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

The Ramsey City Council conducted a City Council Work Session on Tuesday, October 27, 2026, at the Ramsey Municipal Center, 7550 Sunwood Drive NW, Ramsey, Minnesota.

Members Present:	Mayor Ryan Heineman Councilmember Eric Peters Councilmember Chris Riley Councilmember Dan Specht Councilmember Shanna Stewart
Members Absent:	Councilmember Kirsten Buscher Councilmember Michael Olson
Also Present:	City Administrator Brian Hagen City Clerk Katie Schmidt Public Works Director Bruce Westby Finance Director Diana Lund Community Development Director Stephanie Hanson Administrative Services Director Colleen Lasher Planning Manager Todd Larson Economic Development Manager Sean Sullivan City Attorney Amanda Johnson

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Heineman called the City Council Work Session to order at 6:00 p.m.

2. TOPICS FOR DISCUSSION

2.01: Update on Charter Commission Annual Recruitment

City Clerk Schmidt provided an update on the Charter Commission's annual recruitment process. One Commission seat, currently held by Laura Moore, will expire on December 31, 2026. Ms. Moore is not seeking reappointment. Staff will conduct the annual recruitment process in accordance with City policy. Staff will forward new applications, along with applications received within the preceding 14 months, to the Chief Judge of the Tenth Judicial District for consideration. The application period will close December 1, 2026.

The Council had no questions or concerns.

2.02: Review Proposed 2027 Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges

City Clerk Schmidt reviewed the proposed 2027 Schedule of Rates, Fees, and Charges, highlighting adjustments intended to reflect increased operating costs, updated service expenses, and revised contractual rates. Proposed changes included adjustments to building permit and occupancy fees, facility use charges, park reservations, public safety services, right-of-way permits, and utility rates. Electrical permit fees would remain unchanged. The quarterly recycling rate would increase from $11.94 to $12.30; sewer rates would increase by 4%; water rates by 5%; and streetlight and stormwater fees by 10%. Additional changes included new fire standby and fire watch fees, credit card processing fees for utility payments through Opus 21, and revised park reservation fees, including rates for the waterfront pavilions.

Councilmember Riley asked whether basement finishing projects still require permits because no separate fee was listed.

Staff clarified that basement-finishing permits remain required, and the city collects the applicable charges through the standard permit review process.

Councilmember Riley also questioned the proposed 10% increase in streetlight-related fees. Finance Director Lund explained that the fee had not increased since 2010, despite rising electricity costs and additional lighting infrastructure. The proposed increase would help maintain adequate fund balances and support future replacement costs.

Finance Director Lund noted that recently installed streetlighting infrastructure cost approximately $500,000 and that the projected year-end fund balance was approximately $565,000.

Councilmember Stewart questioned the increase in the minimum certificate of occupancy fee from approximately $150 to $500.

Community Development Manager Hanson explained that the previous fee did not adequately recover inspection and administrative costs. Temporary certificates of occupancy often require additional inspections, documentation, and special conditions, which require additional staff time.

Councilmember Peters asked about removing vacuum breaker permit fees.

Community Development Manager Hanson indicated that she would provide additional information on how those permits or associated charges would be addressed.

The Council also discussed the proposed tree restitution and restoration fee of $125 per diameter inch for trees removed beyond the allowable threshold.

Staff explained that developers may be required to compensate the City when tree removal exceeds ordinance allowances. The fee is intended to help offset replacement planting costs, which have exceeded the amounts previously collected. Staff clarified that tree measurements are based on diameter at breast height (DBH), approximately four feet above ground level, and that applicable thresholds vary by tree species.

No additional concerns were raised.

2.03: Review of 2027-2036 Capital Improvement Plan (CIP)

Finance Director Lund reviewed the proposed 2027–2036 Capital Improvement Plan, explaining that the document identifies anticipated capital projects, estimated expenditures, funding sources, and projected fund balances over the ten-year planning period. She emphasized that inclusion in the CIP does not authorize a project or expenditure. Individual projects must receive separate Council approval. The proposed 2027 expenditures align with the preliminary 2027 budget.

Finance Director Lund highlighted the fund balance projections included in the plan, noting that the Pavement Management Fund could be depleted around 2029 if all identified projects proceed as currently scheduled. The Parks Supplemental Plan was presented separately because several identified park projects remain unfunded. She clarified that the previously removed community center project was not included in the CIP, although the funding discussion still referenced a community center as an example. Staff agreed to remove the outdated reference.

Councilmember Peters questioned a $221,000 funding entry listed as "To Be Determined" for 2033.

Finance Director Lund explained that the amount relates to the Old Town Hall project, for which no funding source has been established. Potential grant funding remains under consideration.

Councilmembers also questioned why certain project categories showed no expenditures in later years and why projected capital spending declined from approximately $17.5 million in 2027 to $6.1 million in 2036.

Finance Director Lund explained that later-year projections are less developed because future equipment replacement, infrastructure needs, and project costs become more difficult to anticipate over a ten-year period. Additional projects and expenditures will likely be identified as those years approach.

The Council agreed to proceed with the proposed CIP review process. Staff anticipated requesting a public hearing in November and presenting the plan for adoption at the December 8, 2026, City Council meeting.

2.04: Discussion Regarding a Reorganization in Public Works

City Administrator Hagen presented a proposed reorganization of the Public Works Department in anticipation of Parks and Assistant Public Works Director Mark Riverblood's retirement, effective March 1, 2027.

City Administrator Hagen explained that the proposed changes would redistribute responsibilities, preserve institutional knowledge, address expanded utility operations, and improve management of parks, recreation, and environmental services.

The proposal included four components:

1. Reclassifying Recreation Coordinator Abby Proulx to Parks and Recreation Manager, with additional responsibilities for long-term parks planning, capital improvement projects, trails, and recreation programming.
2. Filling the Recreation Coordinator position vacated by Ms. Proulx.
3. Reclassifying Utility Supervisor John Nelson to a superintendent position, recognizing his expanded responsibilities associated with the water treatment facility and his ability to serve in a secondary leadership capacity within Public Works.
4. Reclassifying Senior Planner Chris Anderson to Environmental Manager and transferring the position to Public Works, while filling the resulting Senior Planner vacancy.

City Administrator Hagen noted that Ms. Proulx recently completed her Master of Public Administration degree, meets the preferred qualifications for the proposed position, and received favorable results from a leadership assessment.

Mr. Nelson's 28 years of City service and experience in utilities, public works, and fire services were cited as qualifications for expanded management and safety responsibilities.

City Administrator Hagen also highlighted Mr. Anderson's arborist certification and educational background in urban forestry. His proposed responsibilities would include tree preservation, boulevard and park tree management, resident education, recycling programs, environmental initiatives, and potential grant opportunities.

City Administrator Hagen explained that the first three components could be accommodated within the preliminary 2027 budget. The fourth component would require additional funding, estimated at $97,695, primarily to fill the Senior Planner position. Staff identified a potential Building Official Training Grant of up to $75,000 and other anticipated personnel savings as possible funding sources for 2027.

Councilmembers questioned the long-term financial implications of the Environmental Manager proposal, particularly because the grant would provide only temporary funding.

City Administrator Hagen acknowledged that ongoing costs would affect the property tax levy beginning in 2028 unless the city identified alternative revenue sources or reduced expenditures.

Councilmembers discussed whether a part-time planning position, expanded recycling revenue, future retirements, or alternative staffing arrangements could reduce the financial impact. Staff explained that Mr. Anderson currently divides his responsibilities between planning and environmental work, but finding a qualified part-time Senior Planner would be difficult.

Public Works Director Westby emphasized the importance of maintaining specialized tree care and environmental expertise as the City continues to develop. He noted that additional subdivisions increase the number of boulevard trees, landscaped areas, and other public assets requiring maintenance. He also highlighted the potential for continued environmental grant funding,

referencing recent awards of approximately $46,000 from the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources and $85,000 from the Metropolitan Council.

Councilmembers generally supported the proposed environmental responsibilities but expressed reservations about establishing an additional ongoing financial obligation outside the regular budget process.

The Council agreed to support the first three reorganization components, including Ms. Proulx's promotion, filling the Recreation Coordinator position, and Mr. Nelson's reclassification.

The Council deferred consideration of the fourth component, which involves Mr. Anderson's proposed Environmental Manager position and the corresponding Senior Planner replacement. Staff was encouraged to explore alternative funding, staffing arrangements, and potential budget-neutral solutions for future consideration.

2.05: Discussion Regarding Union Contract Negotiations (Closed Session)

City Administrator Hagen requested that the Council enter a closed session pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, Section 13D.03, to discuss the status of outstanding labor contract negotiations.
The Council agreed to close the meeting to discuss labor negotiations.

After reconvening in open session at 6:41 p.m., Mayor Heineman reported that the Council had discussed the LELS Crime Data Analyst contract in closed session. Staff was directed to continue discussions with the Crime Data Analysts at the next meeting regarding a tentative agreement and to address longevity provisions associated with the Captains' contract.

3. TOPICS FOR FUTURE DISCUSSION

3.01: Review Future Topics/ Calendar

Noted.

4. MAYOR / COUNCIL / STAFF INPUT

None.

5. ADJOURNMENT

The Work Session of the City Council was adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

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Brian S. Hagen
City Administrator

ATTEST:

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Katie M. Schmidt
City Clerk

Drafted by Sue Osbeck
TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.