



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

September 4, 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.

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Finance Analyst Nikki Beckers; Public Works Director Nick Fleishhacker; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Police Captain Joe Gerhard; Police Sergeant Brad Nordby; Patrol Officer Jackie Wagner; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Tom Loonan; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2024-371 Discuss EDA Owned Properties in the Northtown Area
Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, Community Development Director

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the Blaine Economic Development Authority owns several properties in the Northtown area. They include the properties at 255 89th Avenue, 9011/9021 University Avenue and 20 90th Lane, and 8550 Van Buren

Street. Staff provided historical information on each of these properties and asked what the next steps should be for these properties. Staff asked if there was consensus to market these properties for sale.

Councilmember Robertson asked if the property at 255 89th Avenue was originally to be used by the city for a stormwater pond. Mr. Thorvig indicated this property could not be used for storm ponding because it was higher than the surrounding properties.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she could support the sale of the property at 255 89th Avenue for a single family home but noted the new home would have a hard time fitting into the surrounding residential homes. She suggested restrictions be put in place to ensure the new home did not become rental.

Councilmember Newland stated he supported having a single family home on the 255 89th Avenue property as well.

Councilmember Larson asked how much the EDA paid for this property. Mr. Thorvig explained the city spent \$180,000 when the property was purchased. He noted the property was originally zoned commercial.

Councilmember Saroya questioned if the neighbors had been contacted to see what their thoughts were. Mr. Thorvig indicated the city has not spoken to the neighbors to date.

Councilmember Robertson supported the city having building restrictions in place to ensure the new home matched and fit with the surrounding homes.

Councilmember Massoglia inquired if there were any plans to expand Highway 10 in this area of the city.

Mayor Sanders reported the Northtown Redevelopment plan would actually shrink Highway 10 over time.

Mr. Thorvig indicated he could explore the sale of the property at 255 89th Avenue and noted he would speak to some residential builders in the community to see if there was any interest in this property. He then discussed the feedback staff received from the neighborhood meeting that was held regarding the old Kmart building.

Councilmember Newland stated he appreciated the attendance and comments that were received at the neighborhood meeting. He indicated the neighbors were interested in improving this site with a development that was well suited to the neighborhood. He commented on how it would be challenging to have retail on this property because it would force more traffic onto the neighboring streets. He stated the neighbors may have more interest in townhomes or other residential development on this site.

Councilmember Saroya thanked staff for hosting this neighborhood meeting. She believed the neighbors greatly appreciated having an opportunity to voice their opinions regarding the future of this property. She indicated she supported the idea of a community center on this property and asked what amenities the city was missing at this time. Mr. Thorvig stated an indoor playground and basketball space were missing at this time. He explained a private

entrepreneur may see an opportunity to provide an indoor playground on this site.

Councilmember Massoglia commented there would be a lot of momentum in this area once the Northtown Area begins to redevelop. He stated the city may want to wait to see how this area begins to evolve, but noted he did support placing this property on the market to see if the city receives any responses. Mr. Thorvig reported there has been a townhome developer looking at this site.

Councilmember Larson stated she supported this site having townhomes through the local developer because he constructs a very nice product. She recommended the local developer be invited to attend a future workshop meeting to discuss his plans in further detail with the council.

Councilmember Saroya indicated there were concerns from the neighbors regarding the height of townhomes. Mr. Thorvig explained a single level villa townhome may be an option.

Council consensus was to move forward as proposed by marketing the properties for sale.

3.2. 2024-382 2025 Budget - General Fund Budget and City/EDA Property Tax Levy
Sponsors: Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Finance Director Zimmerman stated on August 19, staff presented the initial General Fund budget and preliminary city-based levy options, which included funding for capital improvements and debt service. This first formal workshop regarding the 2025 operating budgets and property tax levy was intended to begin the annual process of aligning City Council priorities with financial resources to provide property owners, residents, and visitors with quality city services at a responsible tax level. While this discussion was very preliminary, with many assumptions, it set expectations for staff to ensure the budgetary process aligns with Council goals and the City's strategic plan. In continuation of the August 19 workshop, staff will briefly review the general direction provided by the Council for the preliminary 2025 city-based tax levy and introduce the Economic Development Authority (EDA) budget and levy-scenarios.

Mr. Zimmerman explained because this document is being prepared in August, many assumptions continue to be made based on trends in prior years' financial performance. Several factors may impact the final budget, including legislative changes, state mandates, economic shifts, and union negotiations. Assessed values for taxes payable 2025 are not final, but estimated figures have been provided by the Anoka and Ramsey County Property Tax Departments for preliminary tax calculations. Additionally, updated metro-wide fiscal disparity information isn't anticipated until sometime in late August or early September, so staff utilized preliminary figures.

Mr. Thorvig provided historical information on Blaine's HRA, EDA, and primary powers of an EDA and services.

Mr. Zimmerman reported another council workshop is scheduled for September 9 to

address any outstanding questions and prepare for adoption of the 2025 preliminary levy, which will come before the council on September 16. Staff reviewed the city-based budget, tax levy scenarios, along with the EDA levy in further detail with the council, described how the median value homeowner would be impacted and requested direction on how to proceed.

Councilmember Robertson asked how many dollars were set aside for the fire suppression grant. Mr. Thorvig stated when he started with the city nine years ago \$75,000 per year was set aside for this grant and noted \$25,000 per year was now being set aside. He commented this program was not as popular as it used to be.

Councilmember Larson indicated she supported Scenario 1 at this time.

Councilmember Robertson discussed how important it was for the city to have a strong commercial base.

Councilmember Newland stated the EDA was working out exactly like it was intended to spur development and control growth in the community and this was being seen within the 105th Area Redevelopment project. He agreed that the more the city could drive commercial and industrial development, the better it would be for Blaine residents. He indicated he supported Scenario 2 or 3.

Councilmember Massoglia commented he did not support Scenario 1 because the city would be running in a deficit. He explained he was concerned with the amount the city was spending on administrative fees each month. He supported staff taking a second look at this item.

Mayor Sanders stated the consensus of the council at the last workshop meeting was to support Scenario 3. He reiterated that this would be the max for the preliminary levy and the council could then work to make cuts between September and December.

Councilmember Fleming indicated she could support Scenario 2 or 3.

Councilmember Larson asked when the land within the 105th Area Redevelopment project would be sold. Mr. Thorvig explained there was a chance all of this land would be sold to the developer in 2024.

Council consensus was to move forward with Scenario 3 for the preliminary city levy and EDA levy for consideration on September 16.

3.3. 2024-352 Police Uniform Patch and Badge Update

Sponsors: Brian Podany, Safety Services Manager/Police Chief

Safety Services Manager/Police Chief Podany, Sergeant Brad Nordby and Officer Jackie Wagner stated the police department's current badge and patch have been in place for almost 30 years. The current patch has the City Logo on it that is no longer in use and has been replaced. Additionally, the current badge has the old state seal for the State of

Minnesota on it. The recent public safety fund allocation has funding that is eligible to be used for a patch and badge replacement. A committee was formed made up of approximately 16 staff members from the police department, including both sworn and non-sworn members from all divisions across the police department, led by Captain Joe Gerhard. The committee met monthly to discuss and share ideas about what was important to them and what they felt most represents the department. Everyone had input discussing design elements, colors, graphics, shapes, and what makes the department unique. Several different options were created and discussed in further detail with the council.

Sergeant Nordby and Officer Wagner explained a law enforcement badge is a portrayal of position and authority. It represents the willingness to sacrifice one's safety to assist others. It is a way of identifying the officers' rank and their department. Different badge shapes have their own individual meanings. It's a symbol of pride and honor for those who take the oath of office to protect and serve their community. A law enforcement patch represents the officer's affiliation with their agency and their commitment to serving and protecting their community. They can also be a source of pride for officers. Patches can include symbols like badges, stars, eagles, and the scales of justice, which can represent different aspects of law enforcement. They can also include design elements like landmarks, mascots, attractions, and the department's core values that make the patch unique to the department. A lot of time, thought, and research was put into this project by committee members to reach a conclusion that everyone was proud of. They shared a presentation that summarized this process and the conclusions reached, along with the proposed future patch and badge.

Councilmember Larson explained she fully supported the new badge and patch. She questioned what funding would be used to cover the expense of this project. Police Chief Podany reported the department received funding from the state and this funding would be used for the new patches and badges.

Councilmember Robertson stated she believed the new patch looked great. She commended the police department for working together to create a patch and badge that was representative of the community and for bringing this item forward to the city council for consideration.

Councilmember Saroya indicated she especially liked the new patch. She asked if the new logo would be placed on the department vehicles. Police Chief Podany indicated the official city seal would remain the same on the squad cars.

Councilmember Saroya inquired how officers would be distinguished between officer, sergeant and detective. Police Chief Podany stated the new badges would have this distinction and officers would also have different collar brass depending on their position within the department.

Councilmember Newland stated the new badge and patch was very well done. He believed the end result was very clean.

Councilmember Fleming indicated the new patch design was very classy. She appreciated the fact the patch had red, white and blue. She commended the department for working together and for bringing unity to the new patch and badge designs.

Councilmember Massoglia commended the department for their efforts on the new badge and patch.

Mayor Sanders thanked Police Chief Podany and the entire committee for their great work on the new badge and patch designs.

Council consensus was to support formal consideration of the proposed police patch and badge for consideration at the September 16 council meeting.

4. Other Business

After a motion and second, council moved into closed session pursuant to 13D.05 Subd. 2(a)(3).

5. Adjournment

The workshop was adjourned at 7:15PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk