



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

January 5, 2026 | 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; Community Development Director Sheila Sellman; Deputy Chief Joe Gerhard; Fire Chief Dan Retka; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Parks and Recreation Director Jerome Krieger; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Eric Larson; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2026-001 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 stated the department finished the year with the highest number of calls ever and was pleased the department came in on budget. He reported the SBM Fire Department took over the Centennial Fire Department on January 1 at midnight. He commented on the need for a new fire station on the east side of Blaine in order to improve

response times for those living in this area of the community. He indicated he would like to have response times reduced to five to seven minutes. He described how the needs of the community have evolved over the past 30 years noting the department was transitioning into a full time department in order to meet the changing needs of the community. He reported a new fire station at 125th Avenue and Lexington Avenue would be ideal for the SBM Fire Department. He noted this new facility could serve as a secondary emergency operations center (EOC) for the city as well.

City Manager Thorvig stated in speaking with federal lobbyists, federal dollars may be pursued if this fire station would serve as a secondary EOC. He explained the city would need to hire an architect in order to provide a better understanding on what the costs would be for a new fire station.

Mayor Sanders inquired if a regional training center should be considered along with the new fire station. Fire Chief Retka explained there was a growing need for regional police training and a training center could be considered within the new fire station space. However, he was uncertain if this was the place for a training center.

Mayor Sanders asked what the timeline was for this project. Fire Chief Retka stated he would like the project planning to move forward in 2026 in order to get shovels in the ground for the new fire station in 2027. He reported he would be presenting this project to Spring Lake Park in two weeks and then would be discussing the project with Mounds View. Mr. Thorvig stated the city would have more information on the scope and costs once an architect was hired.

Councilmember Robertson requested community space be considered within the new fire station. She asked that future needs be considered within the project, but requested that needs be the focus over wants. Fire Chief Retka reported Fire Station 3 was booked all the time and understood there was a need from the city for additional meeting space.

Councilmember Newland reported response times for the northeast corner of Blaine were a concern for the fire department and the new station would assist with addressing this concern. He asked how the fire department defined the northeast corner of Blaine. Fire Chief Retka indicated the northeast corner of Blaine was 109th Avenue north to the Centennial station.

Councilmember Newland inquired what percentage of the calls for service were coming from the northeast corner of Blaine. Fire Chief Retka explained he did not have the exact numbers in front of him, but noted the calls for service from the northeast corner of Blaine had risen by 15% in the last year and he anticipated calls would continue to rise.

Councilmember Newland questioned where the Centennial fire station was located. Fire Chief Retka stated the station was located off Lake Drive east of Lexington Avenue.

Councilmember Larson asked how peer cities are addressing this type of concern. Fire Chief Retka reported peer cities are doing very similar things by consolidating services and strategically placing fire stations. He explained departments are moving away from volunteer departments and are having fire stations centrally located in order to cover as much area as possible.

Councilmember Massoglia supported the city pursuing a new fire station and inquired if the new station would be named Fire Station 2. Fire Chief Retka reported this would be the case.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he thought the entire city had response times under seven minutes. Fire Chief Retka explained the northeast side of Blaine still had 9-12-minute response times, which was why there was a need for a fire station in this area of Blaine.

3.2. 2026-002 Conditional Use Permit (CUP) Discussion I
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Community Development Director

Community Development Director Sellman stated conditional use permits (CUPs) are a common zoning application considered by the planning commission and city council. When either approving or denying a conditional use permit, the city council must make specific findings based on language in the zoning code. In the past several years, staff have recognized ambiguity in the existing code language and would like to discuss with council whether the language should be more direct. Additionally, staff are proposing language regarding CUP extensions. State Statute 462.3595 permits certain land uses as conditional uses under zoning regulations. To approve a CUP, the proposed use must meet the standards and criteria outlined in the local ordinance. Conditions may be attached to the CUP to address and mitigate potential concerns related to the proposed use or location. Section 101-4 of the Blaine zoning code outlines the criteria, process and revocation of CUPs. Though Minnesota Statutes authorize the ability for cities to address CUPs, cities are allowed the ability to set their own criteria for considering CUP requests. The zoning ordinance currently has a one-year expiration of CUPs, if the conditional use or construction has not commenced within one year. The city council has received some renewal/extension requests from applicants for additional time to progress with their project. Many times applicants are not able to start operating or begin construction because of delays with other agencies, weather issues, presence of rare plants or wetland delineation timing, etc. Staff suggests the addition of language related to the expiration of CUPs and allows the CUP to expire in two years instead of one year. Staff reviewed proposed language changes with the council and requested feedback on how to proceed.

Councilmember Newland asked if other cities allow for CUP extensions. Ms. Sellman stated she has seen cities allow for options for extensions.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she does not support allowing for extensions. She did not believe it was necessary to allow property owners two years in order to complete a project.

Councilmember Newland questioned what was happening that business owners how required two years in order to complete a project, adding he would rather see projects move forward and be completed in one year.

Mayor Sanders discussed how some recent projects put neighborhoods through a great deal before gaining approval and for this reason he wanted to see projects completed

within the one-year timeline. He stated he did not support offering a two-year timeline for applicants from the onset.

Councilmember Robertson agreed a one-year timeline should remain in place for CUPs and that requests for extensions could be reviewed on a case by case basis in order for the council to better understand the extenuating circumstances within each request. She recommended the extension process remain fluid. City Attorney Larson agreed the language should not be too binding.

Council consensus was to keep the one-year expiration for CUPs and to allow extensions based on criteria and council approval.

3.3. 2026-003 Accessory Dwelling Unit (ADU) Discussion II
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Community Development Director

Ms. Sellman reviewed the history of accessory dwelling units (ADUs) in the city of Blaine. She stated the current code allows attached ADUs in all single-family districts with staff-issued administrative building permits. Detached ADUs are allowed in most districts through various mechanisms. Currently, either the primary home or the ADU must be owner-occupied and either can be rented out with a standard rental license. At the May council meeting, some council members commented that the intent of the ADUs was to be intergenerational and be used by family members. If council wants to continue to allow ADUs and wants to limit the use to family members, the ordinance would need to be amended accordingly. Additional comments at the meeting were about maintaining the single-family character of the neighborhood. Council should discuss the overall intent of ADUs, if they should still be allowed, and provide direction to staff on any ordinance changes. Standards for both attached and detached ADUs are outlined in the current attached ordinance. Also attached is a previous PowerPoint that summarizes the current ordinance and a table of peer cities' ADU policies.

Councilmember Newland stated he did not support the city allowing ADUs.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she could support attached ADUs in the city for farm residential properties.

Councilmember Fleming reported she could support attached ADUs as well.

Councilmember Newland commented he could support attached ADUs.

Councilmember Ford indicated he could support both attached and detached ADUs in Blaine, so long as the ADU matched the existing structure.

Mayor Sanders commented he did not want to see a neighborhood conflict arise every time a property owner requested an ADU. He understood an ADU would be less intrusive if the city required ADUs to be attached.

Councilmember Larson discussed how ADUs added more people to a property, which

created the need for more parking and additional mailboxes. She supported the city only allowing attached ADUs.

Councilmember Robertson stated the council's previous discussion was that the city did not want additional mailboxes, separate utilities and a new driveways for ADUs.

Councilmember Massoglia said he liked the idea of detached ADUs but he did not want numerous rental ADUs popping up in the community. He explained he could support attached or detached ADUs.

Mr. Thorvig stated the council could allow attached ADUs for the time being and could make adjustments to city code.

Council consensus was to remove detached ADUs from the ordinance. It was noted staff would review the attached ADU definition and bring forward any changes based on this discussion for future consideration by the council.

4. Other Business

Council reviewed the proposed liaison appointments being considered at the council meeting later this evening.

Mr. Thorvig reported the council staff retreat would be held on January 26 beginning at 3:00PM.

5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 6:53PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk