

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, September 9, 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 (attended remotely)  
Councilmember Shanna Stewart

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

**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: Civil Legal Services Attorney Interviews**

The City Council and Staff conducted interviews with the following two law firms: LeVander, Gillen & Miller and Flaherty & Hood. Each firm was asked questions regarding their background, experience, and examples of challenging issues each firm has faced in past situations.

The Council will deliberate on the two interviews conducted this evening and the four interviews conducted on September 2, 2025, at the end of the Work Session meeting in item 2.04.

**2.02: Final 2026 Budget/Levy Review Before Preliminary Adoption on 9-23-25**

Finance Director Lund reviewed the Staff report in regard to the final 2026 budget and levy.

Councilmember Riley asked what the land write-down revenue represents.

Finance Director Lund explained that there was around \$12,000,000 for the land purchase price and the assessments, which were written down. She said that this was set up for the account for

land held for resale, and as land sales were made, it decreased the \$12,000,000. She noted that this revenue represents the balance remaining in this account.

Councilmember Riley asked what had changed between their last conversation and now in terms of the cash flow for the HRA fund.

Finance Director Lund explained that she included 2029 through 2032 for capital requests.

City Administrator Hagen added that every year they look at a ten-year CIP and approve a specific CIP per year based on what there is room for in the budget. He noted that this ten-year plan is ever-changing.

Councilmember Riley said he is glad to see how they plan on paying for these capital items over the next several years.

Finance Director Lund shared that Andover has the lowest levy increase in Anoka County. She stated they are using \$500,000 of their fund balance to keep this low. She noted that Lino Lakes has the largest levy increase in Anoka County, and its increase is mainly due to staffing changes.

The consensus of the Council was supportive of the final 2026 budget and levy and directed Staff to bring back the budget for preliminary approval at the next Council meeting.

### **2.03: Discuss Pending Vacancy on the EDA**

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the Staff report concerning the vacancy on the EDA due to William MacLennan's resignation. She shared the suggestion of giving the seat to Nichole Bauer, who had been previously considered to serve on the EDA.

Councilmember Stewart noted that they will be going through the recruitment process for Boards and Commissions again in the next six months. She asked if there is a need to fill this vacancy before the next recruiting process starts.

Mayor Heineman shared that Ms. Bauer's experience with the Chamber of Commerce would be great to have on the EDA, and he would also like to respect Mr. MacLennan's desire to resign.

The consensus of the Council was supportive of appointing Nichole Bauer to the vacant EDA seat.

### **Recess and Reconvene**

The meeting recessed at 6:54 p.m.

The meeting reconvened at 8:27 p.m.

### **2.04: Deliberate on Civil Legal Services Attorney Interviews**

City Administrator Hagen started the discussion on the six interviewed legal firms for civil legal services.

Councilmember Riley asked why the current legal firm has been underperforming from Staff's perspective.

City Administrator Hagen explained that from a personnel standpoint, they do not feel confident that City Attorney Knaak can guide them through a difficult scenario. He shared that they had a situation that they were not confident that City Attorney Knaak could handle, and they ended up working with another firm, which gave them quick guidance on how to navigate the situation. He added that there have also been items that have been missed or forgotten about. He noted that the Police Department handles both criminal and civil cases, and City Attorney Knaak has not had the best working relationship with the Police Department. He shared that for some of the civil cases City Attorney Knaak has handled, he has not provided solutions that have made sense. He said they have been dealing with a dangerous dog case for almost two years and have not received the best guidance. He stated that timing is one of the biggest issues they are facing, as well as confidence in his guidance. He noted that City Attorney Knaak has done a great job in other areas; however, there have been a lot of times that he and Staff have been frustrated with his work.

Mayor Heineman asked how office hour pay works.

City Administrator Hagen explained that currently, this is generally about two and a half hours on the day of Council meetings to be in person for Staff to ask questions; however, this is not being well utilized. He shared that if they do move forward with a different firm, he would like to move away from this, as they do not see a high value in this office hour time.

Mayor Heineman asked when they did the calculations for how much they are paying City Attorney Knaak versus how much they are utilizing him, if this included the office hours and drive time, or just the times that Staff had reached out to him.

City Administrator Hagen said their calculations included office hours but not drive time.

Mayor Heineman asked how many hours City Attorney Knaak puts in outside of attending meetings.

City Administrator Hagen shared that in 2022, City Attorney Knaak reported 429 hours, in 2023, he reported 280 hours, in 2024, he reported over 300 hours, and they are anticipating he will report around 300 hours for 2025.

Mayor Heineman said he does not want to just go with the cheapest option; however, cost is a factor in making his decision.

Councilmember Riley said he does not feel strongly about whether they pay hourly or with a retainer. He stated he finds it interesting that all of the other firms provided an hourly wage and suggested this route instead of a retainer.

The Council reviewed its rankings of the six firms. The consensus of the Council was that Eckberg Lammers was their top choice.

City Administrator Hagen shared his perspective as the one who did the reference checks for each firm. He said his top three choices would be Eckberg Lammers, Flaherty & Hood, and LeVander, Gillen & Miller. He noted that any of these firms would do a great job for the City, and they have large teams behind them that would be able to support the City.

Administrative Services Director Lasher shared that Flaherty & Hood was her top choice; however, she also thinks Eckberg Lammers of Kennedy & Graven would do a good job.

Police Captain Frankfurth shared that they use Eckberg Lammers for criminal prosecution with the Police Department, and they have done a great job. He said Eckberg Lammers is his top choice, with Flaherty & Hood as his second choice.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby said he was very impressed with Eckberg Lammers.

City Administrator Hagen said he will work on a contract with Eckberg Lammers and hopes to bring it back for approval at the next Council meeting.

Mayor Heineman asked when these services would start.

City Administrator Hagen said they will start on November 1.

Mayor Heineman asked if they wanted to have the new attorney present at all Council meetings rather than just when requested.

Councilmember Specht said he would like them to be at all Council meetings.

City Administrator Hagen stated it is very helpful for Staff to have the attorney at every meeting to answer any questions that may arise.

Mayor Heineman asked if they want to have a contingency in the contract that two Councilmembers can utilize the attorney directly if they disagree with Staff.

The Council was supportive of this.

The consensus of the Council was to direct Staff to start contract negotiations with Eckberg Lammers for the City's civil legal services.

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

#### **3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar**

Noted.

Councilmember Riley asked about the Cryptocurrency ordinance discussion scheduled for a Work Session in October.

City Administrator Hagen shared that they have seen a lot of fraud cases tied back to ATMs in town, having to do with cryptocurrency. He shared that investigators have done a lot of research into this and would like to inform the Council on the situation and present them with the options available.

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

None.

**5. ADJOURNMENT**

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 9:15 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

---

Brian S. Hagen  
City Administrator

ATTEST:

---

Katie M. Schmidt  
City Clerk

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