



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

April 15, 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, Jess Robertson, and Lori Saroya (arrived at 5:30 PM).

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Police Captain Matt Carlson; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Tom Loonan; and Senior Management Analyst Lisa Derr.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2024-102 Home Occupation Discussion II
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, City Planner

City Planner Sellman stated at the February 12, 2024 workshop, council had a high level discussion on home occupations. At the meeting there was discussion about allowing the properties zoned Farm Residential (FR) to have different standards because they are larger lots. There was discussion to prohibit outdoor storage. Another concern was customers coming to the house. The current code limits this to four customers. The number of

employees was discussed as well. Currently, the code does not allow for outside employees under the permitted home occupations, however a CUP can allow for this. Based on the previous discussion at the workshop, staff has created scenarios for council to consider then reviewed the scenarios in detail and requested council direction on how to proceed.

The council supported residents having a salon in an accessory structure.

Councilmember Robertson explained she had concerns about parking large vehicles and food trucks in driveways. She stated the only way she may support this is if an administrative permit were acquired and the neighbors were consulted for their feedback.

Councilmember Larson agreed stating this would be an eyesore for neighboring residents.

Councilmember Fleming stated she was unsure on this topic but noted large vehicles could be an eyesore for the neighbors.

Councilmember Newland expressed concern with the fact a food truck could be parked in a driveway all winter and not be used until the spring/summer months. He anticipated this would be irritating for the neighbors.

The council supported allowing a gunsmithing business in the R-1 zoning district as a permitted use. The council supported allowing residents to rent equipment from their home without requiring a business permit.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he could support residents storing business equipment outside in a Farm Residential (R-5) zoning district so long as the property was a certain size.

Councilmember Robertson explained she had concerns with this because neighbors may be impacted by the outdoor equipment.

Community Development Director Thorvig stated one way to address outdoor storage on a farm residential property would be to allow outdoor storage only on lots that were 5+ acres.

Councilmember Larson indicated she could support this option given the fact some residents in Blaine have been living here on their acreage lots, long before the current rules and regulations were put in place.

Councilmember Robertson suggested these requests be reviewed on a case by case basis through a variance process. Ms. Sellman stated the variance process would not apply to these matters. Mr. Thorvig reviewed the number of Farm Residential properties that were under three acres.

The council supported residents being able to do light manufacturing out of a home if making candles or using a forge in an accessory structure in the farm residential zoning district.

Ms. Sellman thanked council for their feedback and noted staff would continue working on

this portion of city code and would report back to the council at a future workshop meeting.

3.2. 2024-103 Update and Discuss Various EDA Owned Properties in the City
Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, Community Development Director

Mr. Thorvig stated the Blaine Economic Development Authority (EDA) owns various properties within the City of Blaine. Minnesota State Statute identifies the various powers an EDA has in the State of Minnesota. EDA's have the authority to purchase land and is intended to be done in a manner to promote economic development. Unlike city-owned property, which is perpetually tax-exempt, any land purchased by an EDA becomes subject to property taxes 9 years after acquisition. This provision is in place to discourage EDA's from becoming long-term landholders.

Mr. Thorvig reported the EDA currently owns 31 properties in the City of Blaine. Acquisitions date back to the 1990s/early 2000s. The EDA has sold property for redevelopment purposes in various areas over the last 25+ years. The 2040 Comprehensive Plan identifies 13 redevelopment areas. Many of the properties owned by the EDA are within the identified redevelopment areas. The EDA has acquired other properties within the City of Blaine in an effort to remove blighted property that the private market hasn't resolved (i.e. former Jimbo's Restaurant on County Road 10) or land that could be developed for industrial purposes (i.e. property along Naples Street). The EDA purchased the house at 1320 109th Avenue in 2011 in anticipation that it would be needed for future Highway 65 improvements. The EDA has acted as a landlord and has been renting this property for residential purposes. It will be removed for the Highway 65 reconstruction occurring in 2025/2026.

Mr. Thorvig explained with the number of properties owned by the EDA, the EDA has an opportunity to generate revenue through land sales. Many of the properties are within redevelopment areas that may require developers to purchase additional property to make a project feasible. The EDA has the ability to adjust the purchase price based on the overall financial feasibility of a project (i.e. sell land for less than market value). In other instances, the EDA owns vacant property that could be sold at market value as additional property is not needed by the developer to make a project feasible. There are certain EDA owned sites that could be marketed today based on location, readiness, etc. Staff commented further on the three properties (1409 105th Avenue, 255 89th Avenue and 8700/8800 Block of Central Avenue) staff would like direction/feedback on.

Councilmember Robertson asked if the building at 1409 105th Avenue was safe to lease to ABC Signs. Mr. Thorvig indicated the city has been leasing the property to a welder and noted the building passed a fire inspection in 2023. He reported using the building for storage would not trigger any fire suppression requirements.

Mayor Sanders explained he could support a short term lease for this property noting this property was part of the 105th Area Redevelopment District. He indicated this corner would redevelop once TH65 was completed.

Councilmember Newland stated he supported a short term lease for this property as well.

Councilmember Saroya questioned if ABC Signs asked about leasing or purchasing this property. Mr. Thorvig stated ABC Signs had spoken with staff about both options and staff let ABC Signs know that the EDA would not be interested in selling the property because this would then limit future redevelopment.

Councilmember Massoglia inquired if the city has had any interest in the strip mall. Mr. Thorvig commented this parcel would be better redeveloped when the city has ownership over all of the surrounding parcels.

Mayor Sanders indicated this corner may be a good location for another hotel.

Mr. Thorvig stated he would speak with ABC Signs about a potential short term lease and would report back to the council at a future meeting. He then discussed the property at 255 89th Avenue. Staff requested feedback from the council if a neighborhood meeting should be held and if a new maintenance plan should be created for the property.

Councilmember Saroya indicated she would like to better understand the strategy for purchasing this property. Mr. Thorvig commented this property was purchased in 2005 by the city and he was not on staff at that time.

Councilmember Newland discussed how this property was a part of the Northtown Redevelopment District. Mr. Thorvig explained this property was identified for medium density residential or commercial development.

Councilmember Newland supported staff hosting a focused discussion with the neighbors to see how this site should redevelop in order to fit in with the overall plans for the Northtown Redevelopment area.

Councilmember Robertson agreed a neighborhood meeting would be beneficial, but she was uncertain when this should be done given the fact this area would take 10+ years to redevelop.

Councilmember Massoglia supported the city getting feedback from the neighbors and deferred to Councilmember Newland regarding the maintenance concerns.

Councilmember Newland stated the weeds on this property were a concern and they would continue to come back. Mr. Thorvig suggested the neighborhood be engaged sometime this summer in order to gather ideas and for the neighbors to understand what is going on.

Councilmember Larson commented the neighbors will be biased when it comes to protecting and buffering the existing homes.

Mr. Thorvig stated staff would engage with the neighbors this summer and would analyze the next steps for this property. He stated the last area he would like to discuss in the property at 8700/8800 Block of Central Avenue. He commented on the options available to the city, noting one option would be to purchase the property at 8833, which would provide the city with six parcels in a row.

Councilmember Robertson asked what MNDOT's timing was for this portion of TH65 because she understood improvements were required for the Highway 10 ramps.

Councilmember Newland discussed the uses surrounding these properties. He supported purchasing 8735 if it were to become available. However, he recommended staff speak with MNDOT in order to better understand how these properties would be impacted by the TH65 improvements.

Councilmember Massoglia recommended staff reach out to the property owner at 8833, while also marketing the properties for sale because these properties were in a great location. Mr. Thorvig commented from a strategy standpoint the properties along TH65 were dwindling. He indicated the council may want to hang onto these properties until TH65 was completed and these parcels may become more valuable.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he could support the city waiting to redevelop these properties.

Further discussion ensued regarding the wetlands along 109th Avenue. Staff indicated the best use for this land may be to create a wetland bank.

4. Other Business

City Manager Wolfe explained staff was recommending Item 8.11 be removed from the Consent Agenda then reported the council received a proclamation request regarding therapy animals. She indicated the city does not have a clear process in place for proclamations and at this time proclamations have been locally focused or were from a very high bar.

Mayor Sanders agreed proclamations should have a very high bar in order to remain special and suggested social media be used to address other matters of importance to the public.

Councilmember Newland supported this recommendation.

Councilmember Robertson agreed and noted the city council could explore the city of Bloomington's policy for issuing proclamations.

Councilmember Fleming suggested attention be given to items during Council Communications instead of issuing formal proclamations. The council supported this recommendation as long as the items are properly vetted by staff.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he would be calling for a formal apology from Councilmember Saroya at the council meeting.

5. Adjournment



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk

The workshop was adjourned at 6:50PM.