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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a regular meeting on Tuesday, September 22, 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
Finance Director Diana Lund
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 Peters, seconded by Councilmember Stewart, 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

3.01 Proclamation Declaring October 2026 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month

Mayor Heineman read a proclamation declaring October 2026 as Domestic Violence Awareness Month in the City of Ramsey. He recognized domestic violence as a critical public health and welfare concern and emphasized the importance of community partnerships in preventing abuse and supporting survivors.

Ms. Katie Kelly of Alexandra House thanked Mayor Heineman and Council for recognizing Domestic Violence Awareness Month and for the City's continued support. She noted that the City would illuminate public spaces in purple and host the Silent Witness exhibit at City Hall from October 7 through October 14. She shared information regarding the prevalence of intimate partner violence. She reported that more than 2,500 incidents involving domestic partners were reported to Anoka County law enforcement agencies during the previous year. She encouraged residents to participate in Domestic Violence Awareness Month by displaying yard signs or purple lights, wearing purple on October 22, attending Hope Fest, and having conversations about domestic and sexual violence. She emphasized that community participation was essential to raising awareness, supporting survivors, and preventing violence.

4. CITIZEN INPUT

Mr. Derek Lind identified himself as a 28-year Ramsey resident and a member of the Anoka County Election Integrity Team. He discussed a recent Minnesota Supreme Court decision concerning the authority of municipalities to use paper voter rosters rather than electronic poll pads. He explained that his organization had previously disagreed with Anoka County's interpretation of state law regarding municipal authority to discontinue poll pads and indicated the court decision supported the position that municipalities had authority over that decision. He reported that some area communities were considering or implementing paper voter rosters and requested an opportunity to discuss the issue with Council at a future work session.

Mr. Lind also expressed concerns regarding voter privacy and the electronic storage of voter names and addresses.

A Councilmember questioned whether the same voter information used to produce paper rosters was maintained electronically within the statewide voter registration system.

Mr. Lind acknowledged that the information originated from the State system but maintained that his concern involved information being accessible electronically at polling locations.

Council indicated interest in discussing the matter further at a work session.

Mr. Lance Klatt, Executive Director of the Minnesota Service Station and Convenience Store Association, explained that his organization represents approximately 300 independent retailers throughout Minnesota. He discussed retailer efforts regarding tobacco and THC age-verification compliance and reported that Ramsey retailers had a 94.1% compliance rate in federal checks conducted between January 2024 and September 22, 2026.

Mr. Klatt described TrueAge, an identification-verification system that scans driver's licenses and helps retailers detect fraudulent identification. He explained that the technology could integrate with point-of-sale systems and was available at no cost to convenience stores and fueling locations, with a relatively low cost for some other retailers. He expressed his organization's willingness to

work with Police Chief Bluml and the City to improve compliance and prevent sales to underage customers.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Riley, seconded by Councilmember Stewart, to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda:

- 5.01: Approve the Following Meeting Minutes:
 - 1) City Council Work Session dated September 8, 2026
 - 2) City Council Regular Session dated September 8, 2026
- 5.02: Approve Business License Applications
- 5.03: Affirming Tobacco License Violations and Administrative Penalty
- 5.04: Adopt Resolution #26-224 Approving Cash Disbursements Made and Authorizing Payment of Accounts Payable Invoicing Received During the Period of September 3, 2026, through September 16, 2026
- 5.05: Adopt Resolution #26-205 Appointing Election Judges for the General Election on November 3, 2026
- 5.06: Adopt Resolution #26-209 Approving a Development Agreement for LH Road LLC (Wildlife Research)
- 5.07: Adopt Resolution #26-212 Authorizing Final Payment to North Valley, Inc. for Maintenance Project #26-53, 2026 Skim Patching
- 5.08: Adopt Resolution #26-213 Authorizing an Expanded Speed Study Request for Armstrong Boulevard/CSAH 83 Between Highway 10 and Alpine Drive NW
- 5.09: Adopt Resolution #26-218 Approving Partial Payment to North Valley, Inc. for Improvement Project #26-08, 2026 Neighborhood Pavement Overlay Improvements
- 5.10: Adopt Resolution #26-219 Approving Partial Payment to North Valley, Inc. for Improvement Project #26-03, Carol-Rose Acres & Sports Haven Street Reconstruction
- 5.11: Adopt Resolution #26-220 Approving Partial Payment to North Valley, Inc. for Improvement Project #26-04, Countryside Estates Street Reconstruction.
- 5.12: Adopt Resolution #26-221 Approving Partial Payment to North Valley, Inc. for Improvement Project #26-05, Flintwood Hills 2nd and 3rd Street Reconstructions
- 5.13: Adopt Resolution #26-222 Approving Partial Payment to North Valley, Inc. for Improvement Project #26-07, Section 01 Unplatted Street Reconstruction
- 5.14: Adopt Resolution #26-223 Approving a Union Contract for the LELS Crime Data Analyst Union
- 5.15: Adopt Resolution #26-225 Approving Partial Payment No. 7 to H+U Construction Improvement Project #25-58; The Waterfront Waterplay Park Improvement

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

6. PUBLIC HEARING

6.01: PUBLIC HEARING: Adopt Resolution #26-214 Adopting Assessments for Past-Due Charges on Municipal Utility Bills and Current Services Rendered

Presentation

The staff report was shared with Council.

Public Hearing

Ms. Kareen Hodgman, 5540 144th Avenue NW, explained that she and her family had lived at the property since 2018 and were disputing an unusually high water bill received in January 2026. She reported that the bill reflected approximately 260,000 gallons of water usage during a winter billing period and was approximately \$1,400. She immediately contacted the City because she could not identify any reason for that level of water consumption. She then hired a plumber, who found no leak or evidence of water damage to explain the reported usage. She noted that the City's records indicated the water consumption returned to normal without any action being taken to correct a leak. She had continued working with staff but remained unable to determine where the reported water had gone.

Mr. Dustin Waigiou joined Ms. Hodgman in discussing the disputed bill and the household's efforts to determine the source of the unusual water consumption. They questioned how approximately 260,000 gallons of water could have passed through the residence without producing visible evidence of a leak or substantial property damage.

Staff explained that the City's meter records water after it enters the residence and discussed how the City's tiered billing structure applies to unusually high usage. Staff had offered an adjustment based upon the City's existing policy, including reducing the charge to the applicable maximum base amount and waiving interest if the account was resolved before certification.

Ms. Hodgman responded that the proposed reduction would only reduce the approximately \$1,500 charge by roughly \$200 and did not address the underlying concern. She emphasized that the family was not simply requesting relief from a large bill; they wanted an explanation for the extraordinary reported consumption. She reiterated that a plumber had found no evidence of a leak and that no structural water damage existed in the home. She requested that the disputed amount not be certified to the property's taxes while the matter remained unresolved.

Mayor Heineman acknowledged the unusual circumstances and expressed confidence that staff had followed the City's procedures while also recognizing that the amount and unexplained consumption warranted additional review. He indicated he was willing to continue discussing the matter with staff and the residents after the meeting.

Citizen Input

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Stewart, to close the public hearing.

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

Council Business

Councilmember Buscher asked how Council could approve the remaining assessments while temporarily excluding the Hodgman property.

City Attorney Johnson explained that Council could approve the certification list minus the identified property. Doing so would not forgive or eliminate the outstanding charge; Council would eventually need to provide additional direction on how to resolve the account.

Council discussed whether an appliance, plumbing fixture, meter issue, or another condition could explain the extraordinary usage.

Staff explained that the water meter was located inside the residence and measured water flowing through the meter.

Council acknowledged the difficulty of reconciling the meter reading with the lack of physical evidence associated with such a substantial amount of water.

Councilmember Specht initially proposed approving Resolution #26-214 while writing off the disputed bill for the Hodgman property. The motion failed for lack of a second.

Councilmember Olson suggested another potential resolution: charge the household an amount equivalent to its second-highest water bill for the year rather than eliminating the charge.

Council noted that the necessary amount was not immediately available.

Motion by Councilmember Buscher, seconded by Councilmember Olson, to adopt Resolution #26-214 adopting assessments for past-due municipal utility bills and current services rendered, excluding the property at 5540 144th Avenue NW from the certification list pending further review and directing staff to return to Council with follow-up within one month.

Mayor Heineman reiterated that excluding the property would allow additional time to review the circumstances without questioning the work City staff had already completed. He supported further discussion because of the unusual size and unexplained nature of the reported consumption.

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

7. COUNCIL BUSINESS

7.01: Adopt Resolution 26-215 Adopting Proposed 2027 Payable Tax Levies (General, Pavement Management, EDA and Debt Service) & Schedule Public Hearings for December

8, 2026; Adopt Resolution #26-216 Adopting Proposed 2027 General Fund Budget and Resolution #26-217 Adopting Proposed 2027 EDA Budget

The staff report was shared with Council.

Mayor Heineman clarified that the estimated \$70 to \$75 impact on a median-valued home represented an annual, not monthly, increase. He also explained that the apparent increase in the pavement-management levy should be considered in the context of the City's previous methods of financing road improvements through special assessments and franchise-fee revenues. He noted that Ramsey continued to grow, requiring infrastructure and public-safety investments before receiving all revenues associated with new residents. However, he indicated that he had hoped to see a preliminary levy increase below 6.13% and would not support the proposed amount.

Councilmember Riley noted that comparisons of municipal tax rates did not necessarily reflect other revenue sources available to individual cities, including Local Government Aid, franchise fees, municipal utilities, or municipal liquor operations.

Councilmember Buscher observed that comparisons limited to Anoka County municipalities did not necessarily account for differences in population or growth rates. She noted that comparisons with similarly sized communities provided additional context regarding Ramsey's tax position.

Councilmember Specht thanked staff for the extensive work on the budget but said he would not support the proposal because he continued to have concerns about certain staffing positions and wanted a lower levy increase.

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Olson, to adopt Resolution 26-215 Adopting Proposed 2027 Payable Tax Levies (General, Pavement Management, EDA and Debt Service) and Schedule Public Hearings for December 8, 2026

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

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Riley, to adopt Resolution #26-216 Adopting Proposed 2027 General Fund Budget

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

Motion by Councilmember Peters, seconded by Councilmember Specht, to adopt Resolution #26-217, Adopting Proposed 2027 EDA Budget

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

7.02: Lower-Potency Hemp Edible Retail Compliance Violation and Possible Suspension

The staff report was shared with Council.

Ms. Haley Capital, representing Ramsey Tobacco Outlet, accepted responsibility for the failed compliance check and apologized. She explained that the employee had successfully checked another young customer's identification shortly before the compliance check but mistakenly believed he recognized the compliance checker from a previous visit and assumed the individual was of legal age. She acknowledged that the assumption did not excuse the violation.

Ms. Capital reported that the business had retrained the employee and management and planned to retrain employees at its other locations. The business had also implemented a policy requiring identification to be checked for every transaction regardless of the customer's apparent age or familiarity to employees. In addition, the register system had been updated to allow identification to be electronically scanned. She requested that Council not impose a lengthy suspension and assured Council that the business was committed to compliance and preventing minors from obtaining THC or tobacco products.

Councilmember Buscher asked Chief Bluml whether the City could revise its ordinance to establish consequences for lower-potency hemp violations similar to those for tobacco violations.

Chief Bluml indicated that additional research would be necessary. He supported the business's use of identification-scanning technology. Still, he noted that approximately 30 Ramsey businesses held one or more licenses involving cannabis, alcohol, or tobacco and that only an estimated 40% currently used point-of-sale age-verification technology.

Councilmember Riley asked about information in the staff report indicating that the business could face additional penalties if the product involved in the sale had been improperly stored or was not authorized for sale.

Chief Bluml explained that OCM was reviewing the matter and could independently investigate potential additional violations.

City Attorney Johnson added that OCM had requested additional information, including the police report and a photograph of the product, and had indicated there could potentially be additional issues under state regulations.

Council discussed whether Ramsey could require point-of-sale identification scanners for THC retailers.

City Attorney Johnson cautioned that the State exercises substantial regulatory authority over cannabis and lower-potency hemp products, and additional research would be necessary to determine whether the City possessed authority to impose such a requirement.

Councilmember Stewart questioned whether not suspending would be consistent with the City's treatment of underage tobacco and alcohol sales.

Chief Bluml clarified that the consequences were structured differently. Under the applicable rules, a first tobacco violation cannot result in a suspension but carries a \$300 fine. In the current lower-potency hemp case, the City Code did not establish an administrative fine, but Council could impose a registration suspension of zero to 30 days. He emphasized that the employee had already received a criminal citation and that OCM maintained separate state enforcement authority.

Mr. Alfred Jackson, 16765 New York Street NW, commended the business representative for appearing before Council and accepting responsibility. However, he encouraged Council to establish meaningful consequences for underage sales. He said the City had little precedent for lower-potency hemp violations, so that this case could set expectations for future enforcement.

Motion by Councilmember Buscher, seconded by Councilmember Peters, to determine that a lower-potency hemp age-verification compliance violation occurred on September 8, 2026.

Councilmember Specht supported suspending the registration, suggesting three to seven days to reflect the seriousness of the violation while recognizing that a 30-day suspension might be excessive.

Councilmember Buscher thanked the business representative for accepting responsibility and implementing corrective measures. She supported reviewing the City's ordinance to consider annual training, identification-verification technology, fines, and consistent suspension guidelines for future violations. She emphasized that imposing no City suspension would not eliminate other consequences because the employee had received a citation and OCM was independently reviewing the matter.

Councilmember Stewart disagreed with not suspending and said doing so would not adequately reflect the seriousness of an underage sale.

Discussion continued on the distinction between punishing the individual employee, the City's regulatory authority over the business, and OCM's state-level enforcement.

Council discussed whether additional local regulations were necessary or whether existing state and federal enforcement mechanisms were sufficient. One Councilmember supported a three-day suspension as a compromise that would recognize the violation without imposing the maximum penalty.

Councilmember Buscher agreed to a friendly amendment changing her motion from no suspension to a three-day suspension.

Councilmember Specht indicated that although he would personally have supported a somewhat longer suspension, he considered three days a reasonable compromise that demonstrated the City's expectation of compliance and established consequences for the violation.

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

8. MAYOR, COUNCIL AND STAFF INPUT

City Administrator Hagen announced upcoming meetings and events.

Councilmember Specht noted that early voting had begun and encouraged residents to participate in the election.

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 8:24 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Sue Osbeck
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.