

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Special Work Session on Tuesday, September 2, 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

Members Absent: None

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
City Engineer/Public Works Director Bruce Westby
Police Captain Tim Frankfurth

1. CALL TO ORDER

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

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Civil Legal Services Attorney Interviews

City Administrator Hagen reviewed the process and schedule for the interviews. Four interviews were conducted this evening with the remaining two interviews scheduled for Tuesday, September 9, 2025.

The City Council and staff conducted interviews with the following four law firms: Eckberg Lammers, Kennedy & Graven, Squires, Waldspurger & Mace, and Holstad & Knaak. Each firm was asked questions regarding their background, experience and examples of challenging issues each firm has faced in past situations.

2.02: Consider Public Fund Expenditure to Foster Law Enforcement and Community Relations

City Administrator Hagen reviewed a request from the Ramsey Police Association (RPA), a separate non-profit entity affiliated with the Ramsey Police Department. The request pertains to

the City covering the cost of a dunk tank rental, estimated at approximately \$265, for use during the upcoming Happy Days event. Additionally, the RPA is requesting that officers already scheduled to work during the event be allowed to staff the dunk tank while on duty. He noted that this request falls under the provisions of Minnesota Statute 471.198, which permits the use of public funds to promote positive interactions between law enforcement and the community. Staff requested Council consensus on whether to support or not support the use of City funds for the rental fee and allow officers to staff the dunk tank during their scheduled shifts.

City Attorney Knaak mentioned that the state statute allows this due to the City supporting the fundraising.

Councilmember Busher proposed the City give the non-profit \$400 instead of paying for the dunk tank and providing the staffing for the dunk tank. Based on the return we would be spending more than the return. She continued the statute mentions that its to foster law enforcement and the community, Happy Days is not entirely to foster law enforcement and the community.

City Attorney Knaak confirmed the City can contribute directly to the non-profit under M.S. 471.198.

Mayor Heineman asked if the proposal is in lieu of the dunk tank.

Councilmember Busher confirmed, yes, the dunk tank can presumably be canceled and then the Police department is not being paid to volunteer for a non-profit entity while they are being paid to work the event.

Councilmember Riley stated he would support this since this is allowable and costs the City less and presumably provides the non-profit more money. He does not support paying people to volunteer.

Councilmember Specht stated he likes the idea of donating \$400 but he also likes the idea of the dunk tank, he thinks it creates good community and he is okay with paying Police Officers to work the dunk tank to build that rapport.

Mayor Heineman asked Police Captain Frankfurth if he thinks the dunk tank builds rapport with community members.

Police Captain Frankfurth stated it is a lot of interaction with the community, the benefit is for the association to use the money to use for different things, and ultimately the Community Service Officers and staff will be doing the typical police relations. He stated it is tough to schedule the shifts needed for the dunk tank along with the normal shifts.

Councilmember Olson stated he would hate to see the dunk tank go away as it is a unique connection point. He has a small issue with paying people to volunteer but doesn't want to see the dunk tank go away. He asked for confirmation that the dunk tank will have a cost this year, if in years past there was not a fee.

Police Captain Frankfurth confirmed there will be a charge this year.

Councilmember Buscher asked what type of fundraising the non-profit has done in the past to solicit donations so this doesn't happen again next year.

Police Captain Frankfurth responded that he can't really answer for the board or association. He stated he could not 100% give them an answer on how this all played out to them. He stated that they could request that the board have funding available if this event is going to occur in the future.

Mayor Heineman stated it comes down to doing the dunk tank as permissible or no dunk tank. He stated its above board and we have state statues that allow it. He doesn't see an issue with paying Police Officers to volunteer because it's a dunk tank and it's \$400.

Councilmember Peters stated he doesn't want to see this be a problem next year.

Councilmember Riley asked if the City is able to pay employees to volunteer for a fundraiser.

City Attorney Knaak stated if the City finds that using officers on duty in a situation like this facilitates relationships with the community in a favorable way, then yes, the City can do that.

Councilmember Riley stated he was thinking they were saying they can have \$400 from the City and then they can choose how to use it. Then they don't need to discuss paying people to volunteer.

Councilmember Stewart asked how we got to \$400 when the dunk tank was \$265 and now it's a \$400 use as you want.

Councilmember Riley stated he received an email that estimated the non-profit generally brings in \$400 at the event.

Councilmember Stewart asked if the City has donated in the past.

City Administrator stated the RPA organized this event in the past. This year they found out they had to pay for the dunk tank rental and they have a hard time staffing the event. If the City covered the cost of the dunk tank and staffing for four hours that cost could exceed \$500.

Councilmember Olson stated that clarifies the cost for him if they decide to pay for the dunk tank.

Councilmember Specht stated if the Happy Days budget has the money, he thinks they should use that fund to pay for the dunk tank and staff it.

Mayor Heineman asked Police Captain Frankfurth if the City donated \$400 if that is enough money to staff the dunk tank.

Police Captain Frankfurth stated the Police staff that would sit in there is the staff that are already working their shift where they would be patrolling and paid by the City. He stated in years past they had 16+ reserves volunteer their time for traffic control and other duties, the volunteer

numbers have dwindled to 6-7 reserves this year so the department has had to supplement to cover Happy Days staffing.

Councilmember Buscher stated we are paying an office who is supposed to be policing the event and also submerged underwater at the same time. She continued if it is an event for law enforcement to create relationships that is one thing.

The consensus of the Council was to donate \$400 to the Ramsey Police Association (RPA) and allow the non-profit the discretion to use the money as they choose.

Police Captain Frankfurth confirmed they will not move forward with the dunk tank as they do not have enough staff that could volunteer without being on duty.

Mayor Heineman asked the Police Department to report back if residents were upset that the dunk tank was not at Happy Days this year.

3. ADJOURNMENT

The Special Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 8:39 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Colleen Lasher
Administrative Services Director

Drafted by Katie Schmidt