City of Blaine
City Council Workshop

October 20, 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, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Erik Thorvig; Interim Community Development Director Sheila Sellman; Police Captain Zach Johnson; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Eric Larson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Fire Chief Dan Retka; Accounting Supervisor Haley Chapman; Finance Analyst Nikki Beckers; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

3.1. 2025-232 SBM Fire Department - Quarterly Update
Sponsors: Daniel Retka, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Retka provided the council with a quarterly update from the SBM Fire Department. He reviewed the number of calls for service, noting calls continue to rise, primarily medical calls. He reviewed the average response times for fully staffed Fire Station 1 and 3 which was down to three and a half minutes. He reported this was a tremendous accomplishment for the SBM Fire Department. He explained the response time for the east side of Blaine was eight to nine minutes and the number of calls to this area was relatively low. He stated the Fire Corp has been extremely busy this year and has put in over 4,874 hours in volunteer time. He provided further information on the great work the Care Team was providing to individuals who have had a structure fire. He commented on how the fire department has increased the number of school visits to all 2nd and 4th graders in the community. He reported the Fire Explorers program was back up to 12 explorers which would be a good way for the department to bring in new firefighters. He discussed how the fire department has been working to update its internal policies over the past year. He provided further information on how the SBM Fire Department was providing administrative fire services for the Centennial Fire District. He stated there have been discussions about combining the Centennial Fire District (Centerville and Circle Pines) with the SBM Fire Department. He provided further information on how the combination would benefit all communities involved, while also improving response times for ambulance services. He noted the contract with the Centennial Fire District was bringing in over $1 million in revenue to the SBM Fire Department each year.

Councilmember Massoglia asked how the fire department came up with a fee to charge the Centennial Fire District. Fire Chief Retka reported he followed a formula that has been used in the past and was similar to the fees being charged to Spring Lake Park.

Councilmember Newland requested further information on how the new firefighters were fitting into the department. Fire Chief Retka explained these firefighters bid for a fire station and would be assigned a duty within the fire district, whether in Blaine, Mounds View, Spring Lake Park, Centennial or Circle Pines.

Councilmember Newland inquired if Lino Lakes was at the point where they would be seeking fire service assistance. Fire Chief Retka noted Lino Lakes recently completed a staffing study which showed the fire department needs to go full-time, which would mean a 20% increase in their budget. He noted both Lexington and Lino Lakes had reached out to SBM in the past for services and it was his opinion collaboration would be the way forward for fire services, given how costs have risen.

Councilmember Larson asked if SBM would be interested in providing fire services for Lexington and Lino Lakes. Fire Chief Retka indicated the timing would have to be right. In addition, he stated he would have to have the right infrastructure in place.

Councilmember Ford explained he was curious to learn what kind of command staff would have to be on hand in order to manage fires in the future for all the cities being discussed. Fire Chief Retka commented the SBM Fire Department currently had six shift captains. He noted after bringing on Centennial and Circle Pines, the department would be adding six more paid on-call lieutenants for the east side. In addition, a battalion chief would be added, noting the department would remain at three firefighters per command staff member.

Fire Chief Retka ended his presentation by discussing the training his firefighters were receiving on a yearly basis. He thanked the council for their continued support and stated he was available for comments or questions.

Councilmember Robertson encouraged Fire Chief Retka to consider celebrating the fire department awards and promotions at a city council meeting. Fire Chief Retka stated he would consider this for a future council meeting.

3.2. 2025-233 Charitable Gambling - 2026 Awards
Sponsors: Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Finance Director Zimmerman stated the 2026 Charitable Gambling Fund budget and award process were presented at the October 6 City Council Workshop, with the intent of remaining consistent with past practice based on Council feedback. On October 7, staff emailed Council scoring sheets and supplemental information for each of the 21 applications received to assist with allocating 2026 funds, which are set at $193,790 based on 2024 actual revenues. In addition to the standard procedure of generating award scenarios structured on Council input using the application materials that were received, staff has also prepared an additional model that would allow the city to provide funding to Blaine Youth Hockey Association (BYHA) and Spring Lake Park Youth Hockey Association (SLPYHA) based on the request submitted in 2024. Staff reviewed the different scenarios with the council and requested direction on how to proceed with the charitable gambling awards.

Councilmember Robertson explained she supported Scenario 1. She explained she was not certain whether Local Affordable Housing Aid (LAHA) dollars should be used for these requests, because LAHA funding may not be available in 10 years. She was of the opinion that when it comes to charitable gambling awards the council should not be taking the same actions as was done in 1994. She supported using charitable gambling funds in a manner that has the biggest impact on the community. She said she was not supportive of the large request from the National Sports Center regarding the need to support ice time for the hockey associations.

Councilmember Newland agreed with Councilmember Robertson, stating the funding for hockey would never go down. He anticipated if the city were to fund the hockey associations, then the baseball associations may come forward with a request for dollars. He indicated he could support Scenario 1 or 2, noting he would like to learn more about how LAHA dollars could be utilized by the council. He stated he would not be able to support Scenario 3.

Councilmember Ford commented he supported Scenario 1 or 2 as well. He indicated he did not support taking funds away from seniors in order to support youth sports.

Mayor Sanders discussed how LAHA dollars could be used for the Alexandra House or other appropriate uses, which would then free up charitable gambling funds for other organizations. He commented further on how he was empathetic to the Spring Lake Park Hockey Association because they did not have as much charitable gambling in their community and therefore had less opportunity for charitable funding. He noted the city has worked to assist with finding outside rinks for the Spring Lake Park Hockey Associations.

Councilmember Robertson explained she did not support funding the hockey associations given the fact LAHA dollars may go away in the future. While she understood the cost burden of having children in youth sports, she did not want to see the council continue to set bad precedent.

Councilmember Larson supported staff further investigating how the LAHA dollars could be used by the city. City Manager Thorvig explained the LAHA dollars were relatively new but could be pulled at any time. He indicated if these funds went away in two years, the council would have to reconsider how to fund programming in the city.

Councilmember Robertson explained she would like the council to hold a further discussion on the city's priorities when it comes to charitable gambling and LAHA funding.

Mayor Sanders supported the council having a conversation noting if the city did not designate how LAHA dollars would be spent, this funding would go back to the state.

Councilmember Fleming indicated she would like to see the council holding a broader discussion on the LAHA funding as well.

Councilmember Larson recommended the council move forward with Scenario 3 with $100,000 in LAHA funds and a new line item for the future use of the fire station. Mr. Zimmerman reported it was his understanding charitable gambling funds can only be used for services, equipment or training and could not be used for facilities.

Councilmember Ford stated he wanted to see the LAHA dollars allotted to help people who were behind on their property taxes or street assessments. He did not support the funding being directed elsewhere when there were people who need assistance in order to remain in their home.

Councilmember Massoglia explained he supported moving forward with Scenario 2. Councilmember Fleming agreed.

Councilmember Newland indicated he did not support making the financial concerns of the hockey associations the city's problem. Mayor Sanders said he understood but added hockey was an important part of this community.

General consensus was not to support Scenario 3 (LAHA funds) but further explore LAHA fund use for potential charitable gambling use in 2027. Council directed staff to move forward with Scenario 2 for 2026.

4. Other Business

Attorney Larson shared comments regarding Item 9.1 on the upcoming council agenda and the need to follow the adopted Comprehensive Land Use Plan as they deliberate their decision this evening.

5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 7:05PM.

Signed by ______________________________
Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by ______________________________
Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk