



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

June 20, 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 by Mayor Sanders at 5:30PM.

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

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Police Captain Russ Clark; Finance Director/Assistant City Manager Joe Huss; Deputy Finance Director Alison Bong; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Tom Loonan; Finance Supervisor Bonnie Friedrich; Finance Analyst Jenna Trittin; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

2. New Business

2.1. 2023-215 Request for Future Workshop Agenda Item: 114th Avenue Road Closure

Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager

City Manager Wolfe reviewed the process for council requested discussion items and asked if this process was still working for the council.

Councilmember Saroya stated because there were several new councilmembers, she would like the opportunity to review this process. She indicated the process limits the ability to

bring items to city council meetings. Ms. Wolfe reported the rules of order could be discussed along with the planned governance session as part of an upcoming workshop.

Councilmember Newland supported the council should hold the governance session and understand how everything fit together before discussing any new processes .

Councilmember Larson requested a discussion be held on the potential removal of the barricade on 114th Avenue connecting the Sanctuary Preserve to North Oaks Ponds. She noted the duration was supposed to be two years, but the barricade was still in place. She reported she received a petition from the neighbors requesting the barricade be removed. She commented further on the history of the barricade in this neighborhood, noting many neighbors in the Sanctuary Preserve have expressed concerns with the barricaded street related to public safety, school bus transportation, and access. She stated after speaking with the city engineer she learned that roads in the city were built to create connectivity. She feared this barricade was put in place for segregation purposes and for this reason, she recommended the barricade be removed.

Councilmember Newland stated now that the council has received background information on this topic, what would be the procedure going forward.

Mayor Sanders reported the item would move forward to a workshop meeting for further discussion if there was support from the majority of the council.

Councilmember Newland indicated he supported the council focusing on other issues at this time but could support discussing this matter at some point in the future.

Councilmember Fleming supported the council moving this item forward to a workshop meeting. She recommended this issue be resolved before school starts.

Councilmember Massoglia commented on how this barricade has become quite an issue and noted this was an unusual road. He indicated he was in favor of moving this item forward so long as solutions are pursued and personal attacks are kept out of the issue.

Councilmember Robertson stated she has not been given the opportunity to speak on this topic in front of the council. She said she had not been included on the neighborhood emails or had spoken to her neighbors based on advice of legal counsel. She said it did not matter to her if the topic was included on a future workshop but if so recommended a lot of time be set aside. She shared frustration with reports of comments she did not make and that while streets were constructed for connectivity there were also over 400 cul-de-sacs in the city. She said she did not believe government should be one size fits all and indicated disappointment that this topic had reached the level it had and was disheartened and that any decision needed to be made on facts instead of feelings.

Mayor Sanders recommended this item be moved to a future workshop.

Councilmember Larson said the bus company would like to have a decision regarding the barricade in early August at the latest and that based on the fact that the transportation director emailed the city and said the current route was unsafe that this item be scheduled soon if possible.

Councilmember Saroya commented she supported moving this item forward as well. She believed the barricade should have been removed years ago. She commented on the safety concerns that were in place because the residents in this neighborhood only had one entrance and exit point.

Councilmember Massoglia explained this was not a segregation or disparity issue based on race. He reported this came about because a neighborhood wanted a barricade put in place to keep construction traffic off their streets. He noted now these neighborhoods were clashing. He stated when the council used words like that this barricade now becomes a segregation or class issue. He recommended the extra rhetoric be left out of this conversation.

Council consensus was to include the 114th Avenue road closure topic on a future workshop to be discussed sooner rather than later in order to address any potential changes to school bussing schedules.

2.2. 2023-241 Radisson Road and 109th Avenue Corridor Intersections Study *Sponsors: Daniel Schluender, Director of Engineering*

Director of Engineering Schluender stated Anoka County has a consultant engineering firm, Short, Elliot, Hendrickson, conducting a study of the intersections on Radisson Road from 105th Avenue to Cloud Drive and 109th Avenue from Tournamant Players Parkway to Town Square Drive and is preparing to engage the public on these corridors and would like to introduce the engagement process and where they are at in the study timeline.

Jack Forslund, Anoka County Transportation Planner, introduced himself and reported Erin Jordan with SEH had a presentation for the council.

Erin Jordan, Traffic Engineering and Project Manager for SEH, presented the proposed corridor intersections study that included existing and future traffic flow, opportunities for enhanced mobility and safety, and other improvements. The goal for this project was to complete the study this year and then scope any future near and long term projects based on the input received.

Mayor Sanders stated he drove Radisson Road multiple times every day and his biggest concern was with the Tournament Players Parkway intersection. He said he hoped the county would find a great solution for this intersection and encouraged them to keep in mind the redevelopment that would occur at 105th Avenue.

Councilmember Robertson thanked the county for addressing the city's infrastructure needs and agreed Tournament Players Parkway was a concern. She suggested the county consider participating in Night to Unite to gain additional feedback for this project. She requested the county remain consistent with its signaling along Radisson Road, noting it may be confusing for drivers if they go from a traffic signal to a roundabout and back to a traffic signal.

Councilmember Newland commented on how work on TH65 would impact Radisson Road in two years and asked what the timing was for this project. Mr. Forsland explained the study would be completed this year and then outcomes would be determined. He anticipated the outcomes would be broken down into smaller pieces and he anticipated it would take time to deliver all of the improvements. He stated it was too early for him to know when all of the concerns would be addressed. He indicated Radisson Road was slated for resurfacing.

Councilmember Massoglia agreed that Tournament Players Parkway was the most dangerous intersection.

Mayor Sanders thanked the county for their efforts on this project and stated the city will look forward to hearing more regarding the study results.

2.3. 2023-84 Assessment Review Outline, Part 2
Sponsors: Daniel Schluender, Director of Engineering

Mr. Schluender stated staff reviewed special assessments at the council workshop in January 2023. The review provided for an initial discussion and provided council with information and background on the use of special assessments within the framework of the city's pavement management plan. Staff was directed to further research the opportunities and impacts for funding street projects under different funding scenarios, including a flat rate, changes in cost sharing percentages (25/75, 30/70, 35/65, 40/60), and a levy that would cover 100% of the costs (i.e. no assessments). Staff was also directed to research the possibility and financial impacts of removing tax exempt properties from the assessment policy and if there are any existing programs available for hardship(s). He reviewed potential options that could be incorporated into a draft policy that could include the assessment period, adjustment of rates, a flat rate fee, and levy impacts for reconstruction projects. Staff commented further on the history of the city's assessment policy and requested feedback on how to proceed.

Councilmember Robertson thanked staff for their efforts to walk through all of this information. She anticipated there was not one right way to approach this topic and that she looked forward to discussing this matter further at a future workshop meeting.

Councilmember Saroya asked what other cities do for assessments and their best practices and what was the lowest rate possible that could be charged. Finance Director Huss commented on how street improvement projects were bonded and noted those projects that assess less than 20% do not require a referendum.

Councilmember Newland questioned how much the cost for construction has gone up over the past 10 years. Mr. Schluender stated construction rates increase 3% to 6% per year, except for last year when there was a 20% increase.

Councilmember Newland inquired if this would be the new baseline or would the city see another 20% increase. Mr. Schluender explained he was uncertain how the rates for construction materials and labor would be impacted in the coming years.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if staff needed any further direction from council regarding drafting language for tax deferred parcels. City Attorney Loonan explained the city had to treat similar properties in a similar manner. He stated he would have to do further analysis to see if there could be a potential exemption. He reported the intent of an assessment is to put a cost to the properties that are benefiting from the assessment. He indicated if the city were to make non-profits exempt, but not schools or government buildings, non-profits could sell their building and make a profit.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned why staff had not looked into this further as this direction was given at a previous council workshop meeting. Ms. Wolfe stated if this was the direction of the full council, staff would investigate this matter further.

Councilmember Larson asked what other cities do and if it was common to exempt non-profits from paying assessments. Mr. Loonan stated exempting non-profits was not a common practice. He discussed how the assessment policy cannot pick winners and losers but rather has to be a uniform application.

Councilmember Robertson supported the analysis being done but requested staff also provide the unforeseen ramifications of expanding such exemptions.

Councilmember Larson explained she would like to know what is a most typical assessment rate for cities the size of Blaine. Mr. Schluender stated he would bring this information back to the council.

Councilmember Fleming indicated she would appreciate this information and explained she would like to better understand how the city would make up the difference if the assessment percentages were lowered.

Council consensus was to direct staff to explore expanding which properties could be exempt from the assessment policy and potential unintended consequences, hardship component, potential rates of assessments and provide the council with further information on what other cities do.

2.4. 2023-234 2024 Budget Process
Sponsors: Alison Bong, Deputy Finance Director

Deputy Finance Director Bong provided the council with an update on the 2024 budget process. She explained small group meetings would begin with the council on July 19 and would run through July 31.

Ms. Wolfe reported the 2024 budget would be focused on service levels.

2.5. 2023-237 2022 Audit and Financial Report Presentation
Sponsors: Alison Bong, Deputy Finance Director

Ms. Bong stated the city's external auditing firm, Redpath and Company, has completed the 2022 Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR) and annual audit. It was noted a representative from the firm would be presenting the audit process, the audit results, and new auditing standards at the council meeting.

3. Other Business

None.

4. Adjournment

The workshop was adjourned at 6:57 PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Cathy Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk