

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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, May 26, 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

Also Present: City Administrator Brian Hagen
Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson
Planning Manager Todd Larson
City Attorney Amanda Johnson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Heineman called the City Council Work Session to order at 5:31 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: 2025 Comprehensive Plan Update

Planning Manager Larson introduced the City's required 2050 Comprehensive Plan update process, explaining that the document serves as Ramsey's long-range policy guide for land use, transportation, utilities, infrastructure, housing, and redevelopment planning over the next 20 years. He reviewed the Metropolitan Council's role in coordinating the seven-county metro area planning process and explained that Ramsey is classified as a "Suburban Edge" community.

Council discussion focused heavily on how population growth projections, employment forecasts, transportation analysis zones, sewer capacity planning, and affordable housing allocations will influence the City's future land use decisions.

Planning Manager Larson noted that while the existing 2040 Comprehensive Plan remains strong overall, updates are necessary to incorporate new Metropolitan Council system statement requirements and revised growth projections. He also outlined a tentative timeline that includes consultant assistance, public hearings, intergovernmental review, and a targeted early submission date in October 2027 to qualify for additional Metropolitan Council grant funding.

Council discussion centered primarily on how involved the Council should be throughout the process, particularly in land-use and zoning decisions that could affect Ramsey's rural character and future development patterns. There was emphasis on the importance of not treating the update as a mere procedural exercise, but rather carefully evaluating the long-term impacts of future land-use decisions to avoid comprehensive plan amendments.

Several Councilmembers supported relying heavily on the Planning Commission for technical review while also scheduling joint Council-Planning Commission work sessions at key decision points.

Councilmembers also discussed public engagement strategies, including open houses, farmers market outreach, and broader community input opportunities, depending on the scale of proposed changes. Some members stressed the need to push back against the Metropolitan Council's density expectations where appropriate to preserve Ramsey's community character and better reflect residents' preferences.

2.02: Wage Theft Enforcement

Councilmember Buscher introduced a presentation regarding wage theft enforcement and labor exploitation concerns in the construction industry.

Mr. Andy Wilkin, Government Affairs Representative for Sheet Metal Workers Local 10, Mr. Matt Urban, Sprinkler Fitters and Fire Protection Local 417, Mr. Paul Martin, Sheet Metal Workers, Mr. Woodrow Piner, Carpenters Union, Mr. Tim Watkins, Education and Policy Coordinator with the Fair Contracting Foundation of Minnesota, and Mr. Dylan Ranchoff, Boilermakers Local 647, spoke about recent statewide wage theft investigations, labor trafficking concerns, payroll fraud, worker misclassification, and enforcement challenges tied to publicly funded development projects.

The representatives referenced a recent Minnesota Department of Labor and Industry settlement involving more than \$1.28 million in wage theft violations connected to labor brokerage firms. They described broader industry concerns involving contractors paying workers off the books, avoiding taxes and benefits, and exploiting undocumented or vulnerable workers.

Labor representatives indicated these practices harm workers, undercut responsible contractors, reduce tax revenue, and expose municipalities to reputational and financial risks when taxpayer-supported projects indirectly fund exploitative practices.

Additional testimony included several examples of alleged labor exploitation, wage theft, worker intimidation, workers' compensation fraud, labor trafficking, and unsafe construction practices occurring on projects throughout the Twin Cities metro area.

The representatives discussed how municipalities such as Brooklyn Park adopted claw back provisions tied to TIF agreements and prevailing wage policies to discourage unethical subcontracting practices.

Labor representatives also outlined several policy tools available to municipalities, including apprenticeship utilization requirements, responsible bidder policies, prevailing wage requirements, project labor agreements, and community benefit agreements.

Councilmembers asked questions about prevailing wage calculations, the applicability of these policies to union and non-union contractors, current City enforcement practices, and the potential administrative costs of increased oversight.

The Council discussion ultimately reflected support for continuing the conversation and exploring additional tools to combat unethical labor practices while also ensuring ethical non-union contractors are not unfairly excluded from City projects.

The Council generally supported directing staff to research additional policy options and bring information back for future discussion.

2.03: Project Labor Agreement Policy

Discussion of project labor agreements took place alongside the wage theft enforcement presentation. It focused on how the City could incorporate additional labor standards and contractor accountability measures into future public projects and development agreements.

Labor representatives explained that project labor agreements are pre-hire agreements that establish standards related to labor sourcing, training, wages, benefits, apprenticeship participation, and, in some cases, local hiring requirements.

The representatives emphasized that such agreements can apply to both union and non-union contractors. They argued that these policies help ensure that taxpayer-supported projects are completed by responsible contractors who operate lawfully and ethically.

The representatives also noted that research on prevailing wage and project labor agreement policies generally shows little to no overall increase in project costs compared with similar projects without such requirements.

Councilmembers discussed how Ramsey currently relies primarily on State responsible contractor laws and prevailing wage compliance requirements for State or federally funded projects, but does not actively audit payroll records or enforce additional contractor accountability standards for locally funded projects. The conversation also focused on the possibility of adding contractor disclosure requirements, claw back provisions tied to labor violations, and best-value bidding criteria into future RFPs and development agreements.

Several councilmembers expressed support for exploring policies to prevent City funds from supporting contractors connected to wage theft or labor trafficking, while maintaining a fair process for ethical non-union contractors to compete for City work.

The Council generally agreed to continue researching potential labor accountability measures and asked staff to return with additional information regarding available policy tools and implementation options.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

4.01: Update on Outside Committees

The Council will review at the next Work Session.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:47 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

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