City of Blaine
City Council Workshop

April 21, 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 5:34PM.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders (arrived at 5:45PM), Councilmembers Terra Fleming, Chris Ford, Leslie Larson, Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Chris Massoglia.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Assistant Community Development Director Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administration Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Zoning Technician Alex Koberoski; Public Works Director Nick Fleishhacker; City Attorney Tom Loonan; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

3.1. 2025-86 Temporary Signs Discussion II
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Assistant Community Development Director

Assistant Community Development Director Sellman stated 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 is a continuation of the previous workshop discussions in 2024. Staff reviewed the discussion that was held at the October 14 workshop regarding temporary signs and provided a presentation that provided real examples of signage within the City, while also commenting on what other cities do, which tend to be more restrictive than Blaine, and a summary table of the proposed changes.

Council consensus was to take a more proactive approach for enforcement when staff sees violations when out in the field but not proactively seek out violations. In addition, consensus was to regulate size, number and type through a temporary sign permit and allow temporary signs for four weeks; allow for 2 banners 32 square feet each; allow for 2 feather signs of 3.5 feet wide, 18 feet in height; and 5 H-frame/A-frame, 6 square feet in size. Council consensus was to regulate special event temporary signs in size, number and type with a permit allowing for 2 weeks, 2 times a year and continue to allow 1 - 32 square foot banner OR 1 flag, as allowed currently. This is indefinitely per parcel, not per business. Consensus was also to prohibit inflatables and stringers/pennants.

3.2. 2025-87 Home Occupation Discussion IV

Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Assistant Community Development Director

Ms. Sellman stated in previous workshops, the council discussed different home occupation scenarios to determine what should be allowed and prohibited and possibly create different standards in the Farm Residential (FR) zoning district. Staff reviewed the items in which there was general council consensus. She reported council discussed adding a list of prohibited uses for all districts and interim uses in FR for properties greater than or equal to three acres. Interim uses are like conditional uses. They are processed the same and subject to findings but have an expiration date. Once expired, they will need to apply for a new Interim Use Permit (IUP).

Council agreed to changes as presented but to continue to allow certain businesses through a conditional use permit, not an interim use permit.

3.3. 2025-88 Lift Station 13 Project Update and Costs

Sponsors: Nick Fleischhacker, Public Works Director

Director of Engineering Dan Schluender and Public Works Director Fleischhacker stated this is a complex, multi-year project determined to be a top priority from a risk management perspective. It is such a critical part of our sanitary sewer system infrastructure that council approved the allocation of $3 million from ARPA funds towards the project. Initially, the project was estimated to be $6 million. An initial contract was issued to an engineering firm to design the project. As more was learned during this phase, the scope of the project grew. In addition, some of the costs were impacted due to inflationary impacts during the time between initial estimates, final design, and bidding. When the construction project was bid, there were two bids received ($5.2m and $8.1m). Council awarded the contract to the low bidder at the February 3 meeting. With a 10% contingency added, the low bid resulted in a total that was over the current budget amounts of $6,650,000 ($650,000 reserves, $3m ARPA, $3m revenue bonds.) When the February 3 item was prepared, the previous year's project revenue expenses were inadvertently missed and therefore, it appeared that the construction item was within budget. Council awarded the contract.

Staff explained the February 19 agenda item was the final piece for the project, a $348,974 contract for construction services. This is an important critical function in a large, complex capital improvement project. In preparing the item, it was discovered that the previous year's revenue and expenditure information had been missed in the February 3 item, resulting in the project being over budget. The award of the contract for the construction services would result in an additional expenditure for the project, and accurate information was reported in that item. When this was discovered, staff were instructed to look at other projects that could be delayed or changed in order to provide funding for the additional costs on Lift Station #13. Staff are prepared to make accommodations to allow this project to continue, as it continues to be the highest priority for the sanitary sewer system. The construction contingency amount is approximately $547,000, which represents over 1/3 of the projected overage. If contingency funds in that amount are not needed, it will reduce the impact of the need to move other projects.

Staff reported Finance had previously identified the need for a project accounting process to make it much easier, clear, and transparent to track capital project financials. This process will greatly increase the ability for all staff involved in a project to track the budgeted amounts, contract awards, and expenditures. The LS #13 project is a vital infrastructure initiative to modernize the city's aging sewer system, ensuring long-term reliability and sustainability. Originally initiated in response to multiple sewer system failures, the project has expanded from a rehabilitation project to a reconstruction project to address critical components of the sewer infrastructure. Staff commented further on the proposed phases for the project, funding summary and timeline and asked if there were any questions they could answer as the item was scheduled for the regular agenda later this evening.

Council asked that staff reports include more background going forward that includes process updates, previous council actions with meeting dates, etc.

4. Other Business

Communications Manager Hayle shared an update on meeting setup in Chambers.

5. Adjournment

The workshop was adjourned at 6:38PM.

CITY OF BLAINE
L'ETOILE DU NORD
ANOKA CO., MINN.

Signed by ______________________

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by ______________________

Catherine M. Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk