



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

October 13, 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 Terra Fleming, Chris Ford, Leslie Larson, Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Chris Massoglia.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: Interim Community Development Director Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Community Standards Manager Andy Luedtke; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; City Attorney Lida Bannink; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2025-227 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.03 Subd. (1)(b) - Labor Negotiations Update
Sponsors: Scott Johnson, Director of Administrative Services

After a motion and second the council moved to a closed session pursuant to Minnesota State Statute 13D.03 Subd. (1)(b) to receive a labor negotiations update.

3.2. 2025-228 Discussion of Other Sections of Charter for Possible Review - Sec. 6.05 -
Purchases and Contracts
Sponsors: Cathy Sorensen, City Clerk

City Clerk Sorensen stated that the Charter Commission is seeking feedback on their recommendations for amendments to Section 6.05 - Purchases and Contracts. Staff suggested amending Section 6.05 to clarify which contracts require the mayor's signature during a routine review of city code and charter. Current and potential amended language for Section 6.05 is as follows:

Sec. 6.05. Purchases and Contracts.

The city manager shall be the chief purchasing agent of the city. Contracts for the sale or purchase of supplies, materials, equipment, or the rental thereof, or for the construction, alteration, repair, or maintenance of real or personal property shall be made in accordance with the Uniform Municipal Contracting Law, Minn. Stat. § 471.345, as amended. If the estimated amount of the contract is fifty thousand dollars (\$50,000) or less, the contract may be made by the city manager. All other purchases and contracts shall be submitted to the council for approval. All contracts, bonds, and instruments of any kind submitted to the council for approval to which the city is a party shall be signed by the mayor and the city manager on behalf of the city and executed in the name of the city.

(Ord. No. 356, 6-6-1974; Ord. No. 676, 2-21-1980; Ord. No. 84-818, 3-15-1984; Ord. No. 99-1800, 8-19-1999; Ord. No. 15-2313, 6-4-2015; Ord. No. 19-2427, 6-17-2019)

Ms. Sorensen reported that the commission also discussed increasing the contract limit for the city manager from the current level of \$50,000 to a higher amount. The limit was previously increased from \$10,000 to \$20,000 in 2015 and to the current level of \$50,000 in 2019. The commission requested staff to survey other charter cities' contract limits for discussion at their next meeting. At the September 23 commission meeting, there was general consensus to recommend increasing the limit to \$175,000 based on the following reasons:

- Purchase of any items must be included in the council-approved budget, regardless of amount.
- Operational efficiencies that streamline purchases.
- Comparable to contract limits in other cities.
- Guardrails are still in place based on purchasing policy and statute.

Ms. Sorensen explained that the commission aims to share their thoughts with the council and address any questions prior to making a formal recommendation. Statute dictates the charter amendment process after a formal recommendation is made by the commission. Staff provided additional information on the city's current purchasing policy graphic and a report detailing the number of purchases exceeding \$50,000.

Mayor Sanders inquired about the city manager's recommendation. Ms. Sorensen indicated that City Manager Thorvig supports a higher purchasing limit for the city. Councilmember Newland requested introductions from the charter commission members.

Charter Commission members Ken Anderson, Tom Doran, Al Goracke, Terri Homan, Jasen Howard, Abdi Hussein, Trace Ludewig, and Arman Tagarro introduced themselves.

Ms. Sorensen confirmed that there are 14 active members on the charter commission, noting that state statute allows for 15 members.

Mayor Sanders solicited further thoughts and feedback from the council.

Councilmember Robertson expressed support for the proposed change but felt the timing may be inappropriate, emphasizing the transparency encouraged by the current \$50,000 limit.

Councilmember Larson indicated she could support a limit of \$75,000 or \$100,000 and inquired about the charter commission's recommendation. Ms. Sorensen noted that a survey was conducted on similar-sized cities to inform the council.

Councilmember Newland acknowledged that the \$50,000 cap has been in place for an extended period, supporting an increase but urging consideration of timing. He suggested implementing a phased approach to raising the limit.

Councilmember Ford asked how the \$175,000 limit was determined. Mayor Sanders clarified that this amount is the maximum allowed under state statute for a city of Blaine's size.

Councilmember Ford expressed support for raising the limit, while also noting the need for careful timing. Councilmember Fleming signaled her support for an initial increase to \$100,000, agreeable to the council's suggested timing.

There was general council consensus to recommend that the charter commission proceed with a spending limit increase.

3.3. 2025-229 Proposed Solid Waste Route Changes
 Sponsors: Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Finance Director Zimmerman stated that Walters Refuse and Recycling will present the rationale for a planned change to residential solid waste and recycling collection routes, effective January 5, 2026. Since Walters assumed the city's residential collection contract in January 2016, there have been no major service route changes. The routes have remained unchanged since 2012, when the city switched contracts to Waste Management. As the city has grown and neighborhood patterns have shifted, Walters has evaluated current operational efficiencies and determined that updating the route structure is necessary to maintain reliable, cost-effective service.

Andrew Tortora, Walters Refuse and Recycling, reported on the proposed changes to residential solid waste and recycling collection routes.

Lehi Calvo, Walters Refuse and Recycling, described the anticipated impacts for Blaine residents, noting that the proposed changes are a result of growth in the northeast corner of Blaine. The route adjustments aim to enhance customer service, improve service during large city events, and prepare for upcoming construction on TH65. He mentioned that calendars and postcards would be distributed to Blaine residents to inform them of the proposed changes, and information would also be posted in the *City Connect*. It is estimated that over 7,000 households will be affected by the route changes.

Councilmember Robertson inquired about the last rerouting in Blaine. Mr. Tortora indicated that this was last conducted in 2012, explaining that Blaine has a solid infrastructure that makes the proposed reroute manageable.

Councilmember Newland asked when reroute notifications would be sent to residents. Communications Manager Hayle responded that an article would be included in the city newsletter on November 1, and Walters would send information directly to residents in November, with additional communications in January or February. Councilmember Newland further questioned when organics would be collected in Blaine. Mr. Tortora indicated that Walters would be prepared to accept organics waste in late Q1 of 2026.

Councilmember Ford expressed gratitude to Walters for their presentation and efforts to minimize the impact on Blaine residents.

Mayor Sanders also thanked Walters for their efforts and appreciated the presentation.

3.4. 2025-230 Pulte Residential Concept for Property South of 125th Avenue and West of Zest Street
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Interim Community Development Director

Interim Community Development Director Sellman stated that the City Council reviewed a concept plan in May 2025, which included 83 single-family lots measuring 65 feet wide and 91 townhomes. The Council's consensus at that time was to not support a land use change allowing townhomes, as several members preferred unique homes on larger lots. The applicant has since submitted a revised concept plan proposing upscale single-family homes on 70-foot lots alongside twin homes targeting move-down or retiree buyers, thereby ensuring alignment with the comprehensive plan's minimum density requirements.

Dean Lotter, Pulte Group, highlighted the diversity of housing within The Lakes neighborhood and discussed the plans for the McKinley/Kemp site at the corner of Lexington and Main. He noted differences in wetland protection required for this property compared to those in The Lakes neighborhood, explaining that the McKinley/Kemp site is guided for low-density residential development, permitting 2.5 to 6 units per acre. He stated that a project featuring 80-foot lots would not comply with low-density residential requirements, and a proposal with only 65-foot lots would similarly fall short. Mr. Lotter emphasized that future density requirements will derive from the Metropolitan Council as comprehensive plans are updated. He shared further details that included the proposed single-family lots would measure 70 feet wide and feature high-end homes, with twin homes positioned as alternatives to townhomes for senior or retiree buyers. Mr. Lotter presented refreshed designs for the upscale homes and shared insights on successful amenity-rich

age-restricted twinhome developments constructed by Pulte in Texas, Florida, and Arizona, as well as twinhome projects in Corcoran and Chaska.

Councilmember Larson noted that the previous development did not meet the city's low-density residential (LDR) requirements and inquired about the potential for replatting or rezoning to accommodate larger lot sizes. Ms. Sellman clarified that the area is guided for low-density residential, allowing for 2.5 to 6 units per acre, but the developer has indicated they cannot meet the density requirements due to the wetlands present.

Councilmember Newland expressed appreciation for Mr. Lotter's detailed presentation, recognizing the distinctions between the subject property and The Lakes neighborhood. He voiced support for the proposed twin homes, emphasizing demand in Blaine, and inquired about the distribution between twin homes and single-family homes. Mr. Lotter responded that market research would guide those decisions. Ms. Sellman noted that should the developer seek to increase twin homes in the future, they must return to the city with that proposal.

Councilmember Newland also asked about the construction approach for twin homes and single-family homes. Mr. Lotter explained that buyers would select interior design features, anticipating no speculative homes in the neighborhood due to buyer preferences. The pacing of development would align with demand.

Councilmember Ford expressed his support for the proposed 70+ foot wide lots and twin homes, endorsing Pulte's revised plans. Councilmember Fleming acknowledged the thorough presentation and unique home designs, reaffirming her desire for a low-density project. However, recognizing the constraints posed by wetlands, she indicated support for the proposed plan. Ms. Sellman reiterated that while the developer's project meets LDR density requirements, twin homes are not permitted under LDR zoning, necessitating a reclassification to medium-density residential (MDR).

Mr. Lotter remarked on the challenges faced reconciling city zoning codes with the comprehensive plan, asserting the strength of his proposal given the market for twin homes in Blaine. Councilmember Robertson inquired about discussions with the watershed district. Mr. Lotter confirmed they had spoken with the watershed and would be consulting with a specialist for watershed approval. Councilmember Robertson also asked if twin homes would be age-restricted. Mr. Lotter clarified no such restrictions are planned.

Mayor Sanders requested details regarding the arrangement of units within the development. Ms. Larson questioned why lot sizes could not increase to 80 feet. Mr. Lotter explained the need to ensure the site plan meets minimum density requirements.

Councilmember Newland inquired about the voting threshold for a zoning change. Ms. Sellman confirmed that a simple majority was required.

Mayor Sanders inquired about the inclusion of amenities such as sport courts. Mr. Lotter stated those amenities were not within the current development plans due to site limitations and that they were planning to pay the city's park dedication fee instead.

Councilmember Larson voiced opposition to the project, advocating for R-1 homes to remain competitive with Ham Lake. Councilmember Fleming said while she initially favored R-1, she understood the site's challenges and reflected that complete R-1 development

would result in a less visually-appealing piecemeal approach. She conveyed her trust in staff and developer recommendations, while voicing willingness to support the proposal as a positive development for the city.

Councilmember Newland endorsed Councilmember Fleming's perspective and indicated confidence in the developer's market insights.

Councilmember Ford reiterated his support for the proposed development without necessitating competition with single-family homes in Ham Lake.

Councilmember Robertson inquired if the twinhomes would be age restricted. Mr. Lotter explained Pulte did not plan to have age restrictions on the twinhomes.

Councilmember Robertson suggested implementing requirements during the development flex approval process to prevent uniformity in architectural design.

Mayor Sanders expressed gratitude to Pulte for integrating prior council feedback into the revamped plans, recognizing the enhancements made and the exclusion of townhomes.

3.5. 2025-231 Short-Term Rental Discussion

Sponsors: Andrew Luedtke, Community Standards Manager/Fire Marshal

Community Standards Manager/Fire Marshal Luedtke reported follow-up on the previous discussion in July regarding short-term rentals (STRs). The consensus favored allowing homeowners to utilize their properties to benefit both themselves and the city, noting that STRs primarily occur during major sporting events hosted in Blaine. Staff have consulted with other jurisdictions regarding their STR license discussions and processes, receiving varied feedback. Mr. Luedtke addressed enforcement challenges in consultation with City Attorney Larson, reiterating that STRs are defined as residential properties rented for periods under 30 days and require licensing as rental properties under Article V of the city code.

Councilmember Newland expressed support for establishing minimum and maximum rental periods for STRs, highlighting potential benefits during events such as the USA Cup and 3M Open. Mr. Luedtke acknowledged that while other cities implement such caps, enforcement could be problematic. Mayor Sanders questioned the clarity of enforcement tools available to the city and the necessity for clearer license terms. Mr. Luedtke indicated concerns regarding lessee proof burden.

Councilmember Robertson noted the difficulty in finding an ideal solution for STRs, suggesting that the city should focus on addressing problematic properties without introducing overly complex legislation. Safety Services Director/Police Chief Podany highlighted issues related to single-night rentals hosting weekend parties.

Further discussion included ongoing lawsuits in Apple Valley and Bloomington. Mayor Sanders inquired about the licensing status of STR properties. Mr. Luedtke confirmed they possess rental licenses.

Mayor Sanders proposed considering a "three strikes and you're out" policy to encourage neighborhood respect among renters.

Councilmember Robertson recommended involving the city attorney for further guidance. Councilmember Ford concurred, emphasizing the need for additional consultation on rental licensing fees. Mr. Luedtke detailed fees as \$190 for the first year, including necessary inspections.

Councilmember Ford suggested increasing the rental license fee to help eliminate problem properties not in compliance. Councilmember Larson expressed anticipation for the city attorney's input, supporting the allowance of STRs due to the significant community events.

Mayor Sanders reaffirmed the need to protect Blaine residents and neighbors while implementing stipulations to ensure compliance with city requirements.

4. Other Business

None.

5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 7:22PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk