



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

October 2, 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 Pro Tem Robertson at 5:35PM.

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders (arrived at 5:42PM), Councilmembers Terra Fleming, Leslie Larson, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, Jess Robertson, and Lori Saroya.

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Fire Chief Dan Retka; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Finance Analyst Jenna Trittin; Public Works Director Nick Fleischhacker; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Tom Loonan; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

2. New Business

- 2.1.** 2023-471 SBM Fire Department - Quarterly Update
Sponsors: Dan Retka, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Retka provided the Council with a quarterly update from the SBM Fire Department. He reviewed the 2023 statistics and explained that medical calls continue to rise. He reported EMT services were extremely busy and were grossly understaffed. He discussed how the department would have to begin thinking creatively about how to address this concern going forward. He commented on how they were increasing efforts on fire prevention which included CPR training and home safety surveys. He explained the department was creating social media videos in order to enhance the presence of the SBM

Fire Department. The department's recruiting efforts were further discussed. He reported the department recently hired a new mechanic who would be a great addition to the team. He commented further on the enhancements that have been made to the training division.

Councilmember Newland asked when the department would be moving to duty crews. Fire Chief Retka reported this would begin on January 1, 2024.

2.2. 2023-468 Board and Commission Appointments – 2023/2024

Sponsors: Cathy Sorensen, City Clerk

City Clerk Sorensen stated staff is seeking council input regarding the 2023/2024 board/commission vacancy process. She explained that as staff prepares to advertise for upcoming board and commission vacancies, staff is seeking input on how to address terms, wards, interviews, Park Advisory Board/NRCB vacancies, and the Traffic Commission vacancies.

Councilmember Newland stated he supported commission members serving two terms in most cases. However, on the Planning Commission he could support those with a knowledge base to remain in place longer.

Councilmember Robertson agreed it was important to have members of the Planning Commission in place that had proper knowledge and understanding in order for this board to function properly. She did not support staff changing the language except to share thoughts on why changes may be made to positions.

Councilmember Saroya questioned if the language addressed members of the public serving concurrently on two different boards. Ms. Sorensen reported three members currently serve on the Planning Commission and Charter Commission. She discussed how Charter Commission members were appointed by the Chief Justice based on statute and had 15 members.

Councilmember Newland supported staff clarifying that commissioners could only serve on one commission at a time.

Mayor Sanders stated the Charter Commission was unique and important and supported members serving on another commission.

Councilmember Newland supported this recommendation.

Councilmember Robertson supported the city seeking out individuals from specific geographic locations in the city for commission positions. She explained her preference would be to have geographic diversity on the city's boards, while allowing the council the option if there was a vacancy.

Councilmember Newland and Mayor Sanders agreed.

Council consensus was to follow the current policy to allow for extended terms on a case by

case basis that acknowledges the value in having commissioners with good knowledge of the board/commissions mission. Council did not desire having members serve on multiple commissions with the exception of the Charter Commission and supported ward representation where possible with the allowance to appoint outside a ward if applicants are not available.

Ms. Sorensen requested direction from the council on how to proceed with interviews.

Mayor Sanders stated he supported staff bringing forward the top three or four candidates for interviews. He noted the city currently has some attendance and quorum issues so he wanted to make sure future candidates were willing to show up and serve. In addition, he supported candidates only being able to apply for one or two boards/commissions. He commented on how important it was for the city to have a strong, functioning park board and traffic commission and supported offering adjunct positions as well.

Councilmember Robertson supported staff providing commission applicants with a list of other volunteer opportunities in the community.

Councilmember Saroya stated she supported this idea as it would encourage more members of the public to engage and volunteer.

Council requested applications be narrowed to allow for applicants to select one or two commissions and supported interviewing three or four applicants versus all, and work to engage those not selected in other opportunities, including adjunct members and assisting with WorldFest, OctoberFest, election judges, and Citizens Academy.

Ms. Sorensen questioned how the council wanted to proceed with the current one-year appointments on the NRCB/Park Boards.

Mayor Sanders stated he did not believe the council were ready to address this topic. He supported the council having a more robust discussion with staff along with the Park/NRCB members regarding the potential merger of these boards.

Councilmember Massoglia agreed the council should discuss this topic further at a future workshop meeting. He indicated he supported the merger of the Park Board and NRCB. He noted he would like all of the members on each of the commissions/boards to be treated the same.

Councilmember Robertson supported the council having a broader discussion regarding the future of the Park/NRCB.

Councilmember Newland explained he supported the merger of these two groups as well, but recommended a larger discussion be held at a future workshop meeting. He stated he was concerned with the term limits and how they had been extended for the NRCB.

Council requested a future workshop topic be brought forward to review the possible merger of the NRCB and Park Board but supported continuing the appointment process and terms similar to all other boards.

2.3. 2023-469 Refuse Contract and 2024 Budget
Sponsors: Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Finance Director Zimmerman stated at the September 7, 2022 Workshop, Council discussed both the proposed 2023 Refuse Utility Fund budget, and the refuse and recycling contract. The contract has been held by Walters Recycling and Refuse, Inc. ("Walters") of Blaine since 2015. The initial contract, which was for a 5½-year term, was extended in 2019 by the city council and is set to conclude in June 2024. During the September 7, 2022 Workshop staff indicated that a request for proposals (RFP) process would need to begin in mid-2023 to allow the city time to prepare, solicit, and award the contract. Council voiced general support to an alternative to the RFP process, as there is no legal requirement that the city engage in an RFP for this service. However, before taking formal action, council requested that staff research the hauling contracts and fees/rates of other cities with organized refuse hauling before deciding the next step regarding the contract. At the December 5, 2022 Workshop, council was provided with data regarding the current fee structure for sanitation services. At the time of the discussion, Blaine was one of 13 known cities in the metro area with organized hauling and research indicated that Blaine's fees for garbage and recycling services were the lowest of these cities. Council direction was to waive the RFP process, and work with Walters and the city attorney to directly negotiate a new contract with a duration between three and five years. Staff commented further on the contract and requested direction from the council on how to proceed.

Councilmember Robertson supported the city pursuing another contract with Walters Recycling and Refuse. She commented on how the city was able to pass along savings to residents. She stated she appreciated how Walters was engaged in Blaine and thanked them for being a good partner to the community.

Councilmember Newland agreed stating he would like the relationship to move forward.

Councilmember Fleming requested Walters provide comment on the proposed rates for 2024.

Mike Mroz, Walters Recycling and Refuse, discussed the new rates for 2024 explaining that historically, the increases were 3%. He commented on how the CPI index has increased dramatically, as well as prices for trucks and drivers. He stated a one time increase was being proposed as a reset but noted his rates were still competitive when compared to other providers in the metro area.

Councilmember Fleming stated she appreciated the great partnership the city had with Walters.

Councilmember Larson agreed and thanked Walters for explaining why there would be an increase.

Councilmember Saroya indicated she could support the increase as well as another contract with Walters and thanked Walters for having amazing drivers.

Councilmember Massoglia explained he supported the city pursuing a new contract with

Walters and he was pleased the contract would be tied to the CPI index. He believed this was a common sense way to address price increases. He asked if the state or national CPI would be used for this contract. Mr. Zimmerman reported the national CPI would be used.

Mayor Sanders indicated he supported a continued relationship with Walters as well. He thanked Walters for being a tremendous community partner and strong advocate for the city. He believed Walters would continue to bring great value to the city even with the proposed price increase.

Mr. Zimmerman provided the council with further information regarding the health of the refuse fund.

Councilmember Massoglia asked what the intent was for the fund reserve. Mr. Zimmerman stated this fund has been used to make payments to Walters, noting bills with Walters were completed on a monthly basis.

Council consensus was to support negotiating a new three to five year contract with Walters Recycling and Refuse along with support for the 2024 residential rates as proposed.

3. Other Business

None.

4. Adjournment



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:50PM.