



City of Blaine

Charter Commission

September 12, 2023 | 5:00 PM
Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

MINUTES

1. Call to Order

The meeting was called to order at 5:25 PM.

2. Roll Call

Present: Chair Jeffrey Lester, Commissioners Ken Anderson, Ayman Khan, Jason Halpern, Terri Homan, Dick Swanson, Arman Tagarro

Absent: Commissioners Stephen Berk, Alan Goracke, Jason Hartmann

Also Present: City Clerk/Staff Liaison Cathy Sorensen

3. Approval of Minutes

Moved by Commissioner Homan, seconded by Commissioner Anderson, that the minutes of August 8, 2023, be approved.

Motion approved unanimously.

4. Open Forum for Citizen Input

No one appeared.

5. New Business

6. Old Business

6.1. 2023-427 Council Salary Review *Sponsors:*

City Clerk/Staff Liaison Cathy Sorensen shared as directed by council the charter commission has been asked to annually review mayor and council salary data from comparable/surrounding cities and make any recommendations on possible adjustments for council consideration. She noted if any adjustments were recommended, they would be presented to council and if concurred an ordinance amendment would be processed that would place any new salary in effect after the next municipal election. She presented an updated salary survey that included population and annual general budget for the commission's information and asked for input.

The commission discussed the difficulty comparing Blaine to other cities as there are differing factors in each city such as the number of employees, enterprise funds, service levels and existence of public amenities such as community centers, etc. The commission noted the many complex projects and developments in Blaine such as TH65, Northtown, and the 105th Avenue redevelopment area, and that any increase ultimately decided upon should include escalators as the increases take effect a year after approval. They agreed the consumer price index (CPI) could be a good measure to use to provide an “up to” salary range recommendation that averaged to an increase of a little more than 1% per year since 2015, then use the annual cost of living increase (COLA) given to employees going forward for consistency and adding language for salary review in the odd year, similar to Anoka.

Moved by Commissioner Anderson, seconded by Commissioner Homan, to recommend annual salaries for mayor be increased up to \$18,315.03 and councilmembers up to \$13,461.54 and amend Sec. 2.07 Salaries of the city charter as follows:

Sec. 2.07. Salaries.

The monthly salary of each of the councilmembers and the mayor shall be established by ordinance. Review of salaries shall be conducted in June of every odd numbered year and recommendations for adjustments, if any, be based on the annual cost of living adjustments consistent with adjustments provided to staff. The mayor and councilmembers, in addition to the above salaries, shall be paid a reasonable sum for each day and their reasonable expenses incurred while traveling outside the city on the city's business.

Motion approved 6-1, Commissioner Tagarro voted nay.

6.2. 2023-428 Potential Ward Structure Changes

Sponsors:

Ms. Sorensen shared that as part of the 2022 redistricting process council was supportive of the commission’s recommendation to review potential amendments that would allow for the possibility of future ward restructuring as the city reaches full development. She reiterated the commission’s reasons for possible restructuring that included five or six smaller wards that could potentially provide more neighborhood-based representation as opposed to the current three-ward structure then outlined factors staff used to determine both wards and precincts that included census population, projected population growth, registered voters and estimated voters, wards bounded by precinct lines, compact in area, and composed of contiguous territory, wards equal in population as practicable within the required 5% population threshold, and polling place management. Ms. Sorensen presented draft language for the commission’s review and input.

The commission discussed various possibilities to redraw wards, which included creation of five or six smaller wards with a councilmember at large. Ms. Sorensen noted the proposed language would not actually establish new or additional wards but provide a mechanism to review and make recommendations for the possibility of new or additional wards. After discussion, the commission supported creating a mechanism that would allow review of ward boundaries, including the potential change to the number of boundaries, and supported the city being proactive in this manner.

Moved by Commissioner Halpern, seconded by Commissioner Tagarro, to recommend the

following amendment to Sec. 2.03(a) of the city charter, adding Sec. 2.03(b):

Sec. 2.03(a). Wards.

The City of Blaine shall be divided into three (3) council election wards.

The city manager shall re-evaluate the ward boundaries following the certification of the decennial census.

Council election wards shall be as equal in population as practicable and each ward shall be composed of compact, contiguous territory.

Ward boundaries shall follow visible, clearly recognizable physical features as required by state law. The city manager shall prepare a redistricting report which shall be submitted to the charter commission for review and comment.

The redistricting report, any charter commission comments, and a redistricting ordinance shall be submitted to the city council for consideration. If the city council does not adopt a redistricting ordinance within the period specified by state law, no compensation may be paid to the mayor or councilmembers until the wards of the city are newly redetermined as required by this charter and state law.

Sec. 2.03(b). Redetermination of Ward Boundaries.

Pursuant to City Charter [Sec. 2.03\(a\). - Wards](#), the city council shall redetermine appropriate ward boundaries in years between the taking of a Federal decennial census whenever the city council finds that a deviation of more than five percent exists in the populations of the largest and smallest wards. For the purposes of this section, the city council, in making its findings as to populations, shall take into consideration changes in numbers of households since the last decennial census and household size in areas where changes have occurred as determined by the school district(s) and as outlined in the Metropolitan Council's annual preliminary population and household estimates released in April of each year pursuant to MN Statute 473.24. If after review of the findings the city council determines the number of council election wards should be changed in addition to ward boundaries, the city council shall direct the charter commission to review said findings for recommendation for any appropriate city charter amendments Pursuant to City Charter [Sec. 2.03\(a\). - Wards](#).

Motion approved unanimously.

6.3. 2023-429 Councilmember Recall Process

Sponsors:

Clerk Sorensen stated council has directed the commission to consider charter language that would provide for a recall process for an elected councilmember. She shared proposed amendments based on discussion on input from the commission at last month's meeting and said this topic would be included on next month's agenda for finalization and hopefully formal recommendation.

6.4. 2023-444 Attachments

Sponsors:

7. Adjournment

The next meeting will be held October 10, 2023, at 6:00 PM.

Moved by Commissioner Halpern, seconded by Commissioner Homan, to adjourn. Motion

approved unanimously. The meeting was adjourned at 6:51 PM.