

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

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

Members Present: Mayor Ryan Heineman
Councilmember Kirsten Buscher (arrived at 5:48pm)
Councilmember Eric Peters
Councilmember Chris Riley
Councilmember Dan Specht
Councilmember Shanna Stewart

Members Absent: Councilmember Michael Olson

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
Police Chief Brad Bluml
Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher
City Attorney Amanda Johnson
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
Fire Captain of Administration Jason Sufka
City Planner Adam Martin
Community Service Officer Katie McNally

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: Quarterly Update from Fire and Police Departments

Fire Captain of Administration Sufka reviewed the quarterly update for the Fire Department, including 2,040 calls for service, which is a 14% increase over last year. He shared that Station #1 received 1,050 calls for service, Station #2 received 940 calls for service, and 50 mutual aid calls between Andover, Anoka, Nowthen, Elk River, Dayton, and Oak Grove.

Mayor Heineman asked if they bill other cities when they provide mutual aid.

Fire Captain of Administration Sufka said no.

Councilmember Specht asked how often they receive mutual aid versus providing it.

Fire Captain of Administration Sufka noted that the amount of mutual aid they receive and give is pretty even, as they have a good relationship with all of the cities that they work with for mutual aid.

Police Chief Bluml added that it is very important for the Police Department also to have these relationships when mutual aid is needed. He noted that without this mutual aid, they would need much higher staffing levels at the Police Department. He shared that for the quarter, they responded to 4,588 calls for service, which was a 6% increase from the second quarter. He noted the three most common types of non-criminal calls were medical calls, welfare checks, and parking requests. He said the three most common types of criminal calls were theft by removal of property, theft by swindling, and harassment or restraining order violations. He stated they made 66 arrests for the quarter, with the most common arrest type being DWIs. He noted that there were 74 traffic accidents for the quarter. He added that they pulled over 1,000 vehicles in the City. He shared that during this quarter, they had three instances of residents charged with child neglect, which is the same number of instances that they had in the entire year of 2024. He discussed the Toward Zero Deaths program and different events that they participated in throughout the quarter.

Councilmember Stewart asked if there are factors that contributed to the increase in child neglect incidents or if they have gotten better at catching these situations.

Police Chief Bluml shared that it is possible that there has been better communication about these situations to help make the Police Department more aware. He said he is not entirely sure what is contributing to this increase.

Mayor Heineman asked if these three incidents were reported by the schools or members of the community.

Police Chief Bluml said he is not sure about all three, but he knows that one was reported by the school.

Councilmember Stewart suggested they do more for public awareness to help with these situations getting reported.

Police Chief Bluml shared that they are trying to work on some education around this.

Councilmember Peters asked if the DWI arrests were all alcohol related.

Police Chief Bluml said a majority are alcohol.

Councilmember Stewart asked about the intersection at Bunker and Sunfish, where the most accidents occurred during the quarter.

Police Chief Bluml said he can look into the contributing factors for these accidents and report back.

The Council thanked Fire Captain of Administration Sufka and Police Chief Bluml for their reports and the hard work of their departments.

This item was informational only.

2.02: Discussion Regarding Proposed Updates to the Personnel Policy

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the Staff report in regard to proposed updates to the Personnel Policy, including changes to address the new law, Minnesota Paid Family Medical Leave, which is effective January 1, 2026.

Councilmember Specht asked why life insurance coverage starts on the first day of employment when the medical insurance does not.

Administrative Services Director Lasher noted that this is how the policy is currently written. She explained that when someone leaves a job, their life insurance likely ends right away, whereas medical insurance typically continues through the end of that given month.

Councilmember Specht asked if this policy applies to only non-union employees or all employees.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that at the last Council meeting, all memoranda of agreement were adopted for Paid Family Medical Leave for all of the unions. She noted that the Personnel Policy overlaps with unionized employees; however, if there is a conflict, the union contract would always take precedence. She asked the Council if they were supportive of Staff being allowed to wear blue jeans throughout the week.

Councilmember Stewart asked if this would include blue jeans with holes and rips.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said there is language that specifies that these would have to be nice-looking blue jeans and cannot have rips or tears.

The consensus of the Council was to allow Staff to wear blue jeans to work.

Administrative Services Director Lasher asked how the Council feels about allowing sports jerseys and shirts to be worn on casual Fridays.

Councilmember Riley said he is against this, as sports jerseys and team shirts are not professional. He noted that if they have designated days where Staff can wear sports jerseys, he would be supportive of that.

Councilmember Stewart agreed.

Councilmember Specht said he is okay with allowing sports jerseys and shirts to be worn on casual Fridays.

Mayor Heineman said he would be supportive of allowing this if it were slightly controlled to avoid being completely unprofessional.

The consensus of the Council was to leave this section as written to only allow sports jerseys and team shirts on specified days.

Councilmember Buscher asked about the section in regard to hand tattoos. She said she does not agree with this, as having a hand tattoo does not dictate someone's character.

Councilmember Specht agreed and added that a hand tattoo does not mean anything towards someone's quality of work.

Mayor Heineman asked if someone who came in to interview for a position at the City and had a hand tattoo would they not be considered for the role.

Administrative Services Director Lasher stated that if the tattoo were derogatory, then it would play a role in the hiring process.

Mayor Heineman suggested updating this language to say that tattoos on the hands, face, neck, or head are allowed only if they are in good taste.

Councilmember Specht asked for the Administrative Services Director Lasher's perspective on this.

Administrative Services Director Lasher said she would prefer this section to be removed.

Councilmember Stewart asked why face piercings outside of ear and nose piercings would not be allowed if they are allowing face tattoos.

Councilmember Buscher said that she would be supportive of allowing other facial piercings.

Councilmember Specht asked Staff their perspective on facial piercings.

City Administrator Hagen said he would like to see the office remain professional-looking when they are interacting with the public. He noted that first appearances mean a lot to people, and he would not want someone's face piercings to detract from someone's experience with the City. He stated that the dress code policy has loosened up substantially over the years already.

Police Chief Bluml said he has concerns with certain facial piercings or colored hair, as he does not think they would look professional on his deputies.

Administrative Services Director Lasher explained that the changes that are being proposed are being brought forward due to concerns from Staff. She noted that they recently made the change to the policy around piercings to allow nose piercings, which satisfied the Staff's concerns. She said there are certain parts of the piercing policy that she would not want to change. She added that the current language is well-received by Staff.

The consensus of the Council was to remove the language around face, head, neck, and hand tattoos, and leave the language around piercings as is.

Councilmember Riley shared that he is concerned with the language around colored hair containing a list of prohibited colors, as this would make every other color allowed. He suggested removing the list of colors that are not allowed and just stating that no extreme hair colors would be allowed.

Councilmember Specht asked if it would be helpful to have the list of colors that are not allowed as examples.

City Administrator Hagen said they can work on the language around colored hair and bring it back to Council.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the discussed changes to the Personnel Policy.

2.03: Discuss Ability for Staff to Consider Donated Exercise Equipment

Administrative Services Director Lasher reviewed the Staff report concerning allowing Staff to consider donated exercise equipment for the new employee wellness room.

The consensus of the Council was to allow Staff to donate exercise equipment to be reviewed by Staff and Council before being accepted.

2.04: Animal Code Update

City Planner Martin reviewed the Staff report in regard to updates to the Animal Code. He asked Council if they would like to continue to allow roosters or crowing hens on the two-and-a-half-acre lots. He shared that they receive many noise complaints about these animals.

Councilmember Specht said he would like them to continue to be allowed.

Councilmember Riley said he would like to see this removed from the animal code, as they are receiving a lot of complaints.

The consensus of the Council was to continue to allow roosters on two-and-a-half-acre lots.

City Planner Martin shared that rounding down to the nearest quarter acre has been a challenge for Staff administering the code and residents trying to interpret it when it comes to chickens. He asked if Council would be supportive of eliminating the language around rounding acreage down and just evaluating things based on the exact acreage.

The consensus of the Council was to remove the language around rounding down to the nearest quarter acre when it comes to allowing chickens.

City Planner Martin asked if they should reduce the 75-foot setback for stables to match that of other accessory structures, which is a minimum of five-foot setbacks in the side or rear of the property.

Councilmember Stewart asked how this change would benefit the City or residents.

City Planner Martin explained that the current setback requirements can be prohibitive based on different lot layouts. He said this change would make things more flexible for residents with uniquely shaped lots.

Councilmember Stewart said that she believes the 75-foot setback is excessive; however, she thinks a five-foot setback would be too small and could lead to an increase in neighbor complaints.

City Planner Martin explained that they currently do not have a setback requirement for roaming area fences, so horses and other animals would be able to roam all the way up to the fence line, which could also be at the property line.

Councilmember Specht asked if chicken coops have a setback requirement.

City Planner Martin said this is also a 75-foot. He added that there is also a setback requirement of 50 feet from places of human habitation.

Councilmember Buscher asked if there was a health reason that these structures are not allowed within 50 feet of human habitation.

City Planner Martin shared that in his research, this seems to be a requirement that has been in place since the 1970s.

Councilmember Stewart said she hesitates to reduce this setback requirement, as a neighbor could end up putting their chicken coop or other structure at their property line, which could be very close to their neighbor's house.

City Planner Martin shared that in his experience, he has seen that people like to keep their chicken coops close to their house to use their house to block wind and keep their chickens farther away from predators. He noted that they could work on some language around setback requirements from neighboring houses. He added that with the Zoning Code amendments made a few years ago, any structure under 200 square feet no longer requires a building permit, and this would include most chicken coops. He said this will be more educational as they will not be inspecting every chicken coop that is being built.

The consensus of the Council was to keep the roaming fence setback the same and reduce the stable and chicken coop setback to match the rest of the accessory structure setback requirements, and reduce the setback requirement from human habitation to ten feet from the property owner's home and 20 feet from a neighboring home.

City Planner Martin asked how the Council feels about adding a list of permitted and prohibited animals to the code.

Councilmember Specht said he likes the way it currently reads, instead of the update to list out each animal.

City Planner Martin explained that they would list out the most common animals and the number that are allowed based on lot size, and any other animals would be addressed separately.

Councilmember Stewart said she would like the residents to be able to look at this list to determine what is and is not allowed. She stated that she would like this to read as clearly as possible, with little room for interpretation.

City Planner Martin explained that they currently have a provision for any non-traditional animals. He noted that they are not aware of any current non-traditional animals in the City. He asked if the Council would like to keep this provision in place and allow residents to apply for non-traditional animal permits.

The consensus of the Council was supportive of adding a list of permitted animals and keeping the non-traditional animal provision and process that is currently in place.

City Planner Martin asked the Council if they would like to see the private kennel license requirement increase from three dogs to four dogs. He added that the City currently does not regulate the number of cats that an individual can have and asked if they would like to add something about this to the code.

Community Service Officer McNally shared that she has been involved in situations where an individual had over 100 cats in their home. She noted that this has been an issue in the past.

Councilmember Buscher shared that when she did a ride-along with Code Enforcement Officer Swalchick, they visited a home that likely had 100 or more cats.

Mayor Heineman shared that five cats is the limit that someone is able to have in order to maintain a healthy household. He said he would be supportive of changing the code to allow up to five cats per household, and anything beyond that would require a private kennel license.

Councilmember Stewart said she is not supportive of regulating the number of cats.

Councilmember Peters agreed with Mayor Heineman.

The consensus of the Council was to leave the private kennel license as written, at anything more than three dogs, and to allow up to five cats per household, and any more than that would require a private kennel license.

City Planner Martin shared that they will bring back an updated draft of the Animal Code for approval at an upcoming meeting.

The consensus of the Council was to move forward with the Animal Code updates as discussed.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

4.01: Update on Outside Committees

Councilmember Buscher gave updates from the Fire Protection Council. She shared that Anoka-Champlain added their first full-time Fire Technician in fifty years. She added that the American Heart Association is no longer routinely recommending the LUCAS device over manual CPR for survival. She noted that they are also evaluating the feasibility of carrying blood products on fire rigs. She shared that St. Francis and Bethel will form the Rum River Fire District in 2026. She added that Fire Service Day at the Capitol is April 27, and she would love to see someone from the Fire Department make it there. She said she would like for the Fire Department to host the Women Explore Fire Day for the area.

Councilmember Specht shared the photo of the Emmy that was won by QCTV.

Councilmember Riley shared that the new Water Resources Technician in the Engineering department has closed multiple open permits for stormwater.

4.02: Updates on Items of Interest

Noted.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:56 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Ava Major
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.