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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a regular meeting on Tuesday, January 27, 2026, 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
City Planner Adam Martin
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
Community Service Officer Katie McNally
Community Service Officer Madison Spah
Police Chief Brad Bluml
City Attorney Amanda Johnson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Heineman called the regular meeting of the Ramsey City Council to order at 7:00 p.m., followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Mayor Heineman.

2. APPROVE AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Riley, seconded by Councilmember Specht, to approve the agenda as presented.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Mayor Heineman, Councilmembers Buscher, Olson, Peters, Riley, Specht, and Stewart. Voting No: None.

3. PRESENTATIONS

None.

4. CITIZEN INPUT

Randy Kaiser, 16967 Bison Street NW, raised concerns about outdoor wood boilers and their potential health and property impacts. He provided detailed evidence of smoke and fumes from wood boilers, citing health problems and nuisance laws. He emphasized the need for local governments to protect residents from wood boiler pollution.

Mr. Kaiser referenced the Minnesota Statute on nuisance and provided evidence of smoke and fumes using a purple air monitor. He described the severe health effects he and his wife have experienced due to wood boiler smoke. He suggested that local governments should restrict or ban outdoor wood boilers to protect public health.

Mayor Heineman acknowledged Mr. Kaiser's concerns and suggested discussing the issue further offline.

Councilmember Riley inquired about the status of the EPB's discussion on wood boilers.

City Administrator Hagen explained that the ordinance was under review and would be brought back for further discussion.

Mayor Heineman agreed to continue the conversation offline and mentioned having data to contribute.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Olson, to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- 5.01: Approve the Following Meeting Minutes:
 - 1) City Council Work Session dated January 13, 2026
 - 2) City Council Regular Session dated January 13, 2026
- 5.02: Approve Business License Applications
- 5.03: Approve Anoka County Threat Assessment Group Agreements
- 5.04: Approve Police Training Tracking Program
- 5.05: Authorization to Hire a Firefighter/Fire Technician
- 5.06: Adopt Resolution #26-035 Approving Cash Disbursements Made and Authorizing Payment of Accounts Payable Invoicing Received During the Period of January 8, 2026, through January 21, 2026.
- 5.07: Adopt Resolution #26-026 Approving Partial Payment to Douglas-Kerr Underground LLC. For Improvement Project #24-13 Fox Ridge Estates 1st & 2nd Street Reconstruction
- 5.08: Adopt Resolution #26-027 Amending the Design Services Proposal from Bolton & Menk, Inc. for MSA Bunker Lake Boulevard Reconstruction, Improvement Project #26-01
- 5.09: Adopt Resolution #26-029 Approving Final Plans and Specifications and Authorizing Advertisements for Bids for Flintwood Hills 2nd & 3rd Street Reconstruction, Improvement Project #26-05

- 5:10: Adopt Resolution #26-030 Approving Final Plans and Specification and Authorizing Advertisements for Bids for 2026 Crack Seal Improvements, Improvement Project #26-09
- 5:11: Adopt Resolution #26-031 Approving Final Plans and Specifications and Authorizing Advertisements for Bids for 2026 Pavement Rejuvenation Improvements, Improvement Project #26-10
- 5:12: Adopt Resolution #26-032 Accepting a Polling Place Accessibility Grant from the State of Minnesota
- 5:13: Adopt Resolution #26-033 Approve Agreement Between the City of Ramsey and Leo A Daly for Contractual Services
- 5:14: Adopt Resolution #26-036 Approving Amendment to Purchase Agreement for Sale of 6701 and 6745 Highway 10 to MW Properties LLC
- 5:15: Adopt Resolution #26-037 Approving Lease Amendment with Mille Lacs Motor Sports II for 6781 and 6745 Hwy 10 NW

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Mayor Heineman, Councilmembers Buscher, Olson, Peters, Riley, Specht, and Stewart. Voting No: None.

6. PUBLIC HEARING

None.

7. COUNCIL BUSINESS

7.01: Introduce Ordinance #26-02, Repealing and Replacing Chapter 10 for Animal Regulations

City Planner Martin introduced Ordinance #26-02, an update to the City's Animal Code, noting that staff have been working on the revisions for several months in collaboration with Community Service Officers Madison Spah and Katie McNally, who were present to assist with questions.

City Planner Martin explained that the goals of the update were to address resident concerns, improve consistency in definitions and enforcement, clearly articulate the purpose of the regulations, distinguish allowable animals and quantities by property, streamline licensing processes, including dangerous dogs, private kennels, and non-traditional animals, and make the code easier to read and administer.

City Planner Martin explained that major proposed updates included new language addressing noisy animals, particularly roosters and crowing hens, with defined standards for sustained noise. The ordinance would codify the use of the Anoka County parcel viewer to determine property acreage for consistency and transparency. It would also align barn, stable, and enclosure setbacks with accessory structure standards, reducing barriers for residents seeking to construct animal-related structures.

City Planner Martin explained that legacy provisions tied to the former Horse Care Commission were revised to apply more broadly to all animals, including standards for manure storage, animal transportation, and the protection of public property. Performance, maintenance, and care

standards were consolidated to ensure uniform application across animal types, and licensing processes were updated to align with current staffing capacity and practices. The update also proposed changes to animal unit calculations, including eliminating the practice of rounding down acreage, which currently limits residents' flexibility, particularly for those keeping poultry. Animal units would be reorganized into clearer categories: large animals, medium animals, and poultry/fowl by weight, with consistent acreage and roaming-area requirements designed to protect animal health and infrastructure such as septic systems.

City Planner Martin also noted that horses, which were separated into a distinct table in 2015, would be reintegrated into the general animal unit standards to reduce confusion for staff and residents. He concluded by stating that the recommended action before Council was to introduce the ordinance and invited questions, with staff and the Police Department available to respond.

Councilmember Riley questioned whether the proposed ordinance would effectively address rooster-related complaints, noting that roosters would still be allowed under the updated code. He asked whether limiting roosters to properties of at least 2.5 acres would sufficiently mitigate the issue or if allowing roosters at all would continue to pose enforcement challenges.

City Planner Martin explained that the issue of allowing roosters was discussed at a prior work session and that staff understood Council's consensus to continue allowing roosters on properties of 2.5 acres or larger. He stated that the proposed ordinance establishes clear nuisance standards to provide a consistent, objective framework for addressing complaints. The intent is to move away from subjective or isolated complaints and instead apply defined criteria for sustained noise, improving enforcement consistency while still addressing resident concerns and reducing unnecessary calls to Community Service Officers.

Councilmember Riley asked staff to confirm whether the proposed ordinance changes would effectively meet the stated goal of addressing rooster-related nuisance concerns and whether staff believe the updated language achieves that objective. He also commented on the clarity of the animal unit standards, noting that the ordinance language was less intuitive than the visual summary presented on the slides. He cited examples such as fractional animal units (e.g., "half a sheep"). He suggested that including plain-language explanations, such as the number of animals allowed per acre, in the ordinance itself would make it easier for residents to understand. He asked whether incorporating that clarifying language into the ordinance would be allowable.

City Planner Martin acknowledged that the animal unit table underwent multiple revisions during development as staff balanced technical accuracy with clarity for residents. He explained that the table was designed to support straightforward calculations while still allowing staff to assist residents who have questions about allowable animals when purchasing or using property. He agreed that Councilmember Riley's suggestion to include clearer per-acre explanations directly in the ordinance would improve readability and understanding. He stated that staff can incorporate those clarifications before the ordinance's second reading.

Councilmember Riley reiterated his recommendation that the animal unit table in the ordinance be revised to clearly state the number of animals allowed per acre (e.g., 2, 4, or 25), noting that this

format is significantly easier for residents to understand. He indicated support for including this clarification in the ordinance amendment process.

Councilmember Olson sought clarification on whether the animal unit chart is intended to be cumulative, meaning property owners must add the applicable animal units based on acreage, rather than assuming each animal category could be allowed independently if it fits within its own standard.

City Planner Martin confirmed that the animal unit system is cumulative, noting that property acreage determines the total number of allowable animal units across animal types. He provided an example that a 1.2-acre property equals 1.2 animal units, likening the calculation to a budgeting exercise. He added that the new language, developed with assistance from the City Attorney, clarifies that fractional animal units cannot be applied to a whole animal and that residents cannot keep partial animals. The intent is to make the system easier for residents to understand and apply while allowing flexibility to “plug and play” animal choices within the limits of their property size.

Councilmember Stewart asked for clarification on whether a property with 2.5 acres could keep multiple types of animals up to the total allowable animal units, or whether there is an overall cap on the number or combination of animals. She sought confirmation that her understanding of the cumulative limits was correct.

City Planner Martin confirmed that the allowable number of animals is based on the total cumulative animal units per property acreage. He explained that a 2.5-acre property equals 2.5 animal units, which may be allocated across different animal types. For example, he noted that a property owner could keep one horse, one rooster, and one goat, totaling 2.5 animal units.

Mayor Heineman clarified that the ordinance does not set a maximum number of animals per category; instead, it uses the categories to determine the total allowable animal units based on property acreage (e.g., 2.5 acres equals 2.5 animal units).

Councilmember Stewart sought clarification on how the cumulative animal unit calculation is applied in practice, asking whether a property owner must choose between animal types, such as one horse or several chickens, but not both, when the total allowable animal units are limited (e.g., on a 1.2-acre property).

Mayor Heineman clarified that a minimum of 2.5 acres is required to keep a horse. On a property of that size, residents may keep multiple types of animals, provided the total does not exceed the allowable animal units. He explained that, for example, a 2.5-acre property could accommodate combinations such as horses and chickens, provided the total animal units did not exceed the acreage limit.

City Planner Martin stated that, under the proposed animal unit calculations, a 2.5-acre property could accommodate two horses and up to 12 chickens.

Councilmember Stewart asked whether beehives, which are not counted as animal units, would be allowed in addition to the maximum number of animals permitted under the animal unit

calculation, using the example of a property having a horse, chickens, and multiple beehives concurrently.

City Planner Martin stated that under the current and proposed code structure, beehives are regulated separately from animal units. He explained that the code addresses dogs, cats, bees, and other animals in distinct sections, meaning bees may be kept in addition to the allowable animal units calculated under the animal unit table, consistent with how the code currently operates.

Motion by Councilmember Riley, seconded by Councilmember Buscher, to introduce Ordinance #26-02, Repealing and Replacing Chapter 10 of the City Code, Animal Regulations, with the added clarification to the Animal Unit table specifying how animal units translate to the number of animals allowed per acre, as presented graphically.

A roll call vote was performed:

Councilmember Buscher	aye
Councilmember Riley	aye
Councilmember Stewart	aye
Councilmember Olson	aye
Councilmember Specht	aye
Councilmember Peters	aye
Mayor Heineman	aye

Motion carried.

7.02: Introduce Ordinance #26-01, Amending Section 30-5, Nuisances

Police Chief Bluml presented a proposed amendment to the City’s nuisance code, specifically the noise ordinance, in response to resident complaints about excessive noise from engine retarding brakes, commonly known as “Jake brakes”, along St. Francis Boulevard / Highway 47. He explained that in 2025, both the Police Department and a City Councilmember received complaints about semi-truck engine brake noise in the area south of Sunwood Drive, where southbound traffic descends a grade, and the speed limit drops from 55 mph to 45 mph. Extra patrols were conducted, but no violations were observed at that time, in part because enforcement vehicles were highly visible to approaching traffic. Upon reviewing state statute and existing city ordinance, staff determined that while vehicle noise is already regulated, additional clarity would be helpful, particularly to support the installation of signage alerting drivers to the restriction. After consultation with the City Attorney, staff recommended adding one clarifying sentence to the ordinance to ensure enforceability before installing signage.

Police Chief Bluml shared historical data indicating that from 2020 to 2025, the city received over 1,000 noise complaints, approximately 200 involving vehicles, 204 related to engine noise, and four specifically involving semi-truck engine braking. While not widespread citywide, the issue significantly affects residents in the identified corridor. The proposed ordinance language would state that the intentional use of engine retarding brakes that cause abnormal or excessive noise is prohibited on public roadways within the city, except in emergencies. The Chief noted that staff

believe a single strategically placed sign could substantially reduce complaints and improve the quality of life for nearby residents.

Councilmember Riley thanked Police Chief Bluml for his work on the proposed amendment to the nuisance noise ordinance and expressed strong support for the change. He noted that he was the Councilmember who received a complaint about engine brake noise and emphasized that the concern affected the entire neighborhood, not just a single resident.

Councilmember Riley stated that residents asked how many complaints were required for the issue to be taken seriously, and he reassured them that a single complaint was sufficient to warrant action. He agreed that the issue was limited to a specific section of roadway rather than a citywide problem and supported installing a single sign to address the concern. He acknowledged that while the solution seems simple, formal action, including an ordinance amendment, is necessary to proceed appropriately, and reiterated his full support for moving forward with the change.

Mayor Heineman asked how the proposed engine-brake noise ordinance would be enforced in practice, particularly in situations where multiple semi-trucks are traveling together. He inquired whether enforcement would rely on an officer's best determination of which vehicle emitted the noise, similar to how MnDOT enforces commercial vehicle regulations, with officers stopping the suspected vehicle to issue a warning or citation.

Police Chief Bluml explained that enforcement would be based on an officer's direct observation, meaning an officer would need to see and hear the engine braking coming from a specific vehicle before initiating a traffic stop. He stated that the department's primary goal would be education, though citations may be used for repeat violations if necessary to change behavior.

Police Chief Bluml added that the Police Department can also partner with the State Patrol's Commercial Vehicle Enforcement Division. If a traffic stop reveals additional concerns, such as unsafe equipment or other violations, officers may request a commercial vehicle inspector or direct the vehicle to the nearby weigh scales in Ramsey for further inspection.

Mayor Heineman stated that the proposed enforcement approach sounded sufficient and expressed confidence that education would be effective. Drawing on his own work experience, he noted that once individuals are aware of the law, they generally adjust their behavior, at least in the affected area, and often help spread awareness to others. He voiced his support for the ordinance amendment, stating he believes it will be effective in reducing the issue.

Councilmember Buscher asked whether limiting the use of engine retarding brakes could impact the safety of truck drivers or surrounding vehicles, expressing concern about the potential safety implications of the proposed ordinance amendment.

Police Chief Bluml acknowledged that engine retarding brakes have legitimate safety and operational benefits, including reducing wear and tear on braking systems. He explained that the proposed ordinance seeks to balance safety and business needs with residents' quality-of-life concerns, allowing engine brake use in emergencies while limiting non-essential use that causes excessive noise.

Councilmember Buscher asked how officers would determine whether a truck driver’s use of an engine retarding brake qualifies as an emergency under the proposed ordinance, seeking clarification on how that distinction would be established during enforcement.

Police Chief Bluml explained that officers would use professional discretion when enforcing the ordinance. During a traffic stop, officers would ask questions and conduct a brief interview to determine whether the use of an engine retarding brake was necessary due to an emergency. Based on that assessment, an officer could issue an education, a warning, or a citation. He noted that the issuance of a citation does not determine guilt and that drivers retain the right to contest it in court. He emphasized that officers are trained to apply discretion appropriately when evaluating circumstances and enforcement options.

Councilmember Buscher asked whether the city could proactively notify major trucking companies and frequent commercial carriers that use Ramsey as a thoroughfare to ensure they are aware of the proposed engine-brake noise ordinance before enforcement begins.

Police Chief Bluml stated that the department cannot easily identify which specific trucking companies are responsible for the violations. However, if the ordinance amendment is approved, the Police Department plans to communicate and educate the public about the change by sharing information on the City’s social media channels, including Facebook, to reach drivers and the broader public.

Mayor Heineman agreed that the proposed approach addresses the concerns raised, noting that education, combined with enforcement, should be effective. He noted that regular highway users are likely to adjust their behavior once informed, as most people want to avoid violations, and expressed confidence that the issue would be resolved quickly under the proposed ordinance.

Councilmember Riley stated that the primary goal of the proposed ordinance is to reduce noise rather than issue citations, emphasizing education as the preferred first step.

Motion by Councilmember Riley, seconded by Councilmember Peters, to introduce Ordinance #26-01, amending Section 30-5 of the City Code related to noise and engine retarding brakes.

A roll call vote was performed:

Councilmember Buscher	aye
Councilmember Riley	aye
Councilmember Stewart	aye
Councilmember Olson	aye
Councilmember Specht	aye
Councilmember Peters	aye
Mayor Heineman	aye

Motion carried.

8. MAYOR, COUNCIL, AND STAFF INPUT

City Administrator Hagen announced upcoming meetings and events.

Councilmember Buscher acknowledged the heightened emotions many community members are experiencing and emphasized that Ramsey remains peaceful, prayerful, and prepared. She expressed appreciation for the Police Department's ongoing efforts to build strong relationships and ensure that all residents feel safe, regardless of background or perspective.

Councilmember Buscher also thanked City staff for their accessibility and responsiveness to residents' needs, encouraged everyone to treat one another with dignity and respect, and affirmed her trust and confidence in local law enforcement. She concluded by emphasizing the importance of collaboration, mutual care, and strong leadership in maintaining the well-being of families and neighborhoods. She thanked staff and fellow Councilmembers for their continued service.

9. ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Olson, to adjourn the meeting.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Mayor Heineman, Councilmembers Buscher, Olson, Peters, Riley, Specht, and Stewart. Voting No: None.

The regular meeting of the City Council adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Sue Osbeck
TimeSaver Off-Site Secretarial, Inc.