City of Blaine
City Council Workshop

January 17, 2024 | 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 5:30PM by Mayor Sanders followed by Roll Call.

1.1. 2024-631 test
Sponsors:

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Mayor Sanders, Councilmembers Larson (arrived at 5:40PM), Massoglia, Newland, Robertson, Saroya (arrived at 5:36PM)

ABSENT: None.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Police Captain Matt Carlson; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Cathy Sorensen

3. New Business

3.1. 2024-023 105th Redevelopment Plan Concept Discussion
Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, Community Development Director

Community Development Director Thorvig explained representatives from Bader Development, the Cunningham Group, Mamoth Lauder, and Elevage Development were in attendance to discuss the proposed plans for the Blaine Town Center with the City Council.

Representatives from Bader Development, Cuningham Group, and Mamoth Lauder, reviewed the Blaine Town Center proposed site plan in detail with the Council.

Dave Hyde, Design Director Cuningham Group, commented further on the framework for the development and discussed how water would be managed on the site. He reported Blaine is known for its marshes and soil conditions. He described how this project would create an experience for visitors with boardwalks through the water retention areas. He discussed how the stadium architecture would reflect the surrounding environment which was warm and inviting. The pedestrian flow through the project was reviewed, along with the park locations.

Jeff Schoeneck, Executive Director Cuningham Group, discussed how the marsh connected the entire development and commented on the buildings proposed within the development. He described how the project would be phased, noting which buildings would be included in Phase 1. The public benefit from the development was further reviewed.

Mr. Hyde reported on the special events that could be hosted within the development year round. He explained the goal would be to draw people to this entertaining and interactive area. He shared a short video with the Council and asked if the council had any comments or questions.

Councilmember Fleming thanked the developers for all of their efforts on the 105th Redevelopment concept plans. She appreciated how the plans considered options and events through the winter months.

Councilmember Newland asked if any of the buildings would be connected. Mr. Hyde stated the idea would be to have the buildings within the district connected in some way. Further discussion ensued regarding the pedestrian connections that would be in place within the development.

Mr. Thorvig asked if the Council supported this vision moving forward. If not, he requested the Council provide the development team with feedback on what should be changed.

Councilmember Robertson requested the developers identify the timelines for the east and west portions of the project. Mr. Hyde discussed the timeline for Phase 1, noting Invictus was included in this portion of the development, along with the stadium, hotel, restaurant, the Mamoth park and food hall. He reported the goal would be to have the ball team's opening season in May of 2026 with the housing component completed later in this project.

Councilmember Robertson explained she appreciated how all the Council's comments and ideas had been brought together into this redevelopment plan. She was pleased to see that this development would be walkable. She thanked the developers for their partnership with the city. She questioned if the development could have more retail space. She stated she was pleased to see the development had plans for more than just baseball in order to generate revenue year round. She looked forward to seeing more architectural renderings and noted she liked the proposed height differences and building materials.

Councilmember Newland stated he appreciated the proposed plans. He indicated he could envision how the entertainment district would come together and appreciated how well the project was connected. He believed the developer was right on track.

Councilmember Massoglia thanked the developers for all of their efforts. He fully supported the plans for Phase 1 and stated the sports entertainment district would be a tremendous draw for the community. He explained he loved the skating rink/pond feature then suggested more retail be proposed for the east district. He noted three apartment buildings were too much in his opinion and suggested row homes or another townhome product be considered within the development. Mr. Hyde commented on how retail would be pursued along the way then discussed how the housing could be townhome style as the project comes to life.

Councilmember Fleming thanked the development team for their detailed presentation. She commented on how much work had been done on this redevelopment project, noting she was excited to see this moving forward. She explained she loved the proposed plans and supported more retail being included.

Councilmember Saroya stated she was concerned with how local and existing businesses would be involved in this project. She explained through her conversations it appeared Invictus was not on board with this project and encouraged the developer to involve them in the proposed plans. She understood existing businesses were being forced out of this area, which did not look good for Blaine. She wanted to see Blaine being inclusive of all businesses. She indicated she would not be able to support the proposed massive apartments in Ward 1. She stated she was concerned about the proposed baseball stadium and encouraged the developers to read the book *Field of Schemes* as it was eye opening. She questioned if Blaine residents wanted this stadium and indicated she would have liked to have seen more public outreach completed. She asked what would happen if the minor league team were to leave Blaine. She stated she supported high school teams being able to use the stadium. She expressed concern about using public funds for this project. She indicated she could have supported this project moving forward with private funds. She commented on how the residents in Ward 1 would be impacted by this project and noted she did not want to see them taxed higher. She explained she wanted to learn more about what the developer was spending on this project versus what the city was spending. She reported she would like more information on how the public will benefit from this project as she did not believe this project was being marketed to all people in Blaine and recommended this project serve all of the demographics within the community.

Corey Burstad, Elevage Development, thanked Councilmember Saroya for her feedback. He explained he has met with Invictus on five different occasions and were fully up to date on this project. He discussed how this project would benefit local businesses by keeping visitors in the community. He reported the seating within the stadium had not changed and stated if a team did not come the stadium would not move forward. He indicated there would be a programmatic element that would allow for high school teams to use the stadium. Further discussion ensued regarding how accessible the entertainment district would be for the community. It was noted traffic in this area would be further analyzed as the project progresses. He noted people were looking to invest in this community, which would dramatically help local businesses. He reported the city has hired Baker Tilly to focus on the long term extensive financial interests of the city.

Mayor Sanders commented the city began working on this project in February 2021. He appreciated how the development team had adhered to the goals of the council, with the main goal to retain the city's five million visitors annually to stay in the community. He believed this project was exactly what the community was looking for. He stated he was grateful for the team that has worked on this project and for the plans that have been created for the 105th Redevelopment Area.

Councilmember Larson appreciated how the new plans would keep visitors in the community. She explained she fully supported the Phase 1 plans for the west side of the development.

3.2. 2024-024 Proposed Charter Amendment - Redetermination of Ward Boundaries
Sponsors: Cathy Sorensen, City Clerk

City Clerk Sorensen stated at their November 2023 meeting, the charter commission reviewed council's recommendation to postpone consideration of the proposed charter amendment regarding redetermination of ward boundaries until 2027 and include it as part of the comprehensive plan update. After discussion, the commission respectfully requested a joint workshop to better outline their reasons for the amendment and allow council to ask questions regarding this proposed amendment. To recap, during the redistricting process in early 2022, council shared general support of the charter commission's recommendation to draft potential amendments that would allow the ability to consider possible ward boundaries and restructuring in the future as the city reaches full development. The commission's reasons for creating this ability for review was based on the potential benefits that a different ward structure could provide:

- smaller geographic areas that are more neighborhood-based
- more focus on topics and issues specific to neighborhoods
- more opportunity for residents to connect with their elected officials
- increased opportunity for those considering serving as elected officials

Ms. Sorensen explained at the meetings there was discussion that should future councils/charter commissions ever wish to consider the possibility of more neighborhood-based wards there was no mechanism included in charter to allow for that review. Redistricting after the census allows for review and adjustment of established precinct boundaries, but work to review any potential ward structure changes needs to occur two to three years before the census. The language being proposed would provide a way to review population data before a census and provide future councils and charter commissions the ability to decide at that time if changes should be explored. The proposed amendment would not result in any ward structure changes but just allow the city to be proactive and provide an opportunity to review the data and make recommendations, which could certainly be that no ward boundary or structure changes should occur at all. If the conclusion by future councilmembers and commissioners was to amend the current ward structure, other amendments would then be presented for formal consideration, again that may or may not ultimately be adopted. To confirm, the proposed amendment being presented would just provide a mechanism for future review; no actual ward-structure changes are being recommended at this time.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he did not support changes. He explained the council should be conscious of how changes could become politicized. He stated for consistency purposes, he supported the wards being determined by the census every 10 years.

Councilmember Fleming supported Councilmember Massoglia's comments and recommended wards be determined every 10 years in conjunction with the census.

Councilmember Robertson commented on how discussions regarding redistricting has turned political in the past. However, she noted she did support the city council having a mechanism in place within the city charter.

Charter Commissioner Chair Jeff Lester explained the proposed language would provide a mechanism within the charter, creating an option for future councils, but not require future councils to make any changes to the wards.

Councilmember Saroya indicated she supported the proposed charter amendment. She stated she appreciated the time and effort the Charter Commission had spent on this item.

Councilmember Massoglia explained he supported the wards remaining as is in order to not open the issue up to politicalizing the situation.

Councilmember Saroya indicated the issue that could be solved by addressing the wards was representation. She commented on how different the demographics were in Ward 1. She believed there was benefit about keeping an open mind about this topic and continuing conversations.

Council consensus was to continue to have discussions around this topic.

3.3. 2024-025 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.05 Subd.C(3). – Discuss Property Acquistion of PIDs 21-31-23-24-0009; 21-31-23-24-0014; 21-31-23-24-0025; 21-31-23-24-0024

Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, Community Development Director

A motion was made and seconded to move to a Closed Session meeting pursuant to Minnesota State Statute 13D.05 Subd. C(3) to discuss the acquisition of property.

4. Other Business

The Council discussed potential interviews/process for board/commission appointments. Consensus was to review and rank the top 3 applications for each board/commission for staff compiling for scheduling interviews. Council also requested the topic of work plans for all boards and possible merger of NRCB and Park Board for the spring retreat.

5. Adjournment

Signed by ______________________________
Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by ______________________________
Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk

The workshop was adjourned at 8:30PM.