

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

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

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

Members Absent: Councilmember Michael Olson

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  
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher  
City Attorney Fritz Knaak  
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson  
Street Supervisor Shane Turner  
Utilities Supervisor John Nelson

**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: Preliminary 2025 General Fund Budget Review**

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Staff report in regard to the 2025 preliminary general fund budget discussion. She reviewed the capital requests.

Councilmember Specht shared that he would lean towards only replacing the one copier that is broken rather than preemptively replacing the rest.

Finance Director Lund invited each department head to share their personnel requests.

Police Chief Katers shared that they would like to reclassify a current community service officer (CSO) to a CSO Lead. He added that they would also like to reclassify the Record Tech/Crime Analyst to just a Crime Analyst. He stated their final request is to add a new role for a Police Record Technician as well as a new Police Officer. He noted that as the City's population grows, so do calls for service.

Mayor Kuzma asked about the ratio of officers to the population.

Police Chief Katers explained that years ago the International Association of Police recommended one officer per 1000 residents. He shared that in the Midwest, this percentage is very low. He noted that using population as a way to measure how many officers would be needed as the number of calls for service are also a factor.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about how the additional officer would benefit other officers being able to take vacation time.

Police Chief Katers explained that this officer would be a patrol officer who would be put into the patrol rotation. He said that this role would help supplement so other officers are able to take time off throughout the year.

Councilmember Specht asked if they have anyone on the Drug Task Force.

Police Chief Katers said they do have an officer assigned to the Drug Task Force which is a four year commitment. He said the Drug Task Force is highly effective in combating drugs and they also help with violent crime calls.

Finance Director Lund added that there is no grant funding associated with this and it is a cost to the City.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if there is a current CSO Lead and if the reclassification is to backfill the role or if it is an entirely new role.

Police Chief Katers said it would be a reclassification of an existing position for someone who is taking on the CSO Lead tasks without being compensated.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared the Public Works personnel request of reclassifying a Mechanic to a Lead Mechanic.

Street Supervisor Turner explained that there was a situation just this morning where a vehicle was urgently needing maintenance and if there was a Lead Mechanic in the shop then they would have been able to make the decision to prioritize this repair rather than waiting for Street Supervisor Turner's approval.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if this mechanic would still be under Street Supervisor Turner's direction and if he would be a working mechanic rather than overseeing the work.

Street Supervisor Turner said that this Lead Mechanic would still be under his direction and he would be working on vehicles and equipment as well as doing all of the paperwork associated with the repairs.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how many mechanics they currently have.

Street Supervisor Turner said they currently have three.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she would like to know if the workflow changes that this reclassification would make would affect the outcome of the work.

Councilmember Specht asked if they have a rule in place that a department needs to have a certain number of employees before they add a lead or manager.

City Administrator Hagen said they do not really have a rule for this. He added that a few years ago this request came forward at the Staff level and they had the conversation about having such a small department needing a lead or manager.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she sees that the mechanics department is already very small, and they are having to work quickly to turn jobs around and she is concerned with making someone a lead and that possibly taking them away from the hands-on work resulting in a negative outcome in the service.

Street Supervisor Turner shared that the mechanic will still be monitored, and they would continue to turn out consistent work. He added that he does not think a reclassification to a lead would affect their current work.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby shared that the importance of a lead goes back to the leadership training that they had which discussed making decisions at the lowest level possible. He noted that if there were a Lead Mechanic, then Street Supervisor Turner would not have to take phone calls and make the decisions without knowing all of the facts and being in the actual shop. He added that they are also requesting a new full-time Utility Maintenance Worker who would be primarily handling the new duties associated with the water treatment plant that will be up and running next summer. He noted that this individual would also be responsible for all of the water sampling.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the yearly salary will be around \$80,000 for this position.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said yes.

Mayor Kuzma asked if there are any redundancies with this role.

Utilities Supervisor Nelson explained that the individual who would be in this role would be required to have Class B Water Operator's License. He noted that there are only two Staff members, himself and his lead, who have these Class B licenses so in the event that someone was out on vacation or sick, there would be others who would be able to run the water treatment plant.

Community Development Director Hanson reviewed the Planning Department request to increase the Planning Administrative Assistant hours from 25 hours a week to 40 hours a week. She shared that this used to be a full-time position and was reduced to part-time after the pandemic. She said this position does provide support for five Staff members and is also doing work for the Rental Housing Inspector. She noted that 25 hours a week is not enough to keep up with the workload. She shared that there are a lot of people in the Planning Department that are having to do their own administrative duties because the part-time role does not allow time for everything to be done. She added that they are also requesting an increase in hours for both the Building Permit Tech and the Building Administrative Assistant. She shared the request to increase the Building Permit Tech hours from 20 hours a week to 28 hours a week. She stated this also used to be a full-time position. She stated they would like the Building Administrative Assistant's hours to go from the current 28 hours a week to a full-time, 40 hour a week schedule. She explained that the Building Department is very busy, and they have more work than they know what to do with.

