



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

February 19, 2025 | 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 Pro Tem Robertson at 5:30PM.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Mayor Pro Tem Jess Robertson, Councilmembers Terra Fleming, Chris Ford, Leslie Larson, Chris Massoglia, and Tom Newland.

ABSENT: Mayor Tim Sanders.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Assistant Community Development Director Sheila Sellman; Deputy Police Chief Joe Gerhard; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Tom Loonan; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2025-52 Twin Cities Gateway Presentation
Sponsors: Guest: Al Stauffacher

Al Staffacher, Twin Cities Gateway Bureau President/CEO, thanked the council for their time and provided the council with an update on the focus of the Twin Cities Gateway Bureau. He reported the bureau now had 11 cities after the recent addition of Ramsey. He commented further on the tourism, promotional and educational work he does on behalf of the 11 cities in order to bring tourists to the many cities' hotels. He explained the bureau is

served by a board made up of 20 members. He stated he was seeking an at-large member (hotelier) from the city of Blaine at this time. He reviewed the post-pandemic numbers for the 25 hotels within the bureau, then described how a portion of the lodging receipts can be utilized for marketing and tourism for the 11 cities.

Lisa Peterson, Twin Cities Gateway Bureau, explained she was the marketing director at Twin Cities Gateway. She commented on the 2025 work plan and discussed the expos she attends on an annual basis in order to promote the 11 cities within the bureau. She reviewed how Blaine's economy, restaurants and small businesses were impacted by hotel stays and visitors.

Mr. Staffacher further discussed how the NSC impacts tourism in Blaine. He indicated he attends four major sports conferences on a yearly basis in order to continue to draw sporting events to the Twin Cities Gateway cities. He explained 85% of the sporting events within the gateway occurred in Blaine. He asked if there were any comments or questions from the council.

Councilmember Massoglia thanked Mr. Staffacher and Ms. Peterson for the presentation then questioned what percent of lodging tax was charged in the city of Blaine. Mr. Staffacher reported the Twin Cities Gateway Bureau had a 3% lodging tax.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned what percentage of hotel proceeds was given back to the member cities. Mr. Staffacher estimated this to be close to 15%.

Councilmember Newland asked how the city used the gateway bureau dollars in 2024. City Manager Wolfe reported this funding was used for special events, such as Oktoberfest.

Ms. Wolfe suggested Kelly Goodrich from the NSC be considered for the at-large position from Blaine for the gateway bureau.

Mayor Pro Tem Robertson thanked Mr. Staffacher and Ms. Peterson for their detailed presentation.

3.2. 2025-53 TH65 Bridge and Noise Wall Aesthetics
 Sponsors: Daniel Schluender, Director of Engineering

Director of Engineering Schluender stated the Minnesota Department of Transportation, MnDOT, has a consultant preparing the final design plans and specifications for TH 65 that will install bridges at 99th Avenue, 105th Avenue, 109th Avenue, 117th Avenue, and the pedestrian bridge at 113th/114th Avenues. The 60% design was submitted to MnDOT and the other agencies for review and comment on February 10. Once review comments are received, the plan and specification will be advanced to 95%. The city now needs to let MnDOT know what aesthetics need to be included in the plans. As the council will recall, the preliminary plan required a Visual Quality Manual to be created that showed in concept the general Aesthetic treatments of the bridges and the landscaping of the local streets (roundabouts and boulevards). As a starting point for the bridge treatments, there was a review of the bridge colors and textures in the corridor at 121st Avenue/Paul Parkway, 125th

Avenue, and 129th Avenue. These colors and textures are listed on page 1 of the attachment. To tie the TH 65 corridor together throughout Blaine, the new bridges would follow similar colors and textures but could customize the abutment wall textures to look or give a sense of location or place. MnDOT has reviewed these preliminary concepts and has concerns over several textures and colors as they are not their standards. MnDOT created several color and texture pages with similar but not exact matches. Staff has reviewed these suggested alterations to the bridge colors and textures along with the options for the sound walls and have made recommendations based on the existing corridor and long-term maintenance. Please note that staff will bring back an item in the future to discuss the landscaping elements on the local roads. Staff commented further on the proposed plans for the TH65 corridor and requested feedback from the council regarding the bridge aesthetics, pedestrian bridge and sound walls.

Mayor Pro Tem Robertson asked how the council wanted to proceed with the four bridges.

Councilmember Newland stated he supported staff's recommendations regarding the bridges, noting it made sense to tie them all together. He indicated he liked the color scheme as well.

Councilmember Fleming explained she supported staff's recommendations as well.

Mayor Pro Tem Robertson supported the 105th corridor being different in order to set the area apart in the city.

Councilmember Fleming supported this suggestion.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if cost the city extra money to do different things on each bridge. Mr. Schluender explained there was room for discussion with MNDOT in order to have the 105th bridge different from the other bridges along TH65.

Council consensus was to support staff's recommendation regarding the bridge aesthetics.

Mr. Schluender questioned how the council wanted to proceed with the pedestrian bridge.

Councilmember Fleming indicated she did not like dark green and suggested the gray green be used for the pedestrian bridge.

Councilmember Newland stated he liked the dark green color the best for the pedestrian bridge.

Councilmember Ford explained he supported the dark green color for the pedestrian bridge.

Council consensus was to support staff's recommendation regarding the pedestrian bridge.

Mr. Schluender inquired how the council wanted to proceed with the sound wall design.

Council consensus was to support staff's recommendation regarding the sound walls.

3.3. 2025-54 Blaine City Manager Recruitment Process
 Sponsors: Scott Johnson, Director of Administrative Services

Administrative Services Director Johnson stated staff will provide an update of the Request for Proposals (RFP) that has been sent to recruitment firms for the upcoming city manager opening. The city manager is under the direction of the mayor and city council, this position directs and manages all city operations to ensure the effective and efficient operation of all city departments. The position develops administrative policies and procedures for the city; enforces the laws, ordinances and resolutions of the city; monitors and drafts legislation; maintains a fiscally sound budget; and manages the daily operations of the city. Additionally, this position will work and communicate with citizens, business interests, commissioners, federal, state and local government entities and elected officials, and others regarding the city and its priorities. The deadline for the RFP is February 21, 2025 at 12 noon. It was noted council will have an opportunity to review the proposals and select a firm.

Ms. Wolfe stated this was not a bid process but rather was a proposal process and the city council did not have to select the lowest-cost firm.

Councilmember Newland asked if the RFP was only sent to local firms. Mr. Johnson reported the RFP was sent to nine national firms.

Councilmember Newland questioned what the going rate was for a recruitment firm. Mr. Johnson estimated the cost would range between \$25,000 and \$35,000. Ms. Wolfe anticipated the cost for the recruitment firm would be covered in the budget through vacancy savings.

3.4. 2025-55 Federal and State Lobbying Update
 Sponsors: Michelle Wolfe, City Manager

Ms. Wolfe provided a brief update regarding state and federal lobbying activities. Specifically, there will be a discussion about legislation Blaine is proposing, as well as legislation impacting Blaine. At the federal level, we are working closely with The Ferguson Group to finalize our FY26 earmark requests, while continuing to monitor our FY25 request (mobile command unit). She was pleased to report both bills regarding the 105th area were introduced in the House and would be getting a hearing.

Mr. Schluender discussed how legislators were working on additional transportation dollars for the TH65 project for temporary traffic controls that may become permanent. He reported staff has been working with Anoka County as well on this matter and noted he would keep the council apprised on this matter.

4. Other Business

After a motion and second, council moved to a closed session pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05 Subd. 3(c)(1) for an update regarding negotiations for the potential purchase of the properties located at 2170 106th Lane NE and 10500 Nassau Street.

5. Adjournment

The workshop was adjourned at 6:59PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk