

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, December 10, 2024, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

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

Members Absent: Councilmember Chris Riley

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
City Engineer/Public Works Director Bruce Westby
Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood
Planning Manager Todd Larson
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
City Attorney Fritz Knaak

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: Stormwater Management Facilities Maintenance Policy and Trail & Sidewalk Maintenance Policy - Recommendations from the Public Works Committee

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby reviewed the Staff report in regard to the stormwater management facility maintenance and the trail and sidewalk maintenance policies. He shared the Public Works Committee's recommendation of approval of both maintenance policies.

Mayor Kuzma thanked Councilmember Musgrove for her work on this.

Councilmember Musgrove noted that these policies will help with Staff needing funding. She added that they have infrastructure in the City that needs to be maintained and the residents need to know what the costs are for that. She thanked City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby and Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood for their work on these policies. She added that part of the goals of the Council has been to look at policies and make sure they are written well. She noted that all the future Councils and staff will have to address these policies with an annual review.

Councilmember Olson also thanked City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby and Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood for all of the work they put into these policies. He said there was a lot of work that went into this and it was able to produce a great result.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the stormwater management facility maintenance and the trail and sidewalk maintenance policies on this evening's Consent Agenda at the Regular Council Meeting.

2.02: Green Valley Greenhouse Building Permit Discussion

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report concerning the Green Valley Greenhouse building permit. He noted that the building code does provide an exemption to the requirements when the structure is an agricultural use. State statute does determine what an agricultural use is, and after reviewing statute staff did not feel this met the definitions. Statute specifically states offices to support the agricultural use are not exempt from the building code requirements. City Administrator Hagen further noted that the floor plan from the prior building to the new building is substantially different, with the new building housing a typical office setting.

Representatives from Green Valley Greenhouse reviewed the changes made to their plans. They emphasized that the new structure would house the same uses as the previous even though the floor plan was different. They disagreed with staff's interpretation of statute, and further stated they feared what that would bring for future improvements on their property. They questioned whether a future green house that housed a single work station and a computer would be subject to a building permit.

Councilmember Woestehoff shared that one of his struggles with this is how the building is structured related to the building code. He said he is not going to argue that what Green Valley does is not agricultural, because it is; however, this building looks like an office building that will also be used for storage. He stated he would want this to go through the building permit process in an effort to protect the people who will be working there. He added that he would be open to an exception to the permitting process because of the agricultural component and due to how much of the project has already been completed. He said he would not want to forgo any building inspections through this process.

Mayor Kuzma asked what the options are for this situation.

City Attorney Knaak said they could also just do nothing, and the building will continue to go up and hope that everything works out. He noted that this would set a precedent that they are allowing an office building in the agricultural zone, they could also require Green Valley to get a building permit, or they could direct Staff to work with Green Valley as an exception due to the project growing from just being an agricultural building to now having an expanding use.

Councilmember Specht asked how long this would push the project back if they did require it to go through the building permitting process.

City Administrator Hagen shared that the City would need to receive a signed and stamped plan from a licensed architect, which they have received. He noted that both the building inspector and the fire inspector would need to look at the project. He added that they could expedite the building permit review due to the circumstances and they could get it reviewed as quickly as possible. He stated that if there are plan revisions, this would be outside of the City's control and would have to be addressed by Green Valley.

A representative from Green Valley stated they believe that they meet every criteria of an agricultural building. He noted that other than making the building 14 feet longer and closing off the mezzanine, it is just a modernized version of what they already had in place. He added that they were told in January that the building met the criteria of an agricultural building. He said they have not grown the project or made it bigger since then and they have only done what they said they were going to do. He shared that they had a similar situation about a year and a half ago which resulted in a \$100,000 loss. He noted that he was told that they would not need a building permit for this building. He said they feel as though they are exempt as an agricultural building and it will be used to grow and ship their plants, nothing more.

Councilmember Specht noted that because Green Valley was originally told that they would not need a building permit and since the project has moved so far along, it would be unfair to change their opinion now and require it to go through the building permit process.

Councilmember Howell noted that this seems to her to be an agricultural building with primarily agricultural purposes which makes this enough of a unique situation to make an exception. She said she would support this moving forward with a corporate statute.

Councilmember Olson asked if they have had any inspections done at the property.

A representative from Green Valley stated they have had fire and electrical inspections completed.

Community Development Director Hanson noted that the Fire Department did have some corrections that need to be made to the building.

A representative from Green Valley said they made these corrections.

Councilmember Olson said it is best to have safety in mind and this building is essentially the same as what was there before. He said he is okay with allowing this as an exception.

Mayor Kuzma asked what plan was submitted in January when they spoke with the building inspector.

A representative from Green Valley explained that they just had the dimensions of the project.

Planning Manager Larson shared that he was present in this meeting, and they were presented with just a rectangular building which was slightly different from what was there before. He added that while he has not been in the new building, he has seen the floor plan, and this is not a concern from the zoning perspective. He noted that what was originally presented that they were told would not

need a building permit was essentially the same building as what was there before. He explained that in the old building when you walked in, you would see an open warehouse with pallets of materials, whereas now, when you walk in you see the reception desk and offices.

Mayor Kuzma asked if the developer would be acceptable to go through the building permitting process.

A representative from Green Valley said this would set a precedent for the future if they ever needed to make changes, like controlling their irrigation equipment with computers. He noted that the office space is essential to running their business and goes along with their agricultural use.

City Attorney Knaak noted that there is something specific in the statute that talks about locating operations inside of a greenhouse itself. He shared that he hopes for any future projects there will be more interaction with Staff than was had this time. He explained that with the office spaces, they will likely want to have some kind of inspection process in place; however, they can make the exception unique enough that someone else will not try to do the same thing in the future.

Councilmember Howell shared that it is very clear at this point that Staff was originally aware that there would be offices in the building. She noted that Staff was originally in agreement with having offices in the building when this project was brought forward in January. She said that since Staff was aware of the offices, she would not want to change the process now as it would not be fair to do so.

Councilmember Specht added that the whole reason this came up is because Green Valley wanted to do the right thing and have the building inspected to ensure it is safe. He noted that they are not trying to cut any corners on safety.

Councilmember Woestehoff asked what parcel this building is on.

A representative from Green Valley shared that the property is all one parcel now and is on the 113 acre parcel.

Community Development Director Hanson noted that she wished building Staff could have been present this evening to help answer some questions. She added that the main difference with the current building and what used to be there is that the new building is two stories, and they have enclosed offices. She added that the new Building Official has set up a new process for these agricultural buildings that was not in place before. She noted that this project will go through this process.

The consensus of the Council was to leave the building as agricultural and not require it to go through the building permit process.

2.03: Continued review of the draft Rental Housing Licensing Inspections Policy

Planning Manager Larson reviewed the Staff report in regard to reviewing the rental housing licensing inspection policy. He reviewed the changes made to the policy since the last Council discussion.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the proposed changes to the rental housing licensing inspection policy.

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 6:50 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Major
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.