



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

February 18, 2026 | 5:30 PM
Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Square Drive NE
Blaine, MN 55449

AGENDA

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**
- 2. Roll Call**
- 3. New Business**
 - 3.1.** 2026-50 Community Engagement in Blaine
Sponsors: Ben Hayle, Communications Manager
 - 3.2.** 2026-51 Digital Accessibility Requirements
Sponsors: Ben Hayle, Communications Manager
 - 3.3.** 2026-66 2027 Budget Schedule
Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, City Manager
- 4. Other Business**
- 5. Adjournment**



City of Blaine Staff Report

File Number: 2026-50

Agenda Date	Status
February 18, 2026	
In Control	File Type
City Council	Workshop Item

New Business - Ben Hayle, Communications Manager

Agenda Item # 3.1

Community Engagement in Blaine

Background

Community engagement is a core function of the City's communications and outreach efforts and supports transparency, trust, and informed participation in City activities and decision-making. The City currently engages residents through a variety of methods, including informational communications, two-way feedback opportunities, and in-person and virtual engagement activities.

As community expectations continue to evolve, it is important for the City Council and staff to periodically align on what effective community engagement looks like for Blaine and identify opportunities to strengthen future efforts.

This workshop discussion is intended to:

- Provide a shared understanding of current engagement activities.
- Discuss council perspectives on engagement expectations.
- Identify strategic opportunities for future community engagement.

No formal action will be taken during this workshop. Staff will use council feedback to inform future engagement approaches and will report back with options or recommendations as appropriate.

Staff Recommendation

Receive information and provide direction to staff.

Questions for Council

Attachment List

None



City of Blaine Staff Report

File Number: 2026-51

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New Business - Ben Hayle, Communications Manager

Agenda Item # 3.2

Digital Accessibility Requirements

Background

In April 2024, the U.S. Department of Justice issued a final rule under the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA) Title II requiring state and local governments to make their digital content accessible to individuals with disabilities. The rule adopts the Web Content Accessibility Guidelines (WCAG) 2.1 Level AA as the required technical standard. For public entities serving populations of 50,000 or more, including the City of Blaine, the compliance deadline is April 24, 2026. Staff has been working diligently over the last year to achieve compliance and to put new systems in place to address accessibility on an ongoing basis.

These requirements apply to a wide range of City digital content, including but not limited to:

- City websites
- PDF documents and Council packets
- Online forms and applications
- Videos and live-streamed meetings
- Digital presentations
- Social media channels
- Other electronic communications used to provide City services

The purpose of this workshop discussion is to provide City Council with an overview of the federal mandate, explain what WCAG 2.1 means in practical terms, and outline how these requirements may affect City Council meetings, materials, staff presentations, and how content is presented to the community.

Financial Impact

Staff budgeted \$10,000 in 2026 to address digital accessibility. In order to add this amount to the

budget, other areas of the communications budget were reduced. There will be ongoing costs related to this new federal mandate. Costs associated with compliance may include document remediation, captioning services, accessibility software, and potential vendor or platform updates. Staff will continue to evaluate and report on potential financial impacts as implementation planning progresses.

Strategic Alignment

This effort supports the City's commitment to inclusive and accessible public services and reduces legal and regulatory risk associated with non-compliance.

Staff Recommendation

This is designed as an informational presentation.

Questions for Council

Do you have any questions about the digital accessibility updates currently underway?

Attachment List

1. Digital Accessibility Council Presentation



Digital Accessibility Requirements

April 2026 Federal Mandate

Digital Accessibility Requirements Overview



- ▶ New federal ADA digital accessibility requirement
- ▶ Applies to how the City shares information online
- ▶ Affects Council packets, presentations, and meetings
- ▶ Deadline: April 24, 2026

Digital Accessibility Requirements Background



- ▶ U.S. Department of Justice ADA Title II Final Rule
- ▶ Requires WCAG 2.1 Level AA compliance
- ▶ Applies to all units of government
- ▶ Legally enforceable requirement

What is WCAG 2.1?



- ▶ Web Content Accessibility Guidelines
- ▶ Standards for accessible digital content
- ▶ Ensures residents with disabilities can access City information
- ▶ Digital equivalent of physical ADA requirements

What This Looks Like in Practice

- ▶ Screen-reader compatible PDFs
- ▶ Captions on videos and livestreams
- ▶ Text descriptions for images and charts
- ▶ Sufficient color contrast
- ▶ Keyboard-accessible forms



Council Packets



- ▶ Documents must be properly formatted and tagged
- ▶ Reduced use of scanned/image-only PDFs
- ▶ Possible changes to packet preparation timelines
- ▶ More standardized document templates

Council Presentations



- ▶ Visual content must be explained verbally
- ▶ Charts, graphs, and maps described aloud
- ▶ Key slide text summarized
- ▶ Less reliance on “as you can see”

Speaker Identification



- ▶ Presiding officer identifies speakers
- ▶ Name and role stated before speaking
- ▶ Supports audio-only and assistive technology users
- ▶ More structured speaker transitions

Video Content

- ▶ Captioned livestreams and recordings
- ▶ Accessible video platforms
- ▶ Updates to public engagement tools – social media



What Staff is Doing to Prepare



- ▶ Communication staff leading this effort
- ▶ Website and document audit
- ▶ Workflow and template updates
- ▶ Staff training on accessibility basics
- ▶ Vendor and platform review
- ▶ Onboarding accessibility tools
- ▶ Prioritizing high-use and high-risk content

Why This Matters



- ▶ Federal compliance requirement
- ▶ Reduces legal and regulatory risk
- ▶ Improves access for residents
- ▶ Supports inclusive and transparent government

Questions

- ▶ What questions or concerns does council have regarding digital accessibility?





City of Blaine Staff Report

File Number: 2026-66

Agenda Date	Status
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February 18, 2026

In Control	File Type
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City Council

Workshop Item

New Business - Erik Thorvig, City Manager, Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Agenda Item # 3.3

2027 Budget Schedule

Executive Summary

Background

The staff budget team has been meeting to strategize preparation of the 2027 budget. In 2025, several processes and philosophical changes occurred both with the council and staff, which resulted in a collaborative budget outcome.

A structured schedule sets expectations for council and staff as the 2027 budget is prepared. As has been done in previous years, small group council member meetings are scheduled to be held in March/April. These meetings are effective in allowing a platform for council members to ask specific questions and provide guidance on their opinions about the budget. Additionally, any guidance provided by council early in the process sets expectations for staff as preliminary budgets are prepared. Last year, key benchmarks/values were discussed early in the year with the council, which set expectations.

Staff has also discussed whether there is an ability to reduce meetings by limiting presentation content and combining certain funds/topics that in years past have not yielded extensive council discussion. By doing so, more focus can be had on the general fund levy, which is generally the most discussed. Retreats may be utilized for more in-depth discussion. Staff is also trying to avoid the need to schedule meetings on a 5th Monday.

Lastly, the last two years resulted in budget reduction suggestions by council late in the process. Staff would like feedback from Council on how to address these ideas earlier in the process (July/August timeframe) so suggestions can be vetted and potentially applied prior to adoption of the preliminary levy.

Strategic Plan Relationship

Board/Commission Review

Financial Impact

Public Outreach/Input

Staff Recommendation

Attachment List

1. 2027 Budget Schedule - Council



2027 Budget Schedule Council Dates



February 18	Council Workshop Kick-Off
March 23 - 31	Small Group Meetings with Mayor and Councilmembers
April 13	Budget Review Post-Small Group Meetings – General Council Direction
June 8	General Fund, EDA Budget, and City Tax Levy
June 15	Internal Service Funds
July 13	Capital Funds Budget
August 10	Review General Fund Budget and City Tax Levy
September 14	Reserved for Budget Review if needed
September 21	Adopt Proposed General Fund, EDA, Capital Budgets, and City Tax Levy
October 5	Charitable Gambling and Communications Funds
October 12	Utilities and Refuse Funds
October 19	Review General Fund, EDA, Capital Budgets, and City Tax Levy
November 2	Review Charitable Gambling Fund Scoring
November 9	Reserved for Utilities and Refuse Funds Review if needed
December 7	Truth-in-Taxation Public Meeting
December 21	Adopt Final General Fund, EDA, Capital Budgets, and City Tax Levy