

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, March 25, 2025, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Ryan Heineman
Councilmember Kirsten Buscher
Councilmember Michael Olson
Councilmember Eric Peters
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Dan Specht
Councilmember Shanna Stewart

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
Economic Development Manager Sean Sullivan
City Attorney Fritz Knaak
City Engineer/Public Works Director Bruce Westby

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Heineman called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Old Town Hall Discussion - Next Steps

Economic Development Manager Sullivan reviewed the Staff report in regard to the Old Town Hall and its next steps with the possibility of grant funding.

Councilmember Peters asked if they would be responsible for electrical upgrades like adding Wi-Fi, if they use this space for retail.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said he was not sure; however, he does not think these upgrades would cost too much. He noted the building is already wired for Wi-Fi.

Councilmember Specht asked if they would receive grant funding if it would dictate what they are allowed to do with the building.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said it would not and explained that as long as whoever is using the space is not making significant changes to the building, any use would be allowed under the grant funds. He noted that things like the concrete leading to the building and upgrading the bathrooms would definitely be covered as they are needed to bring the building into ADA

compliance. He said if they want to apply for one of the larger grants, they have to apply in June or July.

Councilmember Buscher said she would love to see the City pursue this opportunity. She noted there is a lot of potential for Staff or the community to use this building. She stated she is hopeful the rest of the Council finds value in this as well.

Councilmember Peters suggested hosting one Council meeting a year in the building.

Councilmember Stewart added that she does not think it would be wise to pursue this if they do not get any grant funding. She said they would need these kinds of grants to have a reasonable breakeven point.

City Administrator Hagen shared that he has not looked into these specific grants; however, most grants require a local match.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that there is not a match requirement for the grants through the Historical Society. He added that the City will have to pay for paint and other things that would not be covered by the grants.

Councilmember Specht shared his support for this project, even if the City has to contribute funds to it. He noted that it is one of the few historical buildings in the City and this is something that they can invest in to keep their history alive. He suggested going for the larger grants and hoping they can secure this funding. He said if they do not get these grants, he would like to discuss how much it would cost the City.

Councilmember Olson asked how much money they have already spent and if this could qualify as a match.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan shared that they have spent \$33,000 recently. He noted that the grant they are discussing does not require a match. He added that the breakeven point is currently overstated as he is adding the money that has already been spent into the amount that they would need to recoup to breakeven.

Mayor Heineman asked if this proposal includes any work being done to the basement of the building or if they will just be leaving this as is.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said that this would include some cleaning of the basement and installing a light.

Mayor Heineman asked if all of these improvements need to be made before they are able to rent out the building.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said yes.

Mayor Heineman suggested having Staff apply for all grant opportunities that are available, unless it would be too time-consuming, then to just focus on the larger grants.

Councilmember Buscher agreed as long as getting some smaller grants does not impact their ability to get the larger grants. She added that she is not opposed to this building not being rented for retail space.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward, maintaining the property and pursuing grant opportunities from the Minnesota National Historical Society.

2.02: Discuss the Policy for the Recruitment, Application, and Interview Process of Appointing City Board and Commission Members and Chair Member Term Rotations

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report concerning the policy for appointing Board and Commission Members and Chairs and the term limits for Chairs. He shared that Councilmembers Riley and Stewart requested that they eliminate the term limit for Chairs.

Councilmember Riley shared that he and Councilmember Stewart sit on the EDA, and when it was announced that they had to pick a new Chairman everyone was confused, as the current Chair is doing a great job. He stated that each Board and Commission should run itself and the Council should not have a say in limiting the terms for the Chair.

Councilmember Stewart agreed and added that this takes away some of the power of these Boards and Commissions.

Councilmember Specht noted that the EDA is separate, and this rule should not apply to them; however, he thinks the rule should apply to other Boards and Commissions as it is a great way for other people to get involved with local government and give them the opportunity to hold a leadership role.

Mayor Heineman shared that he was on the Council when they decided to limit Chair terms because, at the time, there were Chairs who had been in the role for up to 12 years. He said he likes the idea of having someone new in the Chair position every so often. He stated that two-year limits are too short, but he likes the idea of rotating the position.

Councilmember Buscher stated that the decisions for who is the Chair should not be up to the Council and should be decided by these Boards and Commissions. She noted that if someone wants to serve as the Chair, they could voice this to their Board or Commission to be voted in.

Mayor Heineman added that these Board and Commission members are not elected, and they could have the same members continually outside of intervention from the Council.

Councilmember Olson noted that the approvals for reappointment come before the Council anyway, so they still have a partial say in this. He said he is in favor of not trying to impose any control over the Boards and Commissions.

City Administrator Hagen shared that the removal of these term limits will be on the Consent Agenda at the regular Council meeting and can be pulled if anyone would like to vote against it.

Councilmember Specht stated he will be requesting to pull this item from Consent to stay consistent with his vote against removing these term limits.

The consensus of the Council was to remove the Chair term limits for Boards and Commissions.

2.03: Regular Meeting Agenda Order

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report in regard to the Regular Council Meeting agenda order.

Councilmember Riley shared that he approves of both of the suggestions to move the approval of the minutes back to the Consent Agenda and to move the approval of the agenda to right after the call to order. He said it is rare that the Council needs to discuss the minutes, and if changes are needed then they can be pulled from the Consent Agenda. He added that approving the agenda makes sense to do right after the call to order as well.

Councilmember Specht agreed. He asked if three minutes is still a reasonable amount of time for citizens' input.

Councilmember Riley noted that they are generous when it comes to the enforcement of the three-minute rule.

Mayor Heineman explained that the three minutes is a mechanism for control, and if someone is not adhering to the standards that they should be, they can leverage this time limit. He said he would never want to cut someone off for sharing valid concerns and important information. He added that he wants to make sure this would not show favoritism by letting someone speak longer than others.

Councilmember Olson agreed. He said he does not feel strongly about where the minutes are approved in the agenda; however, he is leaning towards just having it on the Consent Agenda.

The consensus of the Council was to move the approval of the minutes back to the Consent Agenda and to move the approval of the agenda to after the call to order.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

City Administrator Hagen shared that they will be beginning their Strategic Planning process at a Special Work Session next week.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

Councilmember Specht asked how they should handle resident complaints about the roads.

City Administrator Hagen explained that the street's webpage has a link where residents can report any problems with the streets to the Public Works department. He said this link has been shared in newsletters and on social media posts in the past and they plan to continue to do this.

Councilmember Specht asked what they should tell the resident if they do not want to report the problem on the website.

City Administrator Hagen said they can take down the issue and the address and pass it on to Public Works. He noted that an address is key to getting the problem addressed.

Councilmember Specht asked how they prioritize these reported issues.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained that if there are a lot of issues in one area they will address these first to get them all done at once. He said it also depends on the severity of the issue and which is the highest priority to fix efficiently.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Major
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.