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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a regular meeting on Tuesday, May 12, 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
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
Fire Chief Matt Kohner
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 Stewart, to approve the agenda as amended, removing cases 4, 5, and 6 from the agenda.

Mayor Heineman asked if Councilmember Riley would like to explain why he requested the removal.

Councilmember Riley indicated he did not.

Mayor Heineman explained that he would not support removing Items 4, 5, and 6 from the agenda because they constituted city council business and had been properly submitted in accordance with city procedures. He indicated that two councilmembers brought the items forward in accordance with scheduling requirements and that the matters were important enough to remain on the agenda.

Motion carried. Voting Yes: Councilmembers Buscher, Peters, Riley, and Stewart. Voting No: Mayor Heineman, Councilmembers Olson, and Specht.

Mayor Heineman announced that the agenda was approved without Items 4, 5, and 6 being included as council business. He clarified that those topics would not be discussed during the meeting agenda. He advised attendees wishing to comment on those matters to do so during citizen input, since the items had been removed from consideration.

3. PRESENTATIONS

3.1 Proclamation declaring the month of May 2026 as ALS Awareness Month

Mayor Heineman read the proclamation declaring May 2026 as ALS Awareness Month.

3.2 Annual Fire Department Update and Review of 2025 Activity

Fire Chief Kohner presented the annual Fire Department year-in-review, focusing on calls-for-service data and departmental activities in 2025.

3.3 Recognition of Retiring Fire Chief/Emergency Management Director's 24 Years of Service

Mayor Heineman recognized Fire Chief Kohner for his 24 years of service, including his role as Fire Chief and Emergency Management Director.

Chief Kohner reflected on his journey, highlighting his passion for the fire service and the support he received from his family and colleagues. He expressed appreciation for the Council's support and the opportunity to serve as Fire Chief.

The Council and community members expressed their gratitude and support for Chief Kohner's contributions.

4. CITIZEN INPUT

Ms. Dara Grimmer, 15931 Xenon Street NW, Ramsey, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the display of Minnesota's former state flag. She explained that she never felt represented by the previous flag and appreciated the state's process of consulting with tribal communities and residents to create a new design intended to unify Minnesotans. She indicated that the new flag symbolizes inclusion, unity, and Minnesota's North Star identity, while also representing neighbors with differing viewpoints. She urged the Council not to display the former flag, explaining that doing so would make her feel unwelcome and excluded from the Ramsey community.

Ms. Marygrace Horner, 6889 170th Trail NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the proposal to designate the historic Minnesota state flag as the city's official flag. Horner acknowledged respect for history and traditions but expressed concern that the former flag depicts only male figures and excludes women from its imagery. She explained that public symbols communicate who is represented within a community and compared the issue to the historical principle of "taxation without representation." Horner encouraged

the Council to consider the message sent to future generations, particularly young women, about inclusion and participation in public life. She urged the Council to support symbols that reflect the full community and promote equal dignity and representation for all residents.

Mayor Heineman noted that former Councilmember Matt Woestehoff submitted written comments to the Council regarding the flag discussion. He explained that Woestehoff provided a lengthy statement outlining his views and suggested that interested residents review the comments on Woestehoff's blog rather than having the full statement read aloud during the meeting.

Mr. Nick Steblay, 15460 Xkimo Street NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council, expressing legal and financial concerns regarding proposed Resolutions 26-111 and 26-108 involving investigations and potential censure actions related to Governor Tim Walz. He argued that the City Charter limits the Council's authority to municipal affairs and contended that pursuing state-level political matters falls outside the city's legal scope. He also questioned whether the City had standing to pursue legal action connected to the Feeding Our Future fraud case. He raised concerns about the use of City Staff time, legal expenses, and budget allocations for the effort. He encouraged the Council to focus on local services and allow state agencies and the Legislature to handle statewide fraud investigations.

Mr. Duane Skoglund, 1100 70th Lane NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. He criticized the adoption of the current state flag, arguing that it did not reflect the values of many residents in the area. He expressed support for councilmembers who favored removing the current flag and replacing it with the former design. During his comments, he also referenced prior concerns he has raised about meeting audio quality and indicated he has lived in the Anoka County area his entire life.

Ms. Teri Trail, 6025 Green Valley Road, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. She spoke about Minnesota's history, including Native American heritage, European settlement, and the development of industries tied to the State's natural resources. She explained that she was born and raised in northern Minnesota and identified herself as having Dakota ancestry. She criticized the process used to adopt the new state flag, arguing that the decision was made by a small appointed group rather than through a statewide public vote. She also described several elements of the former Minnesota flag that she believed represented the State's history and identity, including agricultural imagery, Native American symbolism, and other historic references.

Ms. Christina Harper, 14180 Xenon Street NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. She argued that returning to the former state flag would be a mistake because the design had remained controversial and divisive for decades, even after prior modifications. She explained that the 2023 redesign process involved a 13-member commission, public input, and more than 2,000 submissions from Minnesotans. She indicated the process was publicly discussed and not rushed. She also noted that the former flag represented difficult aspects of Minnesota's history and argued

that updating public symbols reflects societal change rather than erasing history. She encouraged the Council to accept the current state flag as the official design adopted through the legislative process.

Ms. Lorelei Rick, 16340 Barrett Street NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. She explained that she supported keeping the former state flag because she believed it represented Minnesota's identity and history. She indicated that many residents recognized the historic flag as a symbol of the State, even if they did not fully understand the meaning behind the seal. She argued that the timeframe since the adoption of the new flag was not relevant and compared the debate to other historical issues that changed over time through public action. She also expressed concern that the new flag did not reflect her view of Minnesota's identity. She criticized the process used to adopt it, stating she believed the redesign was rushed and politically driven. She encouraged the Council to preserve the former flag as a reflection of Minnesota's history and traditions.

Kelly, a Ramsey resident, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the three agenda items that had been removed from consideration. She explained that while she supports government accountability, she did not believe the City should spend staff time or taxpayer resources pursuing actions related to Governor Tim Walz or other state-level political matters. She indicated that the Council's focus should remain on local responsibilities such as infrastructure, public safety, and City services that directly affect Ramsey residents. Regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion, she noted that the redesign process included public submissions and formal approval through the legislative process. She explained that residents do not need to personally like the new design for it to remain the official state flag. She suggested that if Ramsey wanted a symbol unique to the community, the City could consider creating its own local flag instead of revisiting the state flag issue. She also expressed concern that continued disputes with the State over the flag could negatively affect Ramsey's relationship with the state government and future funding opportunities.

Mr. Todd Embury, 9041 159th Lane NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. He argued that the redesign process for the new flag was extensive and included years of public engagement, more than 20,000 public comments, and over 2,000 submitted flag designs before the final design was selected. He stated that claims that the process was rushed were inaccurate and encouraged the Council to review the facts independently.

Mr. Embury also discussed the importance of recognizable branding and symbolism, drawing comparisons to well-known corporate logos and to the state flags of Texas, California, and Alaska. He explained that many older state flags share similar dark blue backgrounds with detailed seals, making them difficult to distinguish from one another. He indicated that the new Minnesota flag was designed to be more recognizable and symbolic of the State's identity, including references to Minnesota's shape and the star featured in the State Capitol rotunda. He concluded by suggesting that creating a unique Ramsey flag could be a better use of the Council's time.

Mr. Ron Trail, 6025 Green Valley Road NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. He expressed frustration with the process for adopting the new flag and argued that Minnesota residents should have been allowed to vote directly on the design change. He also objected to reports that penalties could be imposed on cities that refuse to display the new state flag, stating that residents should determine what occurs within the City.

Mr. Trail further argued that removing imagery from the former flag, including Native American representation and historic symbols tied to Minnesota's development, erased important parts of the State's heritage and history. He maintained that the former flag had represented Minnesota for many years and urged the Council to support displaying the historic design rather than the current flag.

Mr. Michael Swanson, 5368 140th Court NW, Ramsey, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. He argued that the former state seal and flag symbolized the removal of Native Americans from Minnesota following the Dakota War of 1862 and expressed support for the State's decision to adopt a new flag design. He also explained that while living outside Minnesota for several years, he found that many people could not identify the former state flag because it resembled numerous other state flags with dark blue backgrounds and detailed seals. He indicated the new Minnesota flag has a more recognizable and distinctive design and stated he was proud of the State for adopting it. He also thanked the Council for removing the related agenda items from consideration that evening.

Mr. John Hornby, 15387 Geranium Street NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. He stated that he served 35 years in the military and expressed frustration that Minnesota residents were not allowed to vote directly on the new state flag. He argued that the decision should not have been made by a small commission and believed the matter should have appeared on a statewide ballot. He also indicated that the former state flag better represented Minnesota and claimed that residents in other states had criticized the new design during his travels. He questioned why the issue continued to be debated and urged support for the former Minnesota flag.

Ms. Jacqueline Christensen, 16460 St. Francis Boulevard NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion. She began by referencing the City's mission and vision statements, which center on collaboration, responsible growth, and efficient government services. She explained that while history is important, discussions surrounding the former state flag should also acknowledge the painful history experienced by Indigenous communities in Minnesota, including forced removal from ancestral lands, the Dakota War of 1862, the mass execution in Mankato, internment near Fort Snelling, and long-term systemic inequities affecting Native Americans.

Ms. Christensen also referenced prior comments made during a 2021 Council discussion that compared mask requirements during the COVID-19 pandemic to the internment of Japanese Americans during World War II, arguing that historical context matters when discussing public symbols and representation. She questioned whether revisiting the flag

issue aligned with the City's stated goals of fiscal responsibility and effective local governance.

Paul Sitz, 6521 154th Lane NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council during citizen input. He used a satirical example involving a hypothetical resolution about eating cats to argue that the Council should avoid spending time on resolutions addressing partisan or nonlocal political matters. He suggested that pursuing such issues could be viewed as using nonpartisan local government positions to advance broader political causes rather than focusing on City-related responsibilities.

Mr. Eric Zaetsch, 6520 154th Lane NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the proposed resolutions and the role of local government. He questioned the purpose and follow-through of proposed investigations discussed by the Council. He argued that the primary responsibility of a City Council is to manage taxes, spending, and local services responsibly. He referenced prior comments from Mayor Heineman opposing resolutions on national political issues and questioned why similar resolutions were now being considered. He also expressed concern that the Council was becoming distracted by political debates surrounding Governor Tim Walz and the state flag, rather than focusing on City matters such as roads, fire services, and the potential impacts of new housing development on domestic well water supplies and the local aquifer.

Mr. Mark Heule, 7262 162nd Lane NW, Ramsey, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the state flag and proposed political resolutions. He explained that he had lived in Ramsey since 1992 and believed the City had generally avoided divisive political disputes until the recent discussions. He argued that the former Minnesota flag minimized Native American history and stated that he could understand why Indigenous residents would feel excluded by the old design. He also criticized the Council's consideration of broader political resolutions, indicating that those matters did not belong in City government and expressing concern about spending public funds on issues unrelated to local services and responsibilities.

Ms. Dee Dee Larson, 14990 Waco Street NW, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the state flag discussion and the relationship between state and local government. She argued that when the State imposes mandates on cities, local governments have a responsibility to respond and voice concerns. She compared the flag issue to unfunded mandates from the State and expressed appreciation that the Council had attempted to discuss the matter during the meeting.

Councilmember Buscher thanked State Senator Cal Bahr for attending the Ramsey City Council meeting and listening to residents' concerns. She explained that it is important for community members to feel heard and represented when bringing issues before the Council. She also indicated that while some matters may fall outside the City's authority, partnerships with state representatives, such as State Senator Bahr, can help address constituent concerns. She encouraged residents to speak with him afterward and added that Councilmembers would also be willing to continue conversations with residents.

Mayor Heineman asked whether any councilmembers wished to respond to questions raised during citizen input and indicated he planned to continue most discussions with residents individually following the meeting. He encouraged attendees to remain for the remainder of the meeting and explained that the Council had researched the issues originally on the agenda.

Mayor Heineman also responded to comments suggesting the Council should focus solely on City matters, explaining that the City regularly handles a significant workload while still addressing broader concerns raised by residents. He referenced approximately 470 cases the City had worked on during his time as Mayor and stated that the Council was capable of handling multiple responsibilities simultaneously. He reminded attendees that post-meeting conversations would need to occur individually to comply with open meeting law requirements and avoid improper Council deliberations outside public meetings.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

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

- 5.01: Receive Cash and Investments for Period Ending April 30, 2026
- 5.02: Receive March 2026 Financial Reports General Fund, EDA Fund, and Enterprise Fund
- 5.03: Note the following Boards, Commissions, and Meeting Minutes:
 - Planning Commission – March 26, 2026
 - Environmental Policy Board – No Meeting, March 16, 2026
 - Economic Development Authority – March 12, 2026
 - Park and Rec Commission – March 12, 2026
 - Public Works – February 17, 2026
- 5.04: Approve the following Meeting Minutes:
 - 1) City Council Work Session dated April 28, 2026
 - 2) City Council Regular Session dated April 28, 2026
- 5.05: Approve Business License Applications
- 5.06: Adopt Resolution #26-107 Approving Cash Disbursements Made and Authorizing Payment of Accounts Payable Invoicing During the Period of April 23, 2026, through May 6, 2026
- 5.07: Adopt Resolution #26-076 Approving the Site Plan and Development Agreement for Serenity at Rivers Edge (Project No. 26-101); Case of Rivers Edge Development LLC
- 5.08: Adopt Resolution #26-094 Proclaiming May as Building Safety Month
- 5.09: Adopt Resolution #26-101 Approving Plans and Authorizing Bids for 2026 Pavement Skim Patching, Maintenance Project #26-53
- 5.10: Adopt Resolution #26-103 Approving the Time Extensions for Preliminary Plat and Site Plan Review for “Haviland Fields.”
- 5.11: Adopt Resolution #26-104 Approving an Encroachment Agreement for a Sign at Rivenwick Village 4th Addition

- 5:12: Adopt Resolution #26-105 Approving Final Plans and Specifications and Authorizing Advertisement for Bids for Carol-Rose Acres & Sports Haven Street Reconstruction, Improvement Project #26-03
- 5:13: Adopt Resolution #26-106 Accepting Geotechnical Proposals for 2027 Pavement Management Program Projects
- 5:14: Adopt Resolution #26-112 Accepting Donation from Connexus Energy for Police eBikes
- 5:15: Adopt Resolution #26-113 Ordering Request for Proposal for 2026 Pavement Marking Improvements, Improvement Project #26-11

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

6. PUBLIC HEARING

6.01: PUBLIC HEARING: Consider A Request For Right-Of-Way And Easement Vacation Of A Portion Of Basalt Street; Adopt Resolution #26-097, Approving A Final Plat For “ACE Second Addition”, And; Introduce Ordinance #26-06, Approving a Zoning Map Amendment From I-1, Light Industrial To I-2, General Industrial, For 14021 Azurite St NW, 14021 Basalt St NW, And 14050 Basalt St NW; Case of ACE Solid Waste

Presentation

Community Development Director Hanson presented the case for the right-of-way vacation of Basalt Street and the replatting of ACE’s Properties.

Public Hearing

Citizen Input

Mr. Dave Wiggins, 2269 Wildwood Drive, Shakopee, and Special Projects and Government Affairs Manager for ACE Solid Waste, addressed the Ramsey City Council regarding the company’s request related to its Ramsey property. He explained that the proposal would allow the company to achieve greater consistency across its existing properties and zoning areas, many of which are already within the current fenced area. He indicated that some zoning distinctions are not readily visible on-site and that the requested changes would help support the company’s continued growth alongside the growth occurring within the City. He concluded by offering to answer any questions from the Council.

Councilmember Riley asked staff to confirm that all costs associated with the proposal involving ACE Solid Waste would be paid entirely by the applicant. He specifically questioned whether any expenses incurred by the City or utility providers for the project would be borne entirely by ACE rather than by taxpayers.

Community Development Director Hanson indicated that it was correct.

Motion by Councilmember Olson, seconded by Councilmember Specht, to close the public hearing.

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

Council Business

Motion by Councilmember Riley, seconded by Councilmember Olson, to adopt Resolution #26-096, Vacating Right-of-Way in Gateway North Industrial Park.

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

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Specht, to adopt Resolution #26-097. Approving a Final Plat for “ACE Second Addition”.

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

Motion by Councilmember Riley, seconded by Councilmember Stewart, to introduce Ordinance #26-06, Amending Section 106-120 “Official Zoning Map” of Chapter 106 of the City Code of Ramsey, Minnesota.

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. COUNCIL BUSINESS

7.01: Introduce Ordinance #26-10 Authorizing the City of Ramsey to Sell Parcel of Real Property

Community Development Director Hanson explained that Ordinance #26-10 would authorize the sale of a City-owned parcel to an adjacent landowner because the property lacks street access and is not buildable due to topography and existing stormwater infrastructure. She noted the ordinance would be published following introduction and staff recommended approval.

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Olson, to introduce Ordinance #26-10 Authorizing the City of Ramsey to Sell Parcel of Real Property.

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: Adopt Ordinance #26-07 Amending Street Names in the Plat of “Riverstone”

Community Development Director Hanson explained the ordinance would correct street naming inconsistencies within the Riverstone plat at the request of the Anoka County Surveyor’s Office. She noted the action would not change any residential addresses, and staff recommended adoption of the ordinance.

Motion by Councilmember Stewart, seconded by Councilmember Specht, to adopt Ordinance #26-07, Amending Street Names in the Plat of “Riverstone”.

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.

7.03: Adopt Ordinance #26-08 Amending a Street Name in the Plats of “Affinity at the COR” and “Ramsey Town Center Addition.”

Community Development Director Hanson explained the ordinance would simplify roadway naming along Ramsey Parkway by removing “West” from one segment at the request of the Anoka County Surveyor’s Office. She noted that the change would create more consistent street naming, and staff recommended adopting the ordinance.

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Olson, to adopt Ordinance #26-08 Amending a Street Name in the Plats of “Affinity at the COR” and “Ramsey Town Center Addition”.

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.

7.04: Adopt Resolution #26-102 Designating the Historic Minnesota State Flag as the Official Flag of the City of Ramsey to Ensure Local Control and Fiscal Responsibility

Removed from the agenda.

7.05: Adopt Resolution #26-108 Expressing Formal Disapproval and Censure of Governor Tim Walz

Removed from the agenda.

7.06: Adopt Resolution #26-111 Authorizing Staff to Explore City’s Ability to File Claim Against Governor Walz and Other State Leaders

Removed from the agenda.

8. MAYOR, COUNCIL, AND STAFF INPUT

City Administrator Hagen announced upcoming meetings and events.

Councilmember Specht announced the May 14–17 grand opening event for Campers Inn RV in Ramsey. He noted the event would include specials, food, and thousands of dollars in door prizes and encouraged residents to attend.

Councilmember Buscher explained that the three removed agenda items had been properly submitted in accordance with Council procedures. Still, she indicated that the topics would have benefited from a work session discussion before appearing on the regular agenda. She noted some information within the proposed resolutions was inaccurate, including references to local government aid funding that Ramsey does not receive, and questioned whether the proposed actions would have any direct impact on City residents.

Councilmember Buscher emphasized that accountability in government is important, but argued the City should focus on issues where it can create tangible local benefits. She suggested the City could instead focus on preventing waste, fraud, and abuse at the local level by overseeing contracts and grants. She raised concerns about wage-theft allegations tied to a development project in the City. She also indicated she had contacted Anoka County Attorney Brad Johnson before the meeting, who advised that cities primarily focus on services such as streets, utilities, public safety, parks, and related operations, and cautioned that pursuing litigation against a governor could create the appearance that the City serves only certain residents rather than the entire community. She concluded by encouraging continued respectful conversations on the state flag issue while emphasizing the importance of unity and focusing on positive community matters, including recognition of the retiring fire chief and National Police Week.

Mayor Heineman responded at length to public comments regarding the removed agenda items and rejected suggestions that the Ramsey City Council was neglecting City responsibilities by discussing broader political or state-related issues. He explained that during the past 16 months the Council had acted on approximately 470 items, averaging roughly one issue per day, including water treatment and manganese migration, Highway 10 improvements, the Ramsey Gateway project, splash pad planning, the 2025–2029 strategic plan, tobacco and nicotine code modernization, pavement management, commercial development proposals, zoning adjustments, Mississippi River bridge lobbying efforts, mixed-use development projects, and annual budgeting matters. He argued that the City consistently handles local priorities and that residents could review City records and meeting minutes to verify the Council’s workload and accomplishments.

Mayor Heineman also pushed back against criticism that the Council was detracting from recognition of City employees or public safety staff, noting that the Council regularly highlights accomplishments involving City departments, including firefighters, police officers, and other employees. He referenced comments submitted by former Councilmember Matt Westerhoff, indicating that while he strongly disagreed with the content and viewed many of the claims as misleading or unsupported, he still believed residents should be able to review the comments because he supports free speech principles.

Regarding the Minnesota state flag discussion, Mayor Heineman reviewed the history of previous state flag adoptions and redesigns, including legislative actions in 1893, 1957, and 1983, as well as the 2024 redesign process. He acknowledged that the Legislature legally created the commission responsible for selecting the current flag, but argued the process concentrated too much authority in a small appointed committee. He stated that only seven commission members were ultimately needed to approve the design and argued that the process did not adequately represent Greater Minnesota residents. He further criticized discussions about imposing penalties on cities that choose not to display the current flag, especially while the State faces budget and fraud concerns.

Mayor Heineman also addressed arguments that Ramsey lacked legal authority to pursue resolutions or legal actions involving state government matters. He stated that the Council consulted with the City attorney and argued that municipalities have First Amendment protections allowing them to adopt resolutions or proclamations concerning state or federal

policy issues. He cited Minnesota statutes related to municipal authority and argued that state financial decisions directly affect cities through mandates, infrastructure funding, bonding costs, and local tax pressures. He also cited examples from cities in Oregon, California, New Mexico, and New Hampshire that adopted resolutions or censures targeting state or federal officials or policies.

A significant portion of Mayor Heineman's remarks focused on the Feeding Our Future fraud investigation and state fiscal management. He argued that the Walz administration failed to respond adequately to warnings about the fraud scheme and cited reports from investigators and the Office of the Legislative Auditor that discussed oversight failures. He connected those concerns to broader state financial issues, including the transition from a large state surplus to projected deficits, allegations of billions of dollars in fraud, proposed tax increases, and what he described as unfunded state mandates affecting local governments. He maintained that local governments have a responsibility to speak out when state decisions create financial burdens for cities and residents.

Mayor Heineman concluded by emphasizing that he intended to continue pursuing the issues discussed during the meeting. He stated that residents elected him to represent his principles and positions on accountability and government oversight. He told attendees that if residents disagreed with his approach, they could vote him out of office. Still, he indicated he would not stop raising concerns about fraud, fiscal accountability, and state actions impacting local governments.

8.1 Legislative Update

Senator Cal Bahr addressed the Ramsey City Council and discussed several state legislative and funding topics affecting local governments. He explained that none of the cities within Senate District 31, including Ramsey, receives Local Government Aid funding and noted that much of that funding is directed toward larger metro-area cities such as Minneapolis and Duluth. He clarified that local communities instead rely more heavily on county aid and other funding sources. He also discussed pending election-related legislation that could allow cities to shorten the early voting period from 46 days to 18 days if approved by local governments. He explained the proposal was intended to reduce administrative burdens associated with lengthy early voting periods and commented on how long voting windows can affect political campaigns and late-election developments.

Senator Bahr further discussed the recently approved Office of Inspector General legislation, explaining that the office would provide additional oversight and accountability for state agencies and government operations. He noted that the process to establish the office would likely take more than a year because of the appointment, staffing, and organizational requirements that must be met before investigations can formally begin. He also referenced work conducted by the Office of the Legislative Auditor, describing the agency's audits and investigations into state departments and alleged documentation fabrication within certain agencies. He encouraged residents interested in government accountability to review those public audit reports.

Senator Bahr also provided an update on the proposed Mississippi River bridge connection project involving Ramsey and Dayton, noting that funding and design work remained under consideration in the state bonding bill negotiations. He described the current legislative session as unusually bipartisan because of the tied Minnesota House, explaining that major legislation now requires support from both parties to pass.

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 9:05 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

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