidt

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: Review Community Survey Demographics Questions

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report in regard to the updates made to the community survey from the Council’s last discussion of this item. He shared that Jade Arocha, Director Survey Research with Polco is in attendance online to offer some clarity on the demographic questions that are asked on the survey.

Ms. Arocha explained that the demographic questions are not typically allowed to be removed from the surveys as they help calculate the demographic data. She noted that questions d11, d12, and d14 are half of the questions that they use for the statistical weighting. She said without these results they would not be able to weight the survey data, which offers concerns of not being able to do benchmark comparisons to other communities and that this would have an effect on being able to compare this years and future year’s data to historical data.

Acting Mayor Riley asked if they would still be able to compare unweighted historical data if these questions were removed.

Ms. Arocha said she is not sure and explained that they would have to reanalyze all past data sets, which would have a cost associated with it.

Councilmember Howell asked what baseline is used for weighting the data and how they would rate someone who checks 'race not listed' versus any of the other races that are listed.

Ms. Arocha said they use the most recent census and community survey data available to perform the weighting. She explained that for any of the weighting questions when the answer is not specific, it is given a weight of 1 and they do not do any adjustments for this person's response.

Councilmember Howell asked about the weight of all other races versus 'race not listed.'

Ms. Arocha explained that for rating purposes in most of their communities, they divide the data into categories of white and not Hispanic, and not white and/or Hispanic. She noted that they rarely see enough responses outside of these two categories to create a whole new category. She added that they do not want to give the respondents outside of these two categories too much weight. She added that historically, all of the other non-white responses are less than 10% of the total responses.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how Ramsey's data is used to provide the City information as well as compiling a database for Polco.

Ms. Arocha explained that this data is reflected in the City's reporting. She added that they have a benchmark database that consists of around 500 communities, and they are able to compare particular communities' data against the national database.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this data is ever sold.

Ms. Arocha said no and that they have a privacy policy. She noted the only time they ever share data sets is with the communities they work with.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the purpose of collecting this data for the database of communities.

Ms. Arocha said it is to provide benchmark comparisons to communities and aid in digesting the data. She added that these benchmarks are very valuable to clients so they can see how they compare to other communities. She noted that they can also use this data to compare communities on a regional level rather than national. She said they have a number of clients in the Twin Cities that want to see how they compare to other Minnesota cities.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the unweighted data is the same as raw data.

Ms. Arocha said yes.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if it was possible to start a new trend line with just the raw data.

Ms. Arocha said if they removed the weighting questions it would be at a considerably higher cost to the City for Polco to go back and essentially redo previous data.

Councilmember Howell asked if there is a collaboration between ICMA and Polco to create the survey questions and if there is any collaboration on reviewing this aggregated data.

Ms. Arocha explained that this is the only survey product that is endorsed by ICMA as it was developed in collaboration with them. She said ICMA does not have access to the survey data.

Acting Mayor Riley asked if they were to remove these questions from the survey if they would lose the ability to compare their data to other cities as well as not being able to determine what changes in City trends are as they would be starting new trends.

Ms. Arocha explained that if they remove the demographic questions and there is a trend shift then they will not be able to determine if this change in trend is due to changes in resident demographics or not. She noted that it would benefit the City to keep these questions in.

Acting Mayor Riley asked if anything that was presented by Ms. Arocha changes Council's minds on wanting to remove the demographic questions from the survey.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the removal of questions d11, d12, and d14 from the community survey.

2.02: Anoka County Elections Integrity Team Presentation

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report and introduced Mr. Derek Lind and other members from the Anoka County Elections Integrity Team (ACEIT).

Mr. Lind and other members from the ACEIT reviewed their presentation on election integrity with the Council.

Councilmember Olson asked about the post-election review and if it is done by the election judges at the precincts.

One of the ACEIT members shared that the post-election reviews happen 11 to 18 days after an election and the County Canvas Board draws the precincts they will review. He explained that the precincts that are drawn have to supply their election judges and they do a public handcount of the votes from the drawn precincts.

Councilmember Howell asked if Oak Grove is a part of the post-election review at the County, is that funded by the City.

Mr. Lind said yes.

Councilmember Musgrove thanked the members of the ACEIT for their presentation which contained a lot of new information that she did not know. She shared that she has been an election

judge in the past and hand counted votes and added that smaller precincts would make this more feasible. She asked if one of Ramsey's precincts were involved in the last post-election reviews.

City Clerk Schmidt said yes.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if Ramsey had been involved in any post-election reviews prior to this most recent one.

City Clerk Schmidt said this was the only time they had been involved since she started working for the City in 2017.

Mr. Lind shared that if the Council has any questions about anything that was presented to reach out and continue to be in contact with the ACEIT as the Council considers their presentation.

Councilmember Howell stated that adding additional post-election reviews seems like a great idea. She asked if there was anything that seemed complicated about this.

City Clerk Schmidt shared that a lot of the processes are from the County so she is not sure how much control the City would be able to have over certain components.

City Administrator Hagen explained that past post-election reviews have shown accurate results so he is hesitant to say that there should be concern that election results are not accurate.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that her main takeaway from the presentation is how they can protect elections moving forward as well as make the process easier for residents in regard to precinct sizes. She noted that in her time on the Council there have been four elections and they have only been a part of one review which she finds inadequate. She added that she would like to have more discussions on this in the future as far as possibilities for change.

Councilmember Howell said she would like to see a few more post-elections reviews added and to see if that would be an option for the upcoming 2024 election.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how the early voting process differs from the election day voting.

Acting Mayor Riley said early voting is similar to absentee voting.

The consensus of the Council was to direct Staff to look into adding more post-election reviews as well as switching back to paper ballots.

2.03: Continue Discussions Regarding Proposed Updates to the Personnel Policy

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the Staff report in regard to the updates to the Personnel Policy, continuing the discussion on Section 5.8, Severance Pay and discussing Section 6, Leave.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the leave that would be paid out after an employee leaves the City in good standing would be the sick and safe leave only in the examples that were presented.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that this would be specific to sick and safe leave. She said that all cities that she is aware of pays out accrued vacation leave if an employee is in good standing when they resign. She noted that unused vacation time is paid out at 100%, whereas, sick and safe leave is paid out at a percentage based on time in the position.

Acting Mayor Riley asked if the City has any policies that require employees to take vacation.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said yes and explained that vacation time cannot exceed two times the accrual or the employee will lose this vacation time.

Councilmember Howell said she would like to see the payout of sick and safe leave at 33% after five years with the City and do increases after this point for longevity, such as 45% after 10 years and 50% after 15 years.

Councilmember Musgrove says she likes this idea as well. She noted that this would be helpful information to have in a table which will be easier for employees to see how their benefit will increase the longer they stay.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that during their last discussion they mentioned offering an incentive to those employees who give a very advanced notice of when they would be leaving. She asked if this is something the Council would like to consider.

City Administrator Hagen noted that Council had agreed to this incentive during the last discussion. He said Staff can bring this back based on the other suggested changes that are made to the policy.

Councilmember Howell asked if they anticipate there to be a large percentage of employees that would give such an advanced notice or if this is mainly for employees who would be retiring.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said their assumption would be that this would be for people who are retiring or know that they will be moving out of the area. She noted that there would be a limited number of people who would utilize this.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there is a way that Staff could get the dollar amounts on what some of these sick and safe leave payouts could look like.

City Administrator Hagen explained that Finance Director Lund can do these calculations and added that she has done calculations on what the liability would be to the City if all employees walked away. He noted these numbers and considerations are included in the budget calculations.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they would want specific language in the policy that addresses the payouts for retirements rather than resignations.

City Administrator Hagen said the purpose of offering the additional payout for anyone who gives an advanced, three month notice would be so that the City can get the hiring process started to replace this individual. He said they would not need to specify this is for retirements.

Councilmember Howell asked what would happen if someone accrues three months of vacation time and wants to use this vacation time during their three month notice.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said they discussed not allowing employees to use vacation time during the notice period as it extends benefits. She asked if there is any interest in rounding up the payout amount after five years to 35% from 33%.

Councilmember Howell said no as they have already increased the other numbers and the goal is to incentivize longevity. She noted the 33% with the potential of an additional 10% for three months advance notice is already a good benefit.

The consensus of the Council was to keep the sick and safe leave payout at 33% after five years of service and to offer an additional 10% for an employee who gives a three month notice.

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the changes made based on the Council's previous discussions to the vacation leave policy.

Councilmember Howell asked if what was in the packet was updated based on their previous discussions regarding leave.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said no and explained that she wanted to verify some of the numbers before making all of the updates.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with front loading five vacation days for new employees and adjusting the accrual schedule for the rest of the first year.

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 6:55 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Major
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.