



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

April 3, 2023 | 5:30 PM
Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

MINUTES

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

In accordance with the provisions of Section 3.01 of the Blaine City Charter, a Council Workshop meeting is scheduled for the following purpose:

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:35PM by Mayor Pro Tem Robertson. The Council entered into closed session. Mayor Sanders arrive at 5:40PM.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Terra Fleming, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, Jess Robertson, and Lori Saroya.

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Eric Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Fire Chief Dan Retka; Finance Director Joe Huss; Deputy Finance Director Ali Bong; City Engineer Dan Schluender; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; City Attorney Tom Loonan; and Communications Manager Ben Hayle.

2. New Business

- 2.1.** 2023-94 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.05(2)(a)(2) - Personnel Matter
Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager

The Council met in closed session pursuant to MN Statute 13D.05 (2)(a)(2) to discuss a personnel matter.

The Council voted unanimously to enter into closed session. Mayor Sanders arrive at 5:40PM.

2.2. 2023-92 SBM Fire Department - Quarterly Update

Sponsors: Dan Retka, Fire Chief

The council ended the closed session at 6:20PM and resumed the open session workshop.

Fire Chief Retka provided the Council with an update from the SBM Fire Department. He stated calls for service continue to rise for the department, primarily medical calls. He reported his staffing was down, noting since 2015 the department has been cut in half. He discussed how difficult recruitment was throughout Minnesota for fire professionals. He commented on how the new recruitment specialist was assisting the department. He described how the duty crews would assist with providing the proper number of staff to respond to calls. He explained the department would be refocusing its efforts to address fire prevention.

Mayor Sanders asked when the fire department would be switching over to the new duty crew model. Fire Chief Retka explained this would occur January 1, 2024.

Councilmember Newland commended Natalie on her efforts to promote the SBM Fire Department.

Mayor Sanders encouraged the chief to be in contact with the Council if there was anything the City can be doing to help the department.

2.3. 2023-67 Lakeside Commons Beach Gate Discussion

Sponsors: Jerome Krieger, Sr. Recreation Manager

Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Krieger stated last summer, staff from the police and parks and recreation departments met with a few members of the City Council to discuss possible solutions to address the teenage behavior problems at the beach. Some of the preventative measures that were put into place were adding portable fencing along the wooded area near the volleyball court, letting the foliage grow longer in this area to deter people from entering, additional police officers working shifts at the beach and additional surveillance cameras at the site. During the discussion, the topic of gates at the front entrance was brought up as a possible solution to prevent vehicles from entering the park after closing time. It was noted there were some benefits identified with having gates at the entrance and exit of the park. Staff commented on the concerns further with the Council and requested direction on how to proceed.

Councilmember Robertson stated she had mixed feelings about a gate, but she also understood how the residents of The Lakes would appreciate this addition. She asked for comment from Police Chief Podany regarding the gate. Safety Services Director/Police Chief Podany stated the gate would assist with managing activity in the overnight hours. He reported residents could still walk into the park, but the gate would keep vehicles out of the park.

Councilmember Robertson questioned who owned the land at the entrance to the park. Mr. Krieger explained this land was owned by the City.

Police Chief Podany commented further on how his staff monitored the beach throughout the summer. He stated he believed it was a better use of funds to put a gate in place versus him having to assign additional staff to the beach.

Councilmember Fleming stated she supported the City installing the swing gate.

Mayor Sanders agreed the gate would be helpful for the overnight hours. He supported the police acting swiftly against youth that were improperly using the park and the beach.

Councilmember Newland asked if posts and a chain could be installed at first. Police Chief Podany reported this could be done but this would require staff to open and close the chain daily.

Councilmember Newland recommended a fence be installed on each side of the gate to ensure vehicles could not drive on either side to get into the park after hours.

Mayor Sanders asked if this fence could be installed yet this summer. Mr. Krieger reported in speaking with the gate vendor, he understood the fence was eight weeks out at this time. He commented further on how the expense for the gate could be covered by park dedication fees or the parks development account.

Finance Director Huss reported he would be speaking with the City Attorney to see if this was a proper use for park dedication funds.

Council consensus was to direct staff to move forward with the installation of the swing gate at Lakeside Commons Beach.

3. Other Business

Mr. Schluender provided the Council with an update on the tree removal situation. He noted a window from June to July has been created where trees cannot come down. He discussed how two other bats may be protected in 2024 which may further impact tree removal in the future.

City Manager Wolfe explained she heard back from several Councilmembers regarding Juneteenth. She stated if the City were to observe Juneteenth this year the June 19 Council meeting would have to be rescheduled. She noted typically the Council moved its meetings to Wednesday, which meant the meeting would be rescheduled to Wednesday, June 21.

Community Development Director Thorvig reported the owner of the Rainbow Village emailed staff. He noted he sent a follow up memo to the owner of the Rainbow Village from the City attorney.

Further discussion ensued regarding the new CivicClerk agenda software.

4. Adjournment

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:57PM.