

Ramsey County Charter Commission Minutes of October 23, 2017

The meeting was held at Ramsey County Public Works, 1425 Paul Kirkwold Dr., Arden Hills with the following members in attendance:

	Members Present	Members Absent
District 1	Steven Reeves	Joe Murphy
District 2	Bob Benke Emily Dunsworth	
District 3	Jacquelyn Thomas Randy Gustafson	
District 4		Bethany Winkels Sharon Garth
District 5	Kyle Mestad	Wendy Underwood
District 6	Robert Humphrey	Lizeth de la Torre
District 7	(Vacant)	(Vacant)
At Large	Bill Kempe	Fred Perez Renee Alexander

Also present: Jeff Stephenson, Ramsey County Civil Division Director
Janet Guthrie, Director of Administrative Services / Chief Clerk – County Board
Lee Mehrkens, Ramsey County Chief Financial Officer
Bonnie Jackelen, Retired Chief Clerk
Cheryl Kempe, Ramsey County Administrative Assistant

1. Call to Order: Called the meeting to order at 7:05 p.m.
2. Introductions: Lee Mehrkens, Jeff Stephenson, Bonnie Jackelen were introduced.
3. Approval of October 23, 2017 Agenda: Robert Humphrey moved to approve the agenda for October 24, 2017; seconded by Bob Benke. Approved unanimously.
4. Approval of February 6, 2017 Meeting Minutes: Bob Benke moved to approve the minutes of the February 6, 2017 Meeting Minutes; seconded by Kyle Mestad. Approved unanimously.
5. Citizen Comments/Input: None
6. Charter Commission Role and Purpose / Orientation for New Members: Bonnie Jackelen gave an overview on the Charter and its background. Ramsey County is the only county that operates on the Home Rule Charter. Citizens approved of the charter in November 1990 and became in effect in November 1992. It is overseen by a 17-member commission appointed by the Chief Judge. It has been amended 3 times. The charter gives a framework to the government on how to operate and its recognized roles. The annotative home rule charter goes into more detail on how certain decisions were made regarding the home rule charter.
7. New Business: Lee Mehrkens reviewed the 2018-2019 Budget. The budget moves the county forward with each service team having a “residents first lens.” Countywide property values are back to the pre-recession era.
 - The budget increase in Regional Rail Authority is for capital funds to be available for transit projects.
 - Intergovernmental revenue has not kept pace with cost growths, so property taxes have had to make up the difference.

- The foster care system cost will be going up by \$2 million per year in both 2018 and 2019.
- In the Public Safety sector, the county will be adding staff to the Adult Detention Center to provide a higher level of service as well as updating security.
- Staffing will be added to the Medical Examiner's Office.
- Additional money will be added into cyber security and early voting systems.

QUESTIONS FROM CHARTER MEMBERS

- *Question regarding ice rink study in Ramsey County.* Answer: There was a community study on the ice rinks and change in demand. Prioritization list will improve the infrastructure of the first 3 facilities, then reconsider others, whether they will be kept or repurposed.
- *Question regarding economic development in Ramsey County.* Answer: There are economic development projects underway. The county does not want to get into a land use role. There are pockets of poverty in the county that needs attention. A master development plan is in the works for Rice Creek. Riverfront is looking for a master developer.
- *Question regarding why the budget is biennial and strategic plan is only 1 year?* Answer: Lee responded that the strategic plan informs the budget and the budget helps finance the strategic plan. If major changes were to occur in the second year, supplemental budgets allow for that.
- *Question regarding insurance increases for Ramsey County.* Answer: How does the county deal with increases? Lee stated that the county has a 5-year plan. Health Partners has been very responsive in public bidding for Ramsey County. Ramsey will re-evaluate whether being self-insured is an option.
- *Question regarding identifying areas of concentrated homelessness?* Answer: There is a county wide focus on racial equity. Each department has a write up for their budgets they have been asked to use Racial Equity lens to prioritize their programs and services.
- *Question asking if there are ways to reach residents with services that are available, keeping in mind that some citizens don't have access to internet?* Answer: Ramsey County website has information on programs and services available. The Open Data Portal can go on website and get direct access to our budget and how the county is doing. There are printed literatures in Ramsey County libraries and community events.
- *Question asking how many departments make up the service teams.* Answer: Twenty-three departments make up the four service teams.

8. Old Business: None

9. 2018 Meeting Dates: Meetings are held on Mondays @7:00pm:
 February 5 (RC Public Works-1425 Paul Kirkwold Dr, Arden Hills)
 May 7 (AMC, 125 Charles Ave, St Paul MN 55103)
 August 6 (RC Public Works-1425 Paul Kirkwold Dr, Arden Hills)
 October 22 (AMC, 125 Charles Ave, St Paul MN 55103)

10. Future Agenda Items: For future agenda items, please email Janet Guthrie or Randy Gustafson. Look in your book for contact information.

Adjournment: Meeting adjourned at 8:20 p.m.

Cheryl Kempe – Administrative Assistant – County Manager's Office