Mayor Kuzma asked about the current timeline on getting permits out.

Community Development Director Hanson said it is anywhere from two to three weeks.

Mayor Kuzma asked if this increase in hours would help get the permit turnaround time down closer to two weeks.

Community Development Director Hanson said yes. She added that the current Permit Techs are under a considerable amount of stress as they do not have the time to get all of their work done in a day.

Councilmember Musgrove asked how much of the work for permits can be done online.

Community Development Director Hanson shared that a lot of the permits themselves are done online. She added that a lot of the time is spent on processing the permits.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if they would get a substantial benefit or improvement from just increasing the hours in the Building Administrative Assistant and giving some of the Permit Tech administrative work to the administrative assistant.

Community Development Director Hanson said yes.

Fire Chief Kohner shared that the Fire Department is requesting a new full-time Fire Inspector. He stated this position is needed due to an increase in workload with new constructions and calls for service. He said the position would be responsible for conducting Code compliance inspections and responding to emergencies. He added that they are also requesting a 6% wage increase for their paid on-call firefighters.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the 6% increase already includes the 3% COLA increase.

Fire Chief Kohner explained that the paid on-call firefighters are not included in the COLA increases so this would just be a 6% increase.

Councilmember Musgrove asked why the paid on-call firefighters are not getting a COLA increase.

Fire Chief Kohner shared that these firefighters' wages tend to fall behind since they are not being increased every year, resulting in them having to make large adjustments. He said there would be an opportunity to improve this structure to include these firefighters in the COLA discussions.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if there is a reason these firefighters are not a part of the COLA discussions.

City Administrator Hagen explained that they have not been included historically; however, there is nothing saying they cannot include these firefighters moving forward and approve their increase along with all of the other non-union positions.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that it would be easier on the levy if they just have a yearly, gradual increase rather than getting behind and having to make this up with much larger increases. She said she would be interested to see if they are losing firefighters to other cities that may pay better.

Mayor Kuzma said he would support the 6% increase to get these wages closer to the market rates. He added that it would also be a good idea to add these firefighters to the COLA discussion.

Finance Director Lund discussed salary increases and health insurance costs.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the all-in personnel wages and benefits sheet includes the new personnel requests.

Finance Director Lund said no but that additional number can be found two lines above on the sheet.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the current health insurance cost is \$127,000 per month or per year and if this includes dental coverage.

Finance Director Lund said it is \$127,000 per year and includes health, dental, and life insurance.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the \$127,000 is the increase for the year or the total.

Finance Director Lund said it is the increase. She discussed the overall budget and shared that in last year's budget, they had \$3,400,000 from other funding sources, including the legislative dollars for public safety and the capital equipment certificates. She explained that they now need to come up with \$2,800,000 of funding to keep the budget fairly similar to last year.

Mayor Kuzma added that the salaries could be even higher than what they are accounting for as they have not finished negotiations.

Finance Director Lund shared that she used the average numbers from the North Metro Cities and the calculations from LELS to come up with the average salary numbers.

Mayor Kuzma asked if they have placed the order for the new fire truck.

Fire Chief Kohner said no.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if the fiscal disparities number could potentially go down.

Finance Director Lund said the fiscal disparities number that calculates into their tax rate is not known yet from the County so she is not sure what this number could be.

Councilmember Riley noted that with the personnel wages and benefits increase being \$1,435,000, this would make up about 9.6% of the overall 23% increase being just for personnel. He said they need to do something different to come up with different, better ideas to not have such a large increase.

Mayor Kuzma agreed with Councilmember Riley. He noted that they will need to adjust their salaries as they have fallen behind the market rate. He asked department heads to go back and look at their requests and come back with their 'bare bones' requests. He said they have had large tax increases over the last three years, and they need to find a way to tighten things up.

Finance Director Lund explained that the market rate adjustments would be keeping all employees in their current steps rather than moving onto the next step.

Councilmember Howell suggested freezing all of the top wages for all department heads and the City Administrator. She said she would also like to look at the Council budget to see what could be cut.

Councilmember Specht agreed that they have had many large increases over the past few years, and something needs to be done to change this.

Councilmember Musgrove explained that she believes they got so far behind on wages because of the way the market is changing.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if there is an opportunity to decrease the pavement levy for next year.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said they already have all of their projects for next year loaded into this so they would have to make major modifications to it. He shared that they are really making good progress on the streets and if they cut back, they will likely get some negative feedback and backlash.

Finance Director Lund explained that based on the CIP projects and using the levy and bond dollars, this fund will go negative with all of the projects that have been requested within the next few years.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she thought the pavement management fund was solvent out to a certain time. She asked if they could see these numbers at a later date.

Finance Director Lund stated that the cash flow is in the back of the CIP. She asked what the Council would like to see in regard to the market rate adjustments when they bring the numbers back for further review.

City Administrator Hagen asked if there is a number they should shoot for in the next version of the salary increases that they bring back.

Councilmember Specht said they may need to prioritize positions and look at the big picture of the City's needs.

Mayor Kuzma noted that they need to be cognizant of the fact that they have put the roads in the levy. He said he would like to see a total of a 12% increase this year to fall in line with last year's increase. He reiterated that they need department heads to look at needs versus wants.

Councilmember Specht said they can look at their donations to nonprofits to see if there are areas that they could save more.

Finance Director Lund explained that this money comes out of a different fund.

Councilmember Musgrove said she would like to see the total increase stay between 10% to 12%.

Councilmember Howell asked if anyone is interested in wage freezes for department heads. She reiterated that she would also like to look at the Council's budget to see what they can cut out.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that there may be a lot of little things in the Council budget that they could cut out that would add up.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that they froze department head wages a number of years ago and it took them a while to catch back up from this. She added that department head wages are already below market rates.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they can remove the cities that have LGAs from the list of comparables for market rate wages.

The consensus of the Council was to direct Staff to revisit their requests and distinguish their wants versus their needs to get the overall increase between 10% and 12%.

## **Recess and Reconvene**

The meeting recessed at 6:48 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:02 p.m.

**2.02: The Waterfront Park - 2024 Ballot Question - Please Note: this case was moved from 2.3 to case 2.2.**

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report concerning a ballot question for the Waterfront Park.

Mayor Kuzma stated that with what they learned about earlier this evening in the budget discussion, he would suggest putting this on pause to be brought back in the future once they get a better handle on the City's finances. He shared that he is excited for this project, but they do not have the funding for it right now. He said if they were to put this on a ballot question and the residents vote against it, then the project is dead.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked where the \$3,000,000 that is set aside for this is coming from.

City Administrator Hagen shared that they have over \$7,000,000 available that has been collected from projects City wide. He noted that this \$3,000,000 came from development in the COR area.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that they could hypothetically build the splash pad with the money on hand if they do not move forward with the other aspects of the project.

City Administrator Hagen said they could hypothetically move forward with just the splash pad.

Councilmember Woestehoff said he would be more inclined to find out a way to build out the water play area and table the Community Center idea for future discussions.

Councilmember Specht agreed. He shared that he hears from residents that they want a splash pad in the City and he would be interested in looking into anything that could bring this to the City. He noted that he is not in favor of entertaining the Community Center at this time.

Councilmember Riley reiterated that now is not the best time to be spending more money on something like this. He added that he loves the idea of just moving forward with the splash pad with the available funds.

Councilmember Musgrove shared that she mentioned the idea of just moving forward with the splash pad at previous meetings. She said she would like to wait to discuss the Community Center until after they have paid off City Hall, they are not just paying interest on the Public Works building, Highway 10 is completed, the water treatment plant is up and running, paying for the fire truck, and paying for the budget personnel costs.

Councilmember Howell agreed with the other Councilmembers to not move forward with the Community Center aspect of this project until they have completed all the things that

Councilmember Musgrove mentioned. She asked if there would be an appetite to not bring this back until City Hall is paid off and they are not just paying interest on the Public Works facility.

Mayor Kuzma stated this will likely be up to future Councils to decide. He noted that it is important for this Council that they put a pause on the Community Center discussion.

City Administrator Hagen said Staff will not spend any more time on the building plan for the Community City; however, they will still look at planning this site for a potential future building.

The consensus of the Council was to not ask a ballot question for the Community Center piece of this project and to pause this aspect of the project, but to direct Staff to look into just building a splash pad in this area.

**2.03: Old Town Hall Discussion - 50th Anniversary - Renovation Quotes - Please Note: this case was moved from 2.4 to case 2.3.**

Community Development Director Hanson reviewed the Staff report in regard to renovating the old Town Hall in conjunction with Ramsey's 50th anniversary. She reviewed the quotes received for the proposed work.

Mayor Kuzma asked where the funds would come from for this project.

City Administrator Hagen said this is to be determined. He noted that the two funding sources that have been discussed are the EDA fund or the Park and Trail Dedication fund, depending on the intended use.

Councilmember Howell asked if they were to use EDA funds for this project if they would be able to use the building for Parks and Recreation classes and programming.

City Attorney Knaak said he would have to look into what would and would not be allowed as a use for the building.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if it would be acceptable that they use EDA funds for the project then have a private company lease the building.

City Attorney Knaak said yes.

Councilmember Woestehoff said this makes the most logical sense to him in terms of what would be most valuable to the City.

Councilmember Riley noted that when the EDA was thinking about renting this out in the past it was going to cost more to fix it up then they would be able to get back.

Councilmember Howell shared that she would like to see the project get done either way, but her preference would be to use Park Dedication funds so the building could be used for classes and

events. She added that she knows it will likely not bring in a ton of money, but she does not want to see the City lose the building.

Mayor Kuzma said he is not looking to spend any more money than they need to; however, he thinks they need to at least get the building fixed, so it is usable.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if building maintenance funds would be able to be utilized to take care of the door and other safety issues with the building.

City Administrator Hagen said any fund could be used, including building maintenance funds. He added that if the desire is to do the minimum work to secure the building and make sure it does not fall further into disrepair, then Staff can come back to the Council with the numbers for just these repairs.

Councilmember Howell said that the funding for this could either come from the EDA or Park Dedication funds so it will not affect the overall budget. She noted that she would rather do the whole renovation project to get the building back into use than just continue to limp the building along. She stated that if the funding for this would increase the levy, then she would not support it; however, with funding sources outside of the levy, she is in support of the renovation.

Mayor Kuzma shared that he would like to see the City have a Mississippi River Visitors Center and this building could be utilized for this. He noted that it would no longer be considered a historical building if they move forward with this.

Councilmember Specht shared that he would be in favor of spending whatever they need to in order to bring the building back into use.

Councilmember Musgrove said she is leaning towards using EDA funds for the renovations. She said there is a lot of potential for businesses to lease this space.

Mayor Kuzma said they can send this idea to the EDA to see if they have an interest in moving forward with the renovations utilizing EDA funds.

Councilmember Howell asked if the EDA were to not want to move forward with this project using EDA funds if there is an appetite from the Council to move forward with this project using Park Dedication funds.

Councilmember Woestehoff said he would not be in support of using Park Dedication funds for this project.

Community Development Director Hanson asked if the EDA were to oppose this if the Council would at least want to move forward with getting the door repaired and taking down the trees around the building to clean it up.

Mayor Kuzma said he would be in favor of this.

Councilmember Howell asked if they would hear back from the EDA either way on their opinion.  
Community Development Director Hanson said yes.

The consensus of the Council was to direct Staff to bring their ideas of using EDA funds for the renovation to the EDA to gauge their interest.

**2.04: Discussion Regarding Union Contract Negotiations for AFSCME, LELS-Patrol, LELS-Sergeants & LELS-Captains (Discussion Closed to the Public) - Please Note: this case was moved from 2.2 to case 2.4.**

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the Staff report in regard to the union contract negotiations for AFSCME, LELS-Patrol, LELS-Sergeants, and LELS-Captains. She asked that they move to Closed Session.

Motion by Councilmember Woestehoff, seconded by Councilmember Musgrove, to recess the meeting to Closed Session at 8:32 p.m.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Mayor Kuzma, Councilmembers Woestehoff, Musgrove, Howell, Riley, and Specht. Voting No: None. Absent: Councilmember Olson.

The meeting reconvened to Open Session at 10:12 p.m.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that Council and Staff discussed union negotiation strategies for the upcoming contract which will begin January 1, 2025. She stated Staff has received Council's direction and they will proceed accordingly.

**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 10:15 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 Major  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*

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

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

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

Members Absent: Councilmember Michael Olson

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

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

Mayor Kuzma called the Closed Session of the City Council to order at 8:32 p.m.

**2. COUNCIL BUSINESS**

**2.01: Discussion Regarding Union Contract Negotiations for AFSCME, LELS-Patrol, LELS-Sergeants & LELS-Captains (Discussion Closed to the Public)**

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the Staff report in regard to the union contract negotiations for AFSCME, LELS-Patrol, LELS-Sergeants, and LELS-Captains.

Staff received direction from the Council

**3. ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Councilmember Woestehoff, seconded by Councilmember Musgrove, to adjourn the Closed Session

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Mayor Kuzma, Councilmembers Woestehoff, Musgrove, Howell, Riley, and Specht. Voting No: None. Absent: Councilmember Olson.

The Closed Session was adjourned at 10:12 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 Major  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*