City of Blaine
City Council Workshop

July 7, 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 Tim Sanders (arrived at 5:35PM), Councilmembers Terra Fleming, Chris Ford, Leslie Larson, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: Interim City Manager/Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Assistant Community Development Director Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Deputy Public Works Director Jason Grode; Public Works Supervisor - Water Kristian Gaasland; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Community Development Specialist Elizabeth Showalter; City Attorney Eric Larson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

3.1. 2025-145 Charter Amendment - Councilmember Salary Review
Sponsors: Cathy Sorensen, City Clerk

City Clerk Sorensen stated City Charter Sec. 2-07. – Salaries states that the monthly salary of each of the councilmembers and mayor shall be established by ordinance. Council had directed the charter commission to annually review surveys of council salaries from comparable/surrounding cities for recommendations on possible adjustments for consideration and any adjustments recommended would be presented to council and, if concurred with, an ordinance amendment would be processed. Pursuant to MN Statute 415.11, no change in salary shall take effect until after the next succeeding municipal election. The last increase to salaries occurred in 2025; prior to that changes last occurred in 2015. The current salary ordinance, adopted February 2024 and effective January 2025, is listed below:

> Sec. 2-31. Salaries of mayor and councilmembers.
> Salaries of mayor and councilmembers.
> Pursuant to the City Charter, section 2.07, and Minn. Stat. § 415.11, as amended, the salary of the mayor shall be increased to $1,526.25 per month; and the salary of the councilmembers shall be increased to $1,121.80 per month, effective January 1, 2025.

Ms. Sorensen explained the charter commission had presented a charter amendment last year that outlined a mechanism for regular review and recommendation of future salary changes that would be consistent with any cost of living salary increases afforded to city staff as outlined below:

> Sec. 2.07. Salaries.
> The monthly salary of each of the councilmembers and the mayor shall be established by ordinance. <u>Review of salaries shall be conducted in June of every odd numbered year and recommendations for adjustments, if any, be based on the annual cost of living adjustments consistent with staff.</u> The mayor and councilmembers, in addition to the above salaries, shall be paid a reasonable sum for each day and their reasonable expenses incurred while traveling outside the city on the city's business.

Ms. Sorensen reported with the amendment failing 6-1 last year because it did not receive a unanimous vote by the council, the commission met on May 20, 2025, and reviewed the amendment language again, and after discussion, is proposing the following amendment instead:

> Sec. 2.07. Salaries.
> The monthly salary of each of the councilmembers and the mayor shall be established by ordinance<u>. The council will review salaries of mayor and councilmembers in June of every odd numbered year and any adjustments should be based on the prior two years of cost of living adjustments consistent with those provided to staff and established by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics and the US Department of Labor.</u> The mayor and councilmembers, in addition to the above salaries, shall be paid a reasonable sum for each day and their reasonable expenses incurred while traveling outside the city on the city's business.

Ms. Sorensen commented that the intent of this revised amendment is to ensure when reviews occur and that those reviews are based on data provided by the Bureau of Labor and Statistics and the US Department of Labor. As this language was different to what was presented last year, the commission wanted to receive council feedback prior to the required public hearing.

Councilmember Newland asked how the language differed this year from last year. Ms. Sorensen commented the difference was in who would establish the numbers, which would now be the Bureau of Labor Statistics and the US Department of Labor.

Councilmember Newland indicated he supported the language as presented by staff.

Councilmember Robertson reported the majority of the council wanted to move forward with the previous amendment and she supported leaving this in the hands of the charter commission. In addition, she supported more regular reviews of the council pay, versus being done once every ten years. Ms. Sorensen clarified the review would be at staff's directive and not the charter commission's directive and would occur in June of every odd-numbered year.

Councilmember Fleming indicated she supported the proposed language change as it would recognize the council's efforts on behalf of the community.

Councilmember Massoglia shared his preference for last year's draft language and suggested, rather than the council review salaries, that a review occur instead, as it doesn't seem right to have the council review their own salaries.

Council provided feedback that supported the proposed language.

Ms. Sorensen noted the charter commission would be finalizing this language at their August meeting and staff would likely bring the item forward to the council in September.

3.2. 2025-146 Concept Plan for Flowerfield Road

Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Assistant Community Development Director

Assistant Community Development Director Sellman stated the applicant is requesting concept plan review for a 32 lot single family subdivision at the northeast corner of Lexington Avenue and Flowerfield Road. Since the project is consistent with the comprehensive plan and has fewer than 50 lots, concept plan review is not required, however, the applicant is requesting this review prior to development of the more detailed plans necessary for a formal application. Stonegate Builders is proposed to construct both product types. Stonegate is a local builder who has not previously built in Blaine and offers a wide range of home designs and materials. Staff reviewed example elevations and floor plans for a villa and a two-story homes. If a formal application is made, staff would craft conditions for consideration to be included in the required CUP to ensure that the homes built are consistent with the examples.

Mark Anther, Fenway Land Group, introduced himself and discussed the Flowerfield Road concept plan in further detail with the council. He explained the site was 30 acres in size with a great deal of wetland along with a regional sewer line. He indicated this created challenges in finding the right product mix that worked with the land. He stated he would be partnering with Stonegate Builders on this project and they have been around for many years. He commented further on the open space and trees that were located on the parcel. He reviewed examples of the products he was proposing to build within this development and noted he was available for comments or questions.

Councilmember Newland stated he had no problems with the proposed development. He indicated his only concern was with how increased traffic would impact Flowerfield Road, because this was a narrow, rural roadway. He asked if the city had any plans to improve Flowerfield Road given the concerns that have been raised by the neighbors. Director of Engineering Schluender discussed the development that occurred along Flowerfield Road in 2014. He noted Flowerfield Road was a rural roadway section with three foot shoulders.

Councilmember Newland questioned if any improvements were planned for Flowerfield Road in the near future. Mr. Schluender discussed the complexities with upgrading and improving Flowerfield Road noting this would require filling in and purchasing wetland credits.

Councilmember Ford commented he supported the proposed development, but he agreed that the traffic along Flowerfield Road should be considered because this was a narrow roadway. He recommended a pedestrian trail be considered for safety purposes. Mr. Schluender stated staff has requested the developer look at connecting the Ghia Street cul de sac to Lexington Avenue with a trail.

Councilmember Robertson thanked the developer for bringing this development forward for council consideration. She explained she appreciated the elevated design elements. She asked that staff address the overgrown ditch grass and shoulders along Flowerfield Road for safety purposes. She stated this was a unique pocket in Blaine because this project was close to both Circle Pines and Lexington. She asked if it was possible to do a right-in/right-out to Lexington Avenue instead of pouring traffic from this development onto Flowerfield Road. Mr. Schluender said he did not anticipate that Anoka County would approve a right-in/right-out but the developer could make that request.

Councilmember Robertson recommended the developer consider a pedestrian plan in order to keep pedestrians off Flowerfield Road for safety purposes.

Councilmember Larson agreed with Councilmember Robertson's comments. She indicated she appreciated the proposed housing mix and that these units would be Villas, which would be geared towards seniors and empty-nesters.

Councilmember Newland supported the Public Works Department visiting Flowerfield Road in order to cut back the foliage along this roadway because it was so narrow.

Councilmember Ford explained he liked this project but indicated there was no space for pedestrians to walk along this roadway. He agreed the developer would have to consider pedestrian safety within the development plans.

Further discussion ensued regarding the trail segments that were located adjacent to the proposed development.

Councilmember Fleming stated she supported the proposed development and appreciated the unique housing designs being proposed by the developer. She thanked the developer for wanting to invest in Blaine.

Councilmember Larson spoke to a number of property owners already in this area and stated she was uncertain how 30 more housing units would adversely impact traffic, especially given how the new units would be marketed towards seniors.

Councilmember Robertson stated it appears the developer has support for the development from the council and the only concerns were with pedestrian safety along Flowerfield Road and how more trails can be incorporated. She asked that staff visit Flowerfield Road and work to improve driver safety by cutting back the existing overgrown foliage.

Council stressed the need for some type of trail/pedestrian traffic plan should this go forward, as well as potential road improvements to address increased vehicle traffic as Flowerfield Road was already very narrow.

3.3. 2025-147 SBM Fire Department - Quarterly Update
Sponsors: Daniel Retka, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Retka provided the city council with a quarterly update from the SBM Fire Department. He discussed how the staffing changes over the past two years were improving response times for the community. He reported the department had 50 overlapping calls per month and noted this number was rising. He reviewed the upcoming activities the department would be involved in, which included USA Cup and the PGA golf event. He then commented on the need for another station in the northeast corner of Blaine.

Lieutenant Jake Feffer provided a breakdown on Station 1 and commented on the total response area for this station, which included portions of Mounds View. He explained Station 1 was in a great location with great access to highways. He discussed the location of Station 3 and reviewed the response area for this station. He indicated Station 4 was built in 1974 and noted this station was in a decent location. The response zone for Station 4 was further discussed.

Fire Chief Retka commented on the administrative contract that was entered into with Centennial Fire District and discussed the benefits of this contract. He stated his goal would be to bring on Circle Pines and Centerville on a contract basis in the future. Further discussion ensued regarding how gaps would be eliminated if these cities were brought on.

Interim City Manager/Community Development Director Thorvig reported he met with the administrators from Mounds View and Spring Lake Park last week to discuss the future fire station. He indicated the first thing to understand was if this was the preferred location and what the potential costs would be for a new fire station. He commented the cost could be anywhere from $15 to $30 million.

Councilmember Newland questioned if Station 4 was still being used. Fire Chief Retka reported two firefighters were on call back to Fire Station 4. He indicated a staff vehicle was at Station 4 for these two individuals.

Councilmember Newland requested further information regarding how the stations were being staffed. Fire Chief Retka discussed how the fire stations were being staffed, noting only Stations 1 and 3 were being staffed overnight. He explained Station 4 did not have any room for expansion, but noted Centennial Station 1 could fill this gap along with a new station in the northeast corner of Blaine.

Councilmember Robertson thanked Fire Chief Retka for providing the council with further information on the mutual aid agreements that were in place. She appreciated the information that was shared on the department's response times, and she understood why there was a need for a fire station in the northeast corner of Blaine. She thanked Fire Chief Retka for being budget conscious.

Councilmember Ford stated he understood the city needed a fire station on the east side of Blaine, but noted he was not convinced the best place for the fire station was at the corner of 125th and Lexington. He reported fire stations were not necessarily built due to the growth in residential housing, rather he recommended the fire department consider call volumes. He indicated there would be fewer fire calls in newer housing developments than older housing developments.

Councilmember Massoglia explained he greatly appreciated SBM's approach when it came to providing fire services. He stated he was frustrated by how it appears SBM's partners were not paying their afire share. He asked if the contract with Centennial was calculated as if they were part of the JPA and would this be done with Circle Pines and Centerville. Fire Chief Retka described how fees were calculated for Circle Pines and Centerville, noting both of these communities were smaller than Spring Lake Park. He noted fees for these two cities would increase incrementally each year.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned what would be done with Fire Stations 2 and 4. Fire Chief Retka explained Fire Station 2 was still being used to store a command vehicle and for storage for the police department. He indicated there were discussions about selling Fire Station 2 over the next year. He indicated his recommendation would be to sell Fire Station 4 and noted the Centennial School District was interested in purchasing this property. He discussed how the sale of both of these properties would assist with reducing capital and equipment costs for the fire department.

3.4. 2025-148 City Manager Transition Topics

Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, Interim City Manager/Community Development Director

Interim City Manager/Community Development Director Thorvig discussed several key topics regarding his transition into the role of interim city manager with the city council. He explained he appreciated all of the work City Manager Wolfe has done over the past month in order to get him up to speed. He commented on how busy the city was at this time and noted nothing would be put on the back burner, except major policy decisions. He reported the budget would be moving forward in full force along with the well interference project. He asked how the council wanted to move forward with emails from the public.

Councilmember Robertson stated each email response differed on a case-by-case basis.

Councilmember Larson indicated she liked responding to emails and noted she reached out to staff when she needed assistance.

Mayor Sanders stated he responded in a similar manner noting he liked to acknowledge residents that emailed him, but also reached out to staff for assistance.

Councilmember Newland explained he does not always have the answers for the emails he receives and he simply forwards them onto the city manager for a response.

Mr. Thorvig said he would be holding one-on-one meetings with councilmembers sometime in August.

4. Other Business

Councilmember Massoglia explained he would like start seeing credit card statements and employee reimbursements provided to council on a quarterly basis for transparency purposes and noted he would be making a motion to that effect at the council meeting.

5. Adjournment

The workshop was adjourned at 6:58PM.

Signed by ______________________

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by ______________________

Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk