

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, March 24, 2026, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present: Mayor Pro Tem Chris Riley
Councilmember Kirsten Buscher
Councilmember Eric Peters
Councilmember Dan Specht
Councilmember Shanna Stewart

Members Absent: Mayor Ryan Heineman
Councilmember Michael Olson

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
City Engineer/Public Works Director Bruce Westby
Police Chief Brad Bluml
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood
Economic Development Manager Sean Sullivan
City Attorney Amanda Johnson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Pro Tem Riley called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:30 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Review Senior Project TIF Financing Request by Trident Development and Provide Feedback to Developer

Community Development Manager Sullivan explained that staff worked with the developer to revise the TIF request, reducing assistance from approximately \$5.54 million to \$4.182 million and shifting the split from 90/10 to 95/5. He noted the project itself remains unchanged and described revised financial structures, including a shorter effective timeline and improved return to the City's tax rolls. He summarized projected tax revenue, job creation, and financial feasibility, emphasizing that third-party review would validate assumptions. He outlined next steps involving EDA review, public hearing requirements, and potential timelines for approval and construction.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley stated that prior Council direction supported continuing negotiations and asked for Council feedback on the revised proposal.

Councilmember Buscher asked about prevailing wages and worker protections.

Community Development Manager Sullivan indicated some contractors may pay prevailing wages but details are not finalized.

Mr. Roger Fink stated his position on wages had not changed and would follow up with additional information.

Councilmember Buscher asked about certified payroll and responsibility for subcontractor labor compliance.

Mr. Fink explained the contractor would typically handle labor responsibilities and indicated willingness to clarify requirements.

Councilmember Stewart stated the revised terms reflected Council direction and expressed support.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley indicated support and noted no further concerns.

Community Development Manager Sullivan summarized that consensus appeared to support moving forward and outlined the formal application process.

Councilmember Buscher thanked staff and reiterated the project's importance.

Mr. Fink thanked the Council and expressed interest in continuing through the approval process.

2.02: Review 2026 Fiber Optic Buildout Project and Proposed Permitting and Construction Requirements

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained that Gateway Fiber is proposing a 2026 buildout covering a portion of the city and reviewed anticipated impacts, permitting structure, and proposed requirements. He described limits on permits, restoration expectations, inspection processes, work hours, and communication requirements to minimize disruption. He noted staff believe the project is manageable and outlined estimated costs and near break-even revenue. He also summarized legal considerations, including right-of-way authority and the difference between permit-based and franchise approaches.

Councilmember Specht asked about installation details and homeowner impacts.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained fiber-to-premises installation, underground methods, and coordination with property owners.

Councilmember Stewart asked about damage repair responsibilities.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained bonding requirements and provider responsibility.

Councilmember Stewart questioned the need for an additional provider.

Councilmember Specht emphasized benefits of faster, more reliable service.

Councilmember Peters asked about scheduling flexibility for residents.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained notification processes and coordination expectations.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley asked about infrastructure ownership and provider competition.

City Engineer/Public Works Director Westby explained that typically one provider builds out an area due to cost feasibility.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley raised broader policy concerns about equity and service distribution.

City Attorney Johnson explained legal uncertainties around fiber classification, franchising risks, and right-of-way authority.

City Administrator Hagen noted limitations in restricting providers under current law.

Councilmember Buscher supported moving forward with the lower-risk approach.

Councilmember Stewart expressed interest in broader policy discussion before proceeding.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley emphasized concern about uneven service and long-term implications.

Councilmember Specht supported proceeding under current regulations and opposed franchising.

Councilmember Buscher supported the project and suggested encouraging broader coverage.

Councilmember Stewart questioned enforceability of requirements.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley noted general support for permit requirements but ongoing concern about broader policy.

City Administrator Hagen reiterated limitations in requiring full-city service.

City Attorney Johnson referenced potential state legislation on broadband access.

2.03: Community Center Re-Visioning and Public Participation Plan

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained that the item seeks Council direction on future planning for a community center and waterfront development. He summarized historical planning efforts, community interest, and current timing related to the Comprehensive Plan update. He outlined key questions for Council consideration and introduced a phased

engagement strategy developed with consultants, including internal analysis, community outreach, and final recommendations.

Ms. Neumiller described the engagement process, including surveys, community events, and workshops designed to gather broad input and define a right-sized facility.

Councilmember Specht questioned timing and referenced prior discussions.

City Administrator Hagen explained the need to update community input and clarify expectations.

Councilmember Stewart questioned whether engagement should occur after completion of the splash pad.

Councilmember Buscher supported moving forward and emphasized ongoing community interest.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley noted time constraints and continued discussion after recess.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley recessed to the CC meeting at 6:58 p.m., and the workshop reconvened at 7:30 p.m.

Councilmember Specht opposed additional spending at this time and preferred focusing on existing projects.

Councilmember Buscher asked about funding sources.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood explained funding considerations and maintenance impacts.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley indicated insufficient support to proceed with the study.

Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Riverblood asked for direction on future land use.

Councilmember Stewart supported considering proposals but not actively marketing.

Councilmember Specht supported reviewing proposals while maintaining flexibility.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley agreed with a passive approach to the site.

Councilmember Peters expressed concern about delaying future investment due to rising costs.

Councilmember Buscher questioned removing the item from the strategic plan.

Councilmember Specht emphasized completing current projects first.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley moved to the next item.

2.04: Outdoor Wood-Burning Boiler Discussion

Community Development Director Hanson explained that the issue originated from a resident complaint and summarized recommendations from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency, including permitting, EPA certification, setbacks, and operational standards. She reviewed complaint data and presented options for Council consideration.

Councilmember Stewart opposed requiring removal at time of sale and suggested certification instead.

City Attorney Johnson explained legal challenges related to nonconforming uses.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley asked about certification similar to septic systems.

City Attorney Johnson noted enforcement challenges and administrative complexity.

Councilmember Specht questioned whether the issue was isolated.

Community Development Director Hanson confirmed complaints were tied to one resident.

Councilmember Specht opposed broad regulation changes based on limited complaints.

Councilmember Stewart supported requiring EPA certification for new units.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley asked about enforcement.

Community Development Director Hanson explained certification could be enforced through permitting.

Councilmember Buscher supported stronger regulations, including banning future installations.

Councilmember Peters described concerns about odors and neighborhood impacts.

Councilmember Stewart emphasized the need for verified information.

Councilmember Peters expressed concern about long-term impacts.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley noted lack of consensus.

Councilmember Specht suggested revisiting the issue with a full Council.

Councilmember Peters suggested additional presentations from regulatory agencies.

Mayor Pro Tem Riley confirmed no action would be taken at this time.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

4.01: Update on Outside Committees

Noted.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

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