

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, May 27, 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  
City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby  
Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood  
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher  
Planning Manager Todd Larson  
Economic Development Manager Sean Sullivan  
Police Captain Tim Frankfurth  
City Attorney Fritz Knaak

**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: Discuss City Engineer/Public Works Director Role Separation**

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the Staff report in regard to separating the City Engineer and Public Works Director roles.

Councilmember Specht said he likes the idea of this. He noted that there may be a slight budget impact that will level out as they would be able to decrease their work that is outsourced.

City Administrator Hagen noted the City Engineer's salary cost would be shared by many different funds. He said only a small portion of this comes from the annual operating budget.

Councilmember Specht asked City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby if he was supportive of this being split.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said yes.

City Administrator Hagen shared that they are looking to split this role in 2026. He asked if they wanted to bring on the new City Engineer at the beginning of the year or later in the year.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with splitting the City Engineer and Public Works Director role and start recruitment in September to have someone in the new role by January 2026.

## **2.02: Right of Way Acquisition Loan Program (RALF) Property Sales / Process Discussion**

Economic Development Manager Sullivan reviewed the Staff report concerning RALF property sales and its process. He reviewed each RALF property currently in the City.

Councilmember Specht asked if they would be getting back the small portion of the land near Aurelio's.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said they will likely be getting a piece of this land back that is not needed for the interchange and they would sell it to the Sunfish Commons.

Councilmember Riley asked if they would sell the parcel that has the auto repair building in poor shape or if they would tear the building down first.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan explained that the property is being appraised as it is now. He shared there is a lease extension request for God's Kingdom. He recommended not extending this lease.

Councilmember Stewart asked if God's Kingdom would be willing to purchase this land once it has been appraised.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan noted that this is a big building and he would prefer to see Pro Power Sports in this building.

Councilmember Specht said he does not have a preference on which tenant gets this building. He added that he would love to see God's Kingdom be able to stay in Ramsey. He noted the importance of following the policies set forth by the Met Council. He said he would not be supportive of extending this lease.

Councilmember Riley noted this lease was always temporary and would not want to allow this lease to be extended a second time.

Mayor Heineman asked if Pro Power Sports were to buy this property and if they could lease it back to God's Kingdom.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said yes.

Councilmember Stewart asked if they would have this conversation with Pro Power Sports about allowing God's Kingdom to continue leasing.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said they do not have enough information at this time as they do not know the level of interest from Pro Power Sports.

Planning Manager Larson discussed legal non-conforming buildings, including the RM Golf Carts location. He noted that they can make enhancements to the property but they cannot increase the square footage of the building.

Councilmember Specht asked if they were to petition the Council if they would be able to add square footage to the building.

Planning Manager Larson said they would either have to change the Code or rezone the property to allow this.

Councilmember Specht asked if RM Golf Carts is aware of them being a legal non-conforming lot.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan said yes.

Councilmember Riley asked why they do not have appraisals ordered on all RALF properties.

Economic Development Manager Sullivan explained that the Met Council does these appraisals and they just started working from east to west on these parcels.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the recommendations for each RALF property, including not extending the lease for God's Kingdom.

### **2.03: 2025 Strategic Planning Session**

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the 2025 Strategic Plan and the changes made since the last meeting.

Councilmember Stewart asked if Staff was able to talk to Anoka about their plans for a Community Center.

City Administrator Hagen said no.

Councilmember Specht said he would not be interested in partnering with Anoka on a Community Center.

Mayor Heineman agreed.

Councilmember Peters said he would like Ramsey to have its own Community Center; however, they could work with Anoka to make sure they are not duplicating efforts with their Community Centers.

Councilmember Olson stated he is also opposed to a partnered Community Center with Anoka.

Councilmember Buscher suggested they stay in communication with Anoka on what they are planning to do for their Community Center.

Councilmember Riley noted there are many people in the City who want to volunteer and get involved and he suggested bringing on a Volunteer Coordinator to help with this.

Councilmember Specht asked if they could tie this role in with the Parks Department.

Mayor Heineman asked what current volunteer efforts look like.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood shared that they organize some volunteer events like litter clean up or tree plantings. He noted that in order to maximize the volunteer efforts or opportunities, they would likely want to make the Volunteer Coordinator role a paid position as it takes a lot more time than someone would think.

Councilmember Olson noted if they have a volunteer in the Volunteer Coordinator role, this could result in burnout and turnover.

Mayor Heineman asked if they could use a Board or Commission to coordinate volunteers.

Councilmember Riley said they could call on the Ramsey Foundation for this as well.

Councilmember Specht stated he would not be in favor of hiring someone for this role and utilizing existing Staff for this if there is room in their schedules.

Councilmember Stewart asked if they hire interns for the City and if an intern would be able to coordinate volunteers.

City Administrator Hagen said they have had interns in various departments in the past and they can look at an intern option for this. He added that they can look into what other cities do for volunteer coordination.

Mayor Heineman noted that sometimes it can take just as much time to train and monitor an intern as it does to do the work.

Councilmember Riley said he would like to see some follow-up and more information on bringing on a Volunteer Coordinator.

Councilmember Peters asked if they have an existing system or database for tracking volunteers.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said they do not have a system like this and just reach out to the existing volunteers when there is a need. He noted that they do sometimes struggle to get responses back. He stated continuity would be pretty important when it comes to volunteers.

Mayor Heineman asked how many Staff hours are used to assign volunteers to different tasks and positions.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood said they are currently spending 20 to 40 Staff hours a year picking up litter. He noted that there would also be a lot of hours that would go into organizing different volunteer opportunities and activities. He added that sending out communications to get volunteers would also take Staff time. He noted that they try to work with three or four Eagle Scouts a year.

Councilmember Buscher shared that when she volunteers through Recreation Coordinator Proulx, she directs her to sign up through the City website.

Mayor Heineman noted that there may be partnership opportunities that they could pursue for this position. He said PACT Charter School has a Volunteer Coordinator.

Councilmember Riley said over the last few months there has been some high-profile police activity that has not been positive. He asked if there was something that the Council could do to help the Police Department in this manner.

Councilmember Buscher suggested they look at adding a social worker or mental health response to the department.

Mayor Heineman asked if there were any County resources that they could lean on for this.

Police Captain Frankfurth said they are just getting these kinds of efforts started. He noted that some cities have seen success with having a social worker on staff to respond to calls with mental health aspects.

Mayor Heineman noted that they cannot replace the job of an officer with a social worker; however, there are benefits to having a social worker respond to calls.

Police Captain Frankfurth stated he will need to do more research to figure out what kind of success other departments have had with adding a social worker to staff. He said they could look at partnering with another city nearby on this work.

Councilmember Riley asked if there is anything the police department needs from the City to better do their job and if there is anything the residents need from the City as well.

Police Captain Frankfurth noted that some cities have anti-crime commissions that bring businesses and residents together.

Councilmember Olson asked if a program like Crime Watch that would get residents involved would be successful.

Police Captain Frankfurth said this program is good; however, it falls back on the neighborhood or area's level of commitment to the program.

Councilmember Buscher suggested reaching out to Blaine as they have a social worker and community outreach individual on staff. She said the more that they can get into the community the better. She stated she would like to invest in these types of roles and programs without taking up patrol officer time.

Councilmember Peters recommended they approach new neighborhoods and ask them if they would be interested in having a Crime Watch type of program in their neighborhood.

Councilmember Specht suggested adding an action item for the Police Department to look into ways to support mental health community outreach for proactive crisis mitigation.

Councilmember Riley asked if last year was the only year that the community survey was unsuccessful.

City Administrator Hagen noted the 2024 survey was challenging for a number of reasons and if they want to have another survey in 2026, the Council needs to discuss this to try to make it more successful moving forward.

Councilmember Riley shared concern with the survey company last year and how they sent out questions that were not correct with what the Council had discussed and decided.

Councilmember Specht asked if most other cities in the area send surveys to their residents like this.

City Administrator Hagen said it is not uncommon for a city to do a survey like this.

Councilmember Buscher said she would like to see another survey sent in 2026.

Councilmember Olson asked when they need to start discussing the survey and if they want to send it out in 2026.

City Administrator Hagen said they would want to start discussing this soon so they can put it in the 2026 budget. He added that QCTV does a customer survey through a different vendor that they could look into.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the discussed changes to the 2025 Strategic Plan.

### **3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION**

**3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar**

Noted.

**4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT**

**4.01: Update on Outside Committees**

Councilmember Riley shared that the Lower Rum River Watershed Management Organization met earlier in the month and did not have any permits to review; however, they anticipate they will have a lot more next month. He said there will be a lot of things the WMO has to discuss concerning the generational plan.

Mayor Heineman shared that he attended the Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council and they mainly discussed the budget.

**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.*