

Kathy Schmitz

From: Kathy Schmitz
Sent: Wednesday, October 7, 2026 3:47 PM
To: Kathy Schmitz
Subject: FW: October 13 Public Hearing — 600-Foot Cul-de-Sac Standard | Evidence Packet & Public Record Request
Attachments: Oct13_Ramsey_Consolidated_Council_Packet_v19.pdf

From: paul olson <paulo0684@gmail.com>
Sent: Tuesday, October 6, 2026 3:45 PM
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Cc: Katie Schmidt <Kschmidt@cityoframseymn.gov>
Subject: October 13 Public Hearing — 600-Foot Cul-de-Sac Standard | Evidence Packet & Public Record Request

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Mayor Heineman and Council Members,

Ahead of the October 13 public hearing regarding Ramsey's 600-foot cul-de-sac standard, I am attaching a supporting evidence packet for your review.

I respectfully request that this email and the complete attached evidence packet be formally submitted into the public record for the October 13 public hearing and included with the materials considered by the City Council. Please confirm by reply that both this email and the complete evidence packet have been received and will be entered into the public record for the hearing.

After reviewing Ramsey's own records, Minnesota guidance, engineering and planning standards, neighboring communities, public-safety information and infrastructure considerations, I keep coming back to one simple question:

What changed?

As recently as 2025, Ramsey required a formal variance for an approximately 640-foot cul-de-sac—even though Fire did not object to the additional 40 feet. Fire's acceptance supported an exception; it did not make the underlying standard unnecessary.

There is another process question in the attached record that I believe deserves Council's attention. Earlier Rum River Retreat materials described the proposed road as both a **"Future Thru Street"** and as needing a **cul-de-sac length variance because it exceeded 600 feet**. In the later preserved chronology, the variance requirement was removed through an interpretation of how the ordinance applied—not through a documented shortening of the road or secured western outlet.

The road didn't change. The interpretation did.

I am not suggesting misconduct or asking Council to determine the legal interpretation based on my packet. I am asking Council to consider what this example says about the importance of **clear standards, predictable interpretation and a transparent exception process**—particularly when the proposed alternative itself relies substantially on professional judgment and special approval.

This distinction becomes even more important because Minnesota State Fire Code establishes **minimum fire-access requirements**. Meeting those minimum requirements answers an important question: *Can the proposed access comply with Fire Code?*

It does not, by itself, answer the broader municipal question: *What street design should Ramsey establish as its normal standard?*

The attached evidence identifies considerations beyond minimum Fire Code compliance: reliable Police and EMS access, route redundancy, connectivity, the number of homes dependent upon a single route, actual apparatus operations, utility looping, snow and maintenance operations, infrastructure efficiency, and what happens when the sole access becomes unavailable.

Existing longer cul-de-sacs should also be **compared, not simply counted**. Their circumstances may include different approval eras, variances, hydrants, looped utilities, future connections or other conditions that make them materially different from what a citywide repeal could allow going forward.

I am not suggesting that 600 feet is a scientifically perfect number or that Ramsey should never approve a longer street. Ramsey demonstrated in 2025 that the existing system can accommodate an appropriate exception.

If that process is too rigid, perhaps **the variance process is what should be sharpened**—with clearer criteria defining when additional length is appropriate and what safeguards should accompany it.

That would preserve flexibility while retaining an objective baseline.

Before replacing that baseline with substantially greater case-by-case discretion, I believe Council deserves clear answers to two questions:

What changed that makes a standard Ramsey enforced as recently as 2025 unnecessary today?

And:

What problem does eliminating the objective standard solve that a clearer, better-defined variance process cannot solve—and what objective safeguard replaces it?

The supporting sources are linked throughout the attached packet so the underlying material can be reviewed independently.

Thank you for your time and consideration,

Paul Olson