



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

October 14, 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: Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Fire Chief Dan Retka; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2024-458 SBM Fire Department - Quarterly Update
Sponsors: Dan Retka, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Retka provided the council with a quarterly update. He explained calls were up 38% this year and this was due to a big increase in medical calls. He stated his crews were doing a great job addressing this increase. He indicated his crews were continuing to address fire prevention through the 100% volunteer Fire Corp in order to educate children, raise awareness for senior citizens, and work to reduce the number of structure fires in the

community. He was pleased to report structure fires were down 30% this year. He commented further on the team and reserve truck that was going to be to assist with hurricane relief in North Carolina, but noted the team was called back. He thanked the City for being willing to support this venture.

Fire Chief Retka reported the SBM Fire Department was unsuccessful with the Safer Grant. He discussed how he would work to maintain response times in the community noting all overnight calls were being responded to from Station 1.

Councilmember Newland requested further information regarding the SBM Open House. Fire Chief Retka explained the open house was no longer held at fire stations, but rather a larger event was held at Aquatore Park.

Councilmember Newland commented on a recent article he read regarding the importance of addressing mental health for fire fighters. Fire Chief Retka stated this was a real concern for his crew members, as well as for police officers given the things these individuals have to see on a daily basis. He noted he recently had two firefighters retire for mental health reasons.

Councilmember Massoglia suggested the SBM Fire Department reach out to Diane Stores because she used to be a chaplain and has the Door of Hope Counseling. Fire Chief Retka indicated the department's chaplain program had been put on hold at this time but it was his hope to bring this program back for his crew members in 2025.

Councilmember Larson asked why the fire department was responding to all medical calls. Fire Chief Retka explained the fire department is doing much more than fire calls and his crew members were trained to one level below EMS. He reported his crews automatically respond to all car crashes, overdoses, lift assists, heart attack, stroke calls or if the police department is overloaded. Safety Services Director/Police Chief Podany stated Allina does a great job but wait times were quite high at this time. He indicated the increase in medical calls may be due to the aging population and changes to the healthcare system.

Further discussion ensued regarding the types of calls the fire department was responding to and how these calls were taking a toll on the mental health of both police and fire.

Fire Chief Retka commented on how the calls for service would only continue to rise unless the department began to advocate more for fire prevention and fire awareness.

The Council thanked Fire Chief Retka for his detailed presentation.

- 3.2.** 2024-435 Land Uses for Properties (Kempf and McKinley) Southwest of 125th Avenue and Lexington Avenue
 Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, City Planner

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the properties located southwest of Lexington Avenue and 125th Avenue (shown on map) are owned by the Kempf and McKinley families and are zoned Farm Residential (FR), and a land use designation of Low

Density Residential (LDR). Each parcel is developed with a single-family home, except for the three far west parcels which are vacant. The six properties have an area of approximately 132 acres. The properties have some trees and scattered wetlands throughout the site that may create some site obstacles with the development of the parcels. The FR district is intended for areas where urban services are not presently available. A minimum lot size of ten (10) acres will retain these lands in their natural uses and agricultural uses pending proper timing of economical provision for parks, streets, utilities, and other public facilities, so that orderly development will occur. The LDR land use designation is for single family detached residential homes at a density of 2.5-6 units an acre. For these sites to develop, further rezoning will be necessary.

Mr. Thorvig explained a 16-inch water main currently runs within the platted right-of-way that connects Lakes Parkway and 122nd Ave NE. This existing right-of-way is located on parcel 11-31-23-24-0003 and along the southern portion of 11-31-23-24-0002 (3700 125th Avenue NE), these are the two western parcels. A water main would need to be extended to serve any of the other remaining parcels. The sanitary sewer main is currently constructed within the 122nd Avenue NE alignment with service to the City of Blaine Water Treatment Plant. Extension of the sanitary sewer from the existing eastern location will be required to service the noted properties. All properties within the subject area front onto 125th Avenue NE/Main Street/CSAH 14. This road is maintained by Anoka County and therefore any access to this road would need to be approved by Anoka County. In addition, it is anticipated that all properties within the subject area will receive access to the future Lakes Parkway NE extension. The construction of this extension will be required with development of the noted parcels. It was noted staff has received questions related to the development of these parcels and is requesting feedback on the Council's land use thoughts for these parcels. Staff commented further on the potential for these properties and asked how the council wanted to see these parcels guided for future development and what feedback could be provided to future developers.

Councilmember Larson requested further information regarding the price on the two properties. Mr. Thorvig explained the McKinley property has 52 acres with a list price of \$7.5 million and the Kempf property has 80 acres and staff was unaware of the list price.

Mayor Sanders stated he would like this area to have the same look and feel as The Lakes development. He explained this was one of the last areas where there was an ability to compete with Ham Lake when it comes to lot size. He indicated he would love to see larger lots in this area. He questioned if it made sense to have another lake or water feature in this area. Mr. Thorvig reported the wetlands could not be turned into stormwater ponds, but noted there may be a cost trade off for a larger lake. He noted this would depend on how the developer wanted to design this development.

Councilmember Fleming indicated she would like to see mostly single family homes on these properties with larger lot sizes and trees being preserved.

Councilmember Robertson agreed less would be more for this development even if this takes 20 years to develop. She discussed how unique this opportunity would be, because 130 acres would be available. She reported she would like to see the tree canopy preserved, but understood there may be buckthorn and ash trees on this property. She indicated she supported this development having larger lots.

Councilmember Larson stated she lived closely to this property. She understood it was always Gary Gorham's plan to extend The Lakes to the corner. She discussed how unique this neighborhood was and she hoped the new property could be a continuation of The Lakes with larger lots for single family homes.

Councilmember Newland indicated Main Street/125th Avenue would not get any smaller or slower, but rather there would be more use as time goes on. He questioned who would build a \$750,000 home along Main Street/125th Avenue and suggested medium density be considered instead. Otherwise, he supported larger lots and a continuation of The Lakes for the remaining property.

Councilmember Robertson asked how specific the city could get with the development flex requirements. She stated she really did not want townhouses on this property. She indicated she may be able to support more modern row homes. Mr. Thorvig reported that if a developer were to request development flex or a PUD the city council would have more say over how this property develops.

Councilmember Massoglia supported this property being zoned R-1 versus Development Flex. Mr. Thorvig commented on the differences between R-1 and PUD zoning. He stated the R-1 zoning district would allow for 85+ foot wide lots.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he supported the idea of a lake within this development.

Councilmember Larson discussed how there were currently not townhomes along Main Street/125th Avenue within The Lakes, rather the homes were setback from Main Street/125th Avenue. She stated she was not interested in rental homes on this property.

Mayor Sanders stated he believed The Lakes development was very well done, but he understood the future developer for this land would have to make the economics work for this vacant land.

Mr. Thorvig thanked the council for their feedback.

3.3. 2024-319 Temporary Signs Discussion

Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, Community Development Director

Mr. Thorvig shared that temporary sign code violations are increasing and staff is seeking feedback on current requirements. Historically, staff would periodically discuss this topic with council to understand the level of enforcement and general philosophy. This hasn't occurred in several years and staff is seeking feedback from the current council. He reported common violations include but are not limited to:

- Feather/banner signs without a permit: One feather sign with a maximum width of 3.5 feet and maximum height of 18 feet OR one banner with a maximum area of 32 square feet. The signs should be setback at least 10 feet from the property line and are not permitted within the right-of-way. Several properties have more than one

feather sign, and often a banner as well, without a permit and placed in the right-of-way.

- Temporary sign permits allow an unlimited number of signage (feathers and banners) for a total of 8-weeks per calendar year (new businesses get 10 weeks).
- Window signage is limited to a maximum of 25% coverage. Solid colored window coverings are not considered signage.

Mr. Thorvig reported sign is defined as: Any letters, words, symbols, poster, picture, device reading matter, or representation in the nature of a message, announcement, visual communication, or advertisement, whether printed, painted, posted, affixed, constructed, or displayed for the purpose of information or communication. This definition includes sign structural supports, uprights, bracing and framework. The term sign shall specifically include architectural or graphic features which are intrinsically associated with a particular product, good, service, business, firm, corporation, or profession. Images, poster, mascots are considered signage because they are associated with the nature of the business (i.e. the paw print at Pet Suites or the cow at Chick-Fil-A). Staff commented further on the usage of temporary signs in the community and requested feedback from the council on how to address this matter.

Councilmember Fleming discussed how important signage was for advertising businesses and stated she was not offended by the signs that were wrapped over stacks of tires. She indicated she wanted to see businesses succeeding in Blaine. She supported allowing these types of signs for four weeks, twice a year.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she did not support the wrapped tire stack signage. While she understood the City needed to support small and local business owners, she did not support the majority of temporary signage.

Mr. Thorvig questioned if staff should be more proactive when addressing temporary signage.

Councilmember Robertson supported the temporary signs being removed.

Mayor Sanders suggested staff be solution oriented when addressing local business owners and that staff explain what is and is not allowed within the city's sign ordinance. Mr. Thorvig indicated this has been staff's approach.

Councilmember Newland supported businesses having one temporary sign for up to four weeks, versus two signs and both being in place for eight weeks. He stated the goal would be to elevate the community and to have Blaine more reflective of Arbor Lakes in the future, especially the area surrounding 105th and Radisson Road.

Mayor Sanders wanted to see the city remain friendly to small business owners, while also cleaning up the language and reducing the amount of time temporary signs could be in place. He suggested temporary signs be in place for four weeks instead of eight weeks. He recommended staff address the temporary black signs as well.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she did not support inflatables of any kind for

temporary signs. She suggested staff consider providing new business owners with a welcome to Blaine informational packet and that temporary sign and permanent sign information be included.

Councilmember Massoglia supported the heart of the city being cleaner from temporary signage but understood this was difficult because the city wanted local businesses to succeed. He suggested staff pursue feedback from local business owners on this matter. Mr. Thorvig stated it would benefit staff to receive feedback from local business owners.

Mr. Thorvig discussed how staff has been working with Scooters Coffee on temporary signage concerns.

3.4. 2024-470 Adult-Use Cannabis Zoning Discussion

Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, Community Development Director

Mr. Thorvig stated the council discussed this item at the October 7, 2024, workshop meeting and that follow-up discussion was necessary. Adult-use cannabis was legalized in August 2023. The legislation created the framework for licensing and establishing the Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) for regulation, and requires cities to issue a retail registration to a cannabis micro business/mezzo business with a retail operation's endorsement, a cannabis retailer, medical cannabis retailer, or lower-potency hemp edible retail that:

- Has a valid license issued by the OCM.
- Has paid the registration fee.
- Is found to be in compliance with the requirements of the applicable state laws through a preliminary compliance check performed by the city.
- Is current on all property taxes and assessments at the location where the retail establishment is located.

Councilmember Larson asked if cannabis manufacturing would only occur in an industrial area. Mr. Thorvig reported this was the case, but commented on how this use could travel for up to one mile.

Councilmember Fleming indicated personally she would not like to see this use anywhere near her home and didn't think others would either.

Councilmember Newland suggested the city eliminate this particular use until the council has a better understanding on the cannabis industry.

Councilmember Fleming and Councilmember Larson agreed with this recommendation.

The city council discussed preliminary zoning regulations at the July 8, 2024, workshop. Staff reviewed the guidance that has been provided to date. Based on feedback from the workshop, staff will prepare an ordinance for review by the council at a future workshop this fall.

4. Other Business

The council discussed allotments for the city's charitable gambling funds.

5. Adjournment

The workshop was adjourned at 7:45PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk