City of Blaine
City Council Workshop

April 1, 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 by Mayor Sanders at 5:30PM.

2. Roll Call

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

ABSENT: Councilmember Lori Saroya.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Public Works Director Nick Fleishhacker; Deputy Public Works Director Jason Grode; SBM Fire Chief Dan Retka; City Attorney Tom Loonan; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

3.1. 2024-81 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 discussed how operations were progressing with the duty crews from 5PM to 12AM Monday through Friday. He explained the new staffing model was improving response times and the Lucas machine was making a difference. He commented further on how staffing continues to be a concern for SBM as well as for other neighboring fire departments. He stated SBM continues to be one of the lowest per capita departments in the metro area. He discussed the adjustments he would be making to the budget in order for SBM to operate smarter. The annual call summary for 2023 was reviewed with the council and he asked for questions or comments.

Councilmember Massoglia thanked Fire Chief Retka for his detailed presentation and for working to improve response times which would save lives. He asked what the cost was for staffing in 2022 versus 2023 and 2024. Fire Chief Retka explained while he did not have the figures with him he noted prior to going to a duty crew model volunteer firefighters were being paid a small amount per hour and contributions were made to their pensions. He stated when the switch was made to duty crews, the funding previously being made to pensions was directed to the firefighters. He estimated it cost the department $120,000 to move to the duty crew staffing model. He anticipated it would cost another $200,000 per year to staff the duty crews overnight. However, he indicated this could not happen until the fire stations had sleeping quarters.

City Manager Wolfe reported Blaine, Spring Lake Park and Mounds View would be applying for the Safer Grant which would assist with covering salaries. She noted this was a three year grant.

3.2. 2024-82 Enterprise Asset Management System
Sponsors: Nick Fleischhacker, Public Works Director

Public Works Director Fleischhacker stated the city's primary asset management system (PubWorks) has been in use by Public Works for over six years and no longer supports the business needs of the city. Weaknesses and limitations have been identified that do not align with current needs and future goals for enterprise asset management. Staff, working with an outside consultant, went through an extensive process to identify specific requirements through a needs assessment to select a more capable system that can be used citywide to replace the existing one. After completing this year-long process, a Request for Proposals (RFP) was created and published to find a suitable Enterprise Asset Management System (EAMS). City staff formed an evaluation committee to review the most qualified EAMS vendors. As the offerings from each vendor were reviewed, three vendors were chosen that fit the City's requirements: Cartegraph, Cityworks and Elements XS. All vendors gave thorough demonstrations to a large group of staff. At the completion of all three demonstrations, it was a unanimous decision to move forward with Cartegraph as the preferred vendor. Staff is now ready to bring this item forward for council action. City Council will be asked to consider approval to purchase of the Cartegraph Enterprise Asset Management System software for $228,450 with a 10 percent contingency for a total of $251,295. As this is a significant investment in new technology, staff is bringing the item to workshop to provide an overview and allow time for council questions and feedback prior to being placed on a regular meeting agenda.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned what the yearly price difference would be between the new software and the existing software. Mr. Fleischhacker explained the existing software was roughly $30,000 per year and the new software would be $80,000 per year.

Councilmember Newland asked who would be using the new software. Mr. Fleischhacker stated all public works staff members would have access to the software. He noted there was an app for the program that could be used on a cell phone or tablet.

Councilmember Newland inquired how residents would be notified when their concern had been addressed. Communications Manager Hayle explained Cartegraph would be integrated with See-Click-Fix. He discussed how staff would receive requests through See-Click-Fix and real time updates could be provided to residents through Cartegraph.

Councilmember Robertson stated she appreciated the efficiencies that would be gained through this new program for public works staff. She also appreciated how this program could be utilized by multiple departments. She indicated this software was a large expense and noted the yearly expense for the program was equivalent to a staff person. She encouraged staff to consider how the expense for the program would be split between city funds.

Ms. Wolfe commented on how the city was only six years out from using only post-it notes and notebooks to manage repairs/customer complaints. She indicated the city's current program was using was for small towns and was not for a city the size of Blaine. She commented on how the proposed program would better meet the needs of the public works department. She stated it speaks volumes when considering the number of departments that came together to support the purchase of this software.

Mr. Fleischhacker stated another benefit of the new program would be to assist with monitoring employees time management and accountability.

3.3. 2024-83 Board/Commission Appointments and Council Policy for Appointment Process and Structure Review

Sponsors: Cathy Sorensen, City Clerk

City Clerk Sorensen stated Council was asked to review the 18 applications received for appointment and reappointment to various boards and commissions. The goal was to rank the applicants to demonstrate possible consensus and direction on appointments, including the possibility of interviews. Staff reviewed the final rankings submitted by a majority of council and with current terms expiring April 1 and commented on the suggested reappointments. It was noted appointments would be for three-year terms and would result in two vacancies on the Natural Resources and Conservation Board and one vacancy on the Traffic Commission. The mayor should announce any proposed reappointment and appointments, after which the full council should confirm by motion, second, and vote.

Councilmember Robertson suggested a formal policy not be put in place given how the council changes over time. She believed it worked well for the councilmembers to make selections and to move forward with council consensus. She suggested the applications be rewritten in order to be specific for each committee/commission.

Mayor Sanders supported the applications being rewritten in order to be more specific for the commissions. He indicated this would help the council directing people to the the right appointment.

Councilmember Newland suggested department directors be asked to provide questions for the new applications.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he liked the idea of having unique applications for each commission. He recommended some clarity be provided on how people are selected for appointments. He stated he would like the council to further discuss the purpose of the traffic commission and if the NRCB was going to be merged with the park commission.

Mayor Sanders supported these topics being further discussed at a future workshop meeting.

Council consensus was to include discussion of the appointment process, including future direction on some boards/commissions, to a future workshop or council retreat. Council suggested creating specific applications for each board and to use questions suggested by staff liaisons and from interview questions to better gauge applicants' interest in specific boards/commissions.

3.4. 2024-84 Federal Lobbyist Priorities
Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager

Ms. Wolfe stated the city of Blaine has contracts in place with one state lobbying firm and two federal lobbying firms. It is important to establish the city's legislative priorities annually. Previously, the top priority was T.H. 65. The other focus for our federal lobbying has been grants. Staff's suggestion for federal lobbying focus in 2024 is on grants. We've had ongoing meetings and discussions with our federal lobbying teams to review our capital plans and other city priorities to identify potential federal grant programs, including congressional directed spending ("earmarks"), which will be pursued during the year. The Ferguson Group will be our primary resource for grant programs; they have met with staff to review the capital plans and developed a federal agenda and work plan document. The Jacobson Law Group will focus on potential 2024 earmark requests. Now that those meetings have occurred, staff is reporting back to the City Council regarding proposed plans for the year.

Ms. Wolfe reported the city has submitted two requests for congressional directed spending ("earmarks"). The first is for a mobile command vehicle for use by BPD and SBM Fire. The second request is for Water Tower #2 Rehabilitation. Staff plans to submit these same requests to Senators Klobuchar and Smith once they open up their processes for the year. As with state legislation, if we become aware of any federal bills for which we should take a position and have our lobbyists represent, which is not included in these documents, we will bring the matter to the attention of the council.

Councilmember Larson supported the city coming together with other communities to oppose legislation that would limit local control when it comes to new housing developments in the city.

Mayor Sanders explained he met with two mayors today who also oppose house files 4009 and 4010. He reported the city's lobbyists have been very active in sharing the city's opposition to these pieces of legislation. He indicated there is a core group of mayors who are very active in the process including Prior Lake, Minnetonka, Lakeville, Plymouth, and Blaine and don't want to lose control of the public process and submitted an opinion piece on the topic. He discussed how this was some of the most damaging legislation that has ever been proposed. He commented on how the proposed bills would do nothing for affordable housing but rather would create many problems for the city's infrastructure. He hoped the legislators were listening and hearing the opposition for these house files.

Councilmember Robertson shared a recent conversation regarding how legislators should regulate state matters and councilmembers regulate city matters.

Council consensus was to support the state and federal priorities as presented by staff for the coming year.

4. Other Business

None.

5. Adjournment

The workshop was adjourned at 6:50PM.

CITY OF BLAINE
L'ETOILE DU NORD
ANOKA CO., MINN.

Signed by ______________________
Tim Sanders, Mayor

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