



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

April 14, 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 Sanders at 5:30PM.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Chris Ford, Leslie Larson, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Terra Fleming.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Public Works Director Nick Fleischhacker; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; City Attorney Erik Larson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Fire Chief Dan Retka; IT Manager Paul Grosse; IT Administrator Bob Wolfe.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2025-214 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.05 Subd. (3)(d) Security Briefing
Sponsors: Brian Podany, Safety Services Manager/Police Chief

After a motion and a second, the workshop was closed at 5:31PM pursuant to MN Statute 13D.05 subd.(3)(d) security briefing.

- 3.2.** 2025-81 Council Requested Items for Discussion

Council opened the meeting at 6:44PM.

Councilmember Robertson proposed the city consider implementing an MS4 permitting process. This is a service currently conducted by the watershed district(s). An MS4 permit is required for any construction project that removes the vegetative cover and exposes soils to the natural elements or creates additional hard surface. The permit requires that these projects show how they will handle storm water runoff and protect water resources at or near the project.

Council consensus was to bring the item forward for consideration.

3.3. 2025-82 Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trail Development Project - Phase 1
Sponsors: Daniel Schluender, Director of Engineering

Director of Engineering Schluender stated city council previously approved the contract with Stantec for preliminary design, including an estimated cost for construction of a trail system through the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary. The proposed trail system has been in the works for many years, with the original north section of trail and boardwalk being constructed in 2016/2017. City staff have been working with Stantec to develop an up-to-date concept of the next phase of trails and boardwalk for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary.

Jacob Burgstahler, Stantec, presented the preliminary trail layout map, elevations, building material options and cost estimates for the project. Phasing of the project was discussed. It was noted the NRCB saw this presentation by Stantec at their March meeting. Staff indicated construction is currently budgeted for phasing throughout 2025-2027. The Open Space Capital budget is the funding source for the project. Currently, there is approximately \$6,000,000 in the open space fund.

Council consensus was to move forward as proposed.

3.4. 2025-83 SBM Fire Department - Quarterly Update
Sponsors: Dan Retka, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Retka provided the council with a quarterly update.

3.5. 2025-84 2026 Budget - Review of Small Group Meetings; Outcomes and Council Direction
Sponsors: Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Finance Director Zimmerman stated at the February 10 workshop, staff presented a review of the 2025 budget process with suggestions to improve the process going forward. As part

of those discussions, the development of a budget schedule was determined to be worthwhile for several reasons, as it provides a structured and organized approach to the complex budgeting process. In essence, a budget schedule is a vital tool for local governments to effectively manage their finances, ensure accountability, and promote transparency. Finance Department staff scheduled small group discussions with Council during the second week of April to provide measured assumptions that incorporate operating, capital, and debt funding strategies as outlined in previous budgetary cycles while maintaining existing staffing and service levels at anticipated 2026 costs. An outcome of these small group meetings would be the creation of a policy-driven framework containing key themes, goals, and expectations for the 2026 budget and property tax levy. Pending informal consensus of the council, this document will be shared with departments to provide an outline of budget guidelines to ensure conformance with council direction.

Mr. Zimmerman explained while further discussions will be required to address the wide spectrum of funds the city maintains, the initial focus of the budget kick-off will be on the 2026 property tax levy, as a preliminary, or maximum levy must be certified to the County Auditor by September 30 in accordance with state statute. Staff requested feedback to ensure staff and Council alignment on the 2026 budget and property tax levy.

Council generally concurred with the budget guidelines outline as presented.

3.6. 2025-85 Compensation Study Introduction
 Sponsors: Scott Johnson, Director of Administrative Services

Director of Administrative Services Johnson reported in 2024, the City budgeted for a compensation plan review by Gallagher to update the study implemented for the city in 2021. The 2021 process included a comprehensive review of positions and classifications, plan structure, and market analysis. A review of plans every three to five years is recommended as a best practice to stay competitive in the market and maintain integrity of the plan. (Similarly, salary and benefit information is gathered and analyzed for each labor contract negotiation process.) Goals for having a sound and competitive compensation structure include addressing the following:

- High employee retention rates/low turnover rates
- Successful recruitment to fill vacant positions
- Compliance with Minnesota Pay Equity statute
- Decreased liability for compensation-related claims

Mr. Johnson explained Gallagher began work on the market study in the late fall of 2024, and included work to analyze current salary trends within the public sector industry to ensure that the city will have a competitive market position in attracting and retaining top talent. The goal was to ensure that compensation practices are competitive, equitable, and aligned with the city's budgetary priorities. Gallagher will be completing their work in the near future and staff was providing an introductory presentation on their comprehensive market study.

4. Other Business

None.

5. Adjournment

The workshop was adjourned at 8:46PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk