



# City of Blaine

## City Council Workshop

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October 21, 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; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Police Captain Russ Clark; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Human Resources Manager Lori Carbajal; Public Works Director Nick Fleishhacker; City Attorney Tom Loonan; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

#### 3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2024-459 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.03 Subd. (1)(b) - Labor Negotiations Update  
*Sponsors: Scott Johnson, Director of Administrative Services*

After a motion and second, the council moved into a closed session to receive an update on labor negotiations.

- 3.2.** 2024-460 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.05(3)(c)(3) - Discuss Property Purchase Offers Related to Properties Identified as PID 21-31-23-24-0009 and 21-31-23-24-0014  
*Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, Community Development Director*

After a motion and second, the council moved into a closed session to discuss property purchase offers.

- 3.3.** 2024-495 North Metro TV (NMTV) - Merger Discussion Update  
*Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager*

City Manager Wolfe stated the City Council previously discussed this topic and authorized a letter to be sent to CCX TV, requesting the opportunity to explore the option of merging cable commissions. CCX TV responded that they would be open to such a discussion. North Metro Cable Commission has had discussions about this topic, with a recent vote resulting in a tie. The commission will be discussing the topic again this month. Councilmember Massoglia is Blaine's representative on the Commission, and would like the opportunity to update the council on the status of these discussions. If council is supportive of exploring a possible merger with NWSCC/CCX, and/or other options, Councilmember Massoglia will take steps to open discussions with that organization and the city's partners with NMTV.

Councilmember Massoglia provided further background information on this topic and reported city staff and CCX staff had met. He commented on the differences between NMTV and CCX. He reported this topic will be discussed again by the CCX team at their next meeting, which will be held on November 19.

Ms. Wolfe reported this topic would be further discussed by the Council in November where the pros and cons of a potential merger will be addressed.

Councilmember Newland commented on how the CCX coverage area was quite large. He indicated with NMTV, Blaine was the largest stakeholder within the group. He questioned if staff had investigated other options that would keep the city's footprint closer to the immediate area.

Councilmember Massoglia explained NMTV recently signed a contract to provide Fridley with meeting coverage and noted Fridley could be asked to see if they want to join the cable commission.

Councilmember Robertson asked what the push was to make a change.

Councilmember Massoglia stated this had to do with economies of scale. He discussed how franchise and peg fees were declining because more and more residents were dropping cable. He indicated another reason to consider the merger was to elevate the city, not that Blaine was a Top 10 city. He commented on how CCX had a larger reach throughout the metro area.

Councilmember Newland reported NMTV was founded in 1983 and at that time cable was a booming industry. He explained it made sense to put together this commission to help direct where things were going. However, the cable industry was now seeing a decline and noted this trend was universal. He anticipated CCX would feel this decline and asked it was wise for the city to join a different entity given the fact the decline was imminent.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated public access was very important and what the cable commission was trying to push for was to have fees charged to broadband subscribers. He stated these fees could then be helped to fund public access. He anticipated the federal government would have to address this issue.

Councilmember Newland asked if conversations had begun with local legislators.

Councilmember Massoglia stated it was his understanding a bill was drafted last year that would allow cities to opt in to collect PEG fees on internet.

Danika Peterson, NMTV, reported this bill gained some traction last year and made it to the floor, but got cut with the omnibus bill. She discussed how this bill would be monumental to cities.

Councilmember Newland stated he would like to see the city pursuing some type of funding solution versus just merging.

Councilmember Robertson supported the city asking more questions regarding the new funding source. She commented on the responsibilities the city had for being the largest stakeholder in NMTV. She then discussed how different the north metro was from the west metro. She indicated she did not want the city of Blaine to do any damage to another community through this process and she supported the city continuing to have dialogue on this topic. She asked if the NMTV representatives had any strong opinions on this matter.

Eric Houston, NMTV, thanked Councilmember Massoglia for bringing this topic up. He stated this has been a large learning experience for NMTV when considering options for the commission. He explained a potential merger was a large question mark and there were questions that remained unanswered. He indicated it was difficult to determine which way to move forward and he appreciated the council's dialogue. He stated he was looking for knowledge on the goals that need to be addressed by Blaine, along with the other six member cities.

Ms. Peterson reported if NMTV were to merge, while keeping the existing building and staff members, she did not see how funding could be saved, given the fact CCX's wages were 30% higher.

Mr. Houston stated he understood there was interest in expanded services for the city of Blaine, and being able to expand its footprint in the metro area. He reported if this were important to the council and the other six member cities this would be a reason to pursue the merger aggressively.

Councilmember Fleming requested further information on what NMTV meant by expanding the city's footprint. Mr. Houston stated this would mean Blaine's programming was available

to the west metro and vice versa. He indicated this would mean there were more eyes on the video content that was being created by Blaine, as well as high school sports.

Councilmember Massoglia commented on the pros and cons noting the digital reach for the city would be expanded. He reported CCX has 1.2 million visitors to their website, while NMTV has 63,000 visitors. He believed being a part of CCX would put the activities and events occurring in Blaine on the radar of peer cities across the metro in a positive way.

Ms. Wolfe stated she would want to understand where viewership was coming from.

Councilmember Massoglia understood this to be the case, and noted staff would have to take a deeper dive into the finances of a potential merger. He indicated CCX was very interested in a merger, but stated the six member cities were not as interested.

Councilmember Newland questioned how the city's cable budget would be impacted by a merger.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he did not anticipate expenditures would increase. Ms. Wolfe reported this would depend on what formula was negotiated with CCX. Mr. Houston indicated this was a difficult question to answer given how a merger was somewhat speculative.

Councilmember Newland commented there were some attractive cities within the CCX viewership. However, he noted if a broadband fee were charged, the merger may not be needed.

Ms. Peterson encouraged Blaine to further consider what their goals were when it comes to cable television. She reported she has a staff of talented TV producers and there were options depending on what the cities goals were.

Mr. Houston explained NMTV serves at the pleasure of Blaine and the other six member cities. He stated whatever the city decides, NMTV would do everything in its power to see it through to a beneficial end.

Mayor Sanders thanked Mr. Houston and Ms. Peterson for attending this meeting and sharing their feedback.

#### **4. Other Business**

Ms. Wolfe shared updates regarding an additional item on the Council agenda, Walter's CUP amendment update and proposed changes to pickup days, and the possible removal of a pier at Lochness Park.

#### **5. Adjournment**

The workshop was adjourned at 6:59PM.



Signed by

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Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

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Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk