

**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 26, 2024, 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 Chris Riley  
Councilmember Dan Specht  
Councilmember Matt Woestehoff

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen  
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher  
Planning Manager Todd Larson  
City Attorney Fritz Knaak  
City Clerk Katie Schmidt  
City Engineer/Public Works Director Bruce Westby  
Police Chief Brad Bluml

**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: Discuss Update on Anoka County Elections JPA**

City Clerk Schmidt reviewed the Staff report in regard to the Anoka County Elections JPA. She shared that Anoka County Elections Manger Tom Hunt and the County Attorney's Office was supposed to be in attendance tonight; however, they wanted to wait to discuss the JPA with cities until they could discuss it with their new Board Members.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that there is not much they can discuss without Mr. Hunt and the County Attorney's Office present.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that based on the case it seems as though the County will be keeping the pollpads and bringing them back for the next election. She asked if they would need a JPA with the County for the equipment.

City Clerk Schmidt explained the agreement that was terminated at the last Council meeting was just in regard to the pollpads. She noted that all other equipment is enclosed in the agreement that was not terminated.

Councilmember Musgrove stated she would like to discuss with the County the idea of the County keeping possession of the equipment and only bringing the equipment when it is needed.

City Attorney Knaak shared that in the current JPA, the pollpads would be included. He noted that they can modify the agreement if they would like. He stated that if no changes are made to the agreement, the pollpads will be governed by the JPA.

City Clerk Schmidt explained that it would not be ideal for the equipment to be dropped off the morning of the election as the judges have to get the equipment going right away at 6:00 a.m.

Councilmember Musgrove suggested having the agreement ask that the equipment be dropped off a day before the election.

The consensus of the Council was to table this discussion until Mr. Hunt and the County Attorney's Office were present.

## **2.02: Discuss Polling Locations**

City Clerk Schmidt reviewed the Staff report concerning polling locations.

Councilmember Musgrove shared her concern with the disparity in the number of voters from Ward 3, Precinct 1 and Ward 3, Precinct 2. She noted that while she does not disagree with changing polling locations; however, she thinks that these two precincts warrant a look at where the boundaries are for the sizes. She added that she agrees with using St. Katharine Drexel as she has heard good things about using this facility.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if they are only allowed to change ward numbers every ten years.

City Clerk Schmidt said yes. She noted that they could change precinct lines if they wanted by sending a notice before December 1 the year before a General Election year.

Councilmember Riley said he is supportive of the proposed changes.

Councilmember Specht suggested having signage at polling locations that have changed to make it easier to find the new locations.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the proposed changes to polling locations.

## **2.03: Review Final Draft of Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization Joint Powers Agreement**

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby reviewed the Staff report in regard to the final draft of the Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization JPA.

Councilmember Musgrove thanked the Council for taking the time to look through this. She added that the questions that they asked have been addressed in regard to the City. She noted that the Board did not have any further comments on the changes that they adopted.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the final draft of the Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization JPA.

#### **2.04: Finalize Discussions Regarding Proposed Updates to the Personnel Policy**

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the Staff report concerning the proposed updates to the personnel policy. She asked if the Council would like the proposed shorter version of the protected classes in regard to discrimination or if they would like it spelled out entirely as defined.

There was consensus of the Council to use the shorter version of the language.

Administrative Services Director Lasher noted that they had started the discussion around advancing five vacation days to employees on the front end of their employment. She noted that this change did not make it into the contract negotiations. She asked if the Council has an alternative to this.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked how often something like this would actually occur.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said this could possibly happen in the Public Works Department once every other year.

Councilmember Woestehoff noted that even though this may be awkward to administer, it seems like a reasonable risk based on the low opportunity of something like this happening.

Administrative Services Director Lasher asked if they would like to keep the language to not allow vacation payout in the first year.

There was consensus of the Council to keep the language as is and not allow vacation pay out in the first year of service.

Administrative Services Director Lasher noted they had a lot of discussion around the floating holiday and removing this as an eligible holiday given that Juneteenth is now a holiday. She shared that all four union contracts were able to keep the floating holiday in addition to Juneteenth. She noted the floating holiday is still included in the personnel policy as they typically have the same benefits across all employee groups when it comes to holidays.

Councilmember Specht asked how many employees are not a part of a union.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said it is around 40 employees.

Councilmember Specht asked if it was in the budget to give these non-union employees the floating holiday.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said yes.

Councilmember Riley said if they do not remove the floating holiday now he does not know how they would be able to remove it later.

Mayor Kuzma stated that if they are giving this holiday to the union employees then they should give it to the non-union employees as well.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared that he is in favor of keeping the floating holiday for consistency purposes.

Councilmember Olson stated that while he understands Councilmember Riley's point, he does not think they need to remove the floating holiday at this time.

There was consensus of the Council to keep the floating holiday for all non-union employees.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that when a paid on-call firefighter signs up and works a holiday, it is paid as time and a half. She noted this has been the practice for the paid on-call firefighters; however, it was never written down in the policy.

Councilmember Musgrove said she is in favor of adding this to the personnel policy to solidify things for Staff. She added that this will also help with budgeting. She asked if they came to a consensus on whether the paid on-call firefighters would have a COLA increase.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated they are getting a rate adjustment; however, she does not believe that they settled on a COLA.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that it is important that the future Council continue to have this discussion.

There was a consensus of the Council to add the official language for pay for on-call firefighters on holidays.

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the changes to the conflict of interest section of the policy.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared that he likes the proposed changes. He asked if appointment Board and Commission Members are included in this.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said she would like to include Board and Commission Members.

There was consensus of the Council to move forward with the proposed changes to the conflict of interest section of the policy.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that they have had previous discussions about allowing Staff members to get hotel rooms if they are traveling outside of the metro area for a job-related training or event for multiple days or if they are traveling and severe weather conditions do not allow them to travel.

Councilmember Woestehoff stated that he would be in favor of removing the language around any county outside of the seven-county metro area and just sticking to the 40-mile distance as the distance seems more appropriate.

Councilmember Riley asked if they should add something to this section around needing approval from a department head or City Administrator.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said they could add language around approval. She noted that in the event someone was not able to get ahold of their department head or the City Administrator, they could still get the hotel room for themselves and seek reimbursement later.

The consensus of the Council was to remove the language concerning the seven-county metro from this section and adding needing approval from a department head or the City Administrator.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that IT Manager Frederickson made additions to the policy in regard to the cloud infrastructure as a definition. She noted that the cloud is also referenced throughout the policy as it applies.

Councilmember Musgrove asked about the comments on policy for social networking on City equipment.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that IT Manager Frederickson added these comments. She explained that this is already covered by the League of Minnesota Cities language provided. She said she can get further clarification on this to ensure that the change is put through on the final policy for approval.

Councilmember Howell stated she does not support using City-owned equipment for personal uses on social media. She said she would like to see this be restricted in the policy.

Councilmember Woestehoff said he would not want to limit someone from using their City equipment to check their personal bank account or something of a similar nature. He stated he understands the concerns around social media being accessed on City equipment; however, he would not want to ban the use of personal use altogether.

Councilmember Specht noted that most people would be able to check things like their bank account on their cell phones. He said he sees both sides of this argument.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared that the larger concern if they were to lock down certain websites or uses is that sometimes restricting personal use on City equipment causes City-related things to be done on personal devices. He noted it would be more secure to allow employees to be able to access personal accounts on their City computer rather than having City information on personal devices. He added this is mostly about the users of City equipment having good behaviors.

Councilmember Musgrove stated she would be supportive of restricting personal use of City equipment. She explained that Staff is paid for by taxpayer dollars and she does not support using City funded devices for personal use.

Councilmember Specht suggested strongly discouraging personal use on City equipment while understanding that every once in a while, employees may need to access something personal on their work device.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked Staff how they felt about this.

City Administrator Hagen shared that there are times when using a work computer to do something small makes more sense, such as emailing your child's school, which would be done only on occasions. He noted that if an employee is sitting on their work computer during the workday and doing a lot of personal things, they would be able to figure that out in the production of someone's work. He said he does not see an issue with an occasional personal email being sent or a bank account check. He agreed with having language around strongly discouraging personal use of City equipment.

Police Chief Bluml shared that work devices are tracked and can be audited. He noted that this comes down to trust.

Councilmember Specht asked if there are any bandwidth issues that they could run into if multiple employees are streaming things at the same time.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that this has never been an issue so she can only assume that they do not have a bandwidth issue.

Police Chief Bluml asked if there is training for new employees on IT practices.

City Administrator Hagen shared that limited Staff members have access to City social media sites and there is no formal training for this. He added that all new employees get a copy of the personnel policy and have to sign off on this.

Administrative Services Lasher explained that they also have some resources on file storage, naming, and usage that is given to employees when they are hired.

There was consensus of the Council to add language that discourages personal uses on City equipment.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with all of the proposed and discussed changes to the personnel policy.

## **2.05: Review Draft Rental Housing Licensing Inspections Policy**

Planning Manager Larson reviewed the Staff report in regard to changes to the rental housing licensing inspection policy. He shared examples of the kind of issues they are discovering during inspections.

Councilmember Riley asked if all tax numbers and Social Security numbers that the City collects on these landlords are passed on to the Department of Revenue.

Planning Manager Larson explained that at the end of every year, they report the tax numbers and Social Security numbers to the State, as they do with any other business license.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that she likes the first sentence about the rationale for tenants but recommended striking the rest and replacing it with a statement that says renters are obligated to inform their landlord as part of their contract regarding any damage or problems at the property.

Planning Manager Larson stated this same rationale could be applied to the other sections that renters have their own obligations and responsibilities.

Councilmember Musgrove said the rationale for the policy would just be the first sentence in that case.

Councilmember Howell agreed. She added that in the third section of the rationale section, she would recommend striking the first sentence that states that homeowners tend to be more invested in their neighborhoods than renters.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if this is meant to be an internal policy.

City Administrator Hagen said yes, for the most part. He explained that as they work through various policies, the ones that do need to be public facing on the website will be put there and this one will likely go on at least the rental licensing page of the website.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked Councilmember Musgrove why she is in favor of striking everything after the first sentence is the first section under rationale.

Councilmember Musgrove explained that they are establishing a policy and not determining a tenant's feelings. She said this policy is to inform people what the City will be doing.

Councilmember Howell noted that the first sentence is very objective while the rest of the section is slightly subjective. She stated a policy should be neutral with all of the parties involved while still trying to implement best practices.

Councilmember Riley agreed that the sentence around tenants not feeling comfortable to let their landlord know about any damages or repairs needed could be removed from the first section; however, the rest of the section is fine to stay. He added that he also thinks the first sentence in section 3 of the rationale section can be removed.

Planning Manager Larson explained that the first section language is a combination of language he found in other city's policies. He stated these are not rationales for the policy, but for the program.

Councilmember Musgrove said the first sentence of the first section covers the rationale for the program and the others are subjective and she does not feel as though they are warranted in a policy.

There was consensus of the Council was to strike all sentences after the first one in section one under rationale and strike the first sentence under section three under rationale.

Councilmember Musgrove asked if they want to keep the same definition for a property manager as what they have with the inspection license requirement.

Planning Manager Larson explained that when the inspector is completed, a responsible party needs to be present.

Councilmember Musgrove stated that in previous discussions they concluded that only the property managers would need to have a background check per State statute.

Planning Manager Larson shared that most rental properties in the City were inspected this year and the inspector feels confident that a majority of them could move to a three-year inspection schedule.

Councilmember Riley said he likes the idea of having the properties inspected every three years if the first inspection goes well. He shared concerns with there being no definition of what minimal versus several findings during the inspection would include.

Planning Manager Larson explained that they did not want to quantify these things as different issues vary in their severity. He added that the inspector has done a great job at determining what is a minimal issue versus a major issue. He noted they have not found many things that are major issues.

Councilmember Riley suggested having a part of the inspection form what will be needed to address any issues found.

Councilmember Howell agreed. She stated that people like to know where they stand and like things to be defined. She suggested including definitions of different types of issues.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if the issues that have been discussed so far during the inspections have been major or minor issues.

Planning Manager Larson explained that they found some ceiling damage and suspected growths which would be major concerns. He stated things like issues with the water heater and deck boards would be more minor issues. He shared that major issues are issues that require reinspections while minor issues do not. He explained that a form will be left behind at each inspection letting the tenant know what issues had been found.

Councilmember Musgrove suggested having this form be an appendix to the policy.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked if there is more robust information that is presented to the property owner of the findings.

Planning Manager Larson explained that the inspector writes up a whole report outlining what things passed and what things failed.

Councilmember Olson suggested having examples of different kinds of issues and how they are classified for the tenants to reference and be able to understand.

Councilmember Musgrove suggested removing the section around the inspector's lunch break as they can just schedule around a lunch break and is just an internal item.

Planning Manager Larson explained that when the inspector is inspecting a whole apartment building, the whole day is blocked out for just that building and there have been a few issues with not having a lunch break built into the day.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the discussed and proposed changes to the rental housing licensing inspection policy and to table this for further discussion at an upcoming Work Session.

### **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 6:53 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

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Katie M. Schmidt  
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Major  
*TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.*