City of Blaine
City Council Workshop

February 9, 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 Leslie Larson, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: Councilmembers Terra Fleming and Chris Ford.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Erik Thorvig; Community Development Director Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Police Captain Mark Boerboom; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Human Resources Manager Lori Carbajal; Deputy Public Works Director Jason Grode; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

3.1. 2026-44 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 city council met in closed session pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.03 Subd. (1)(b) to receive a labor negotiations update.

3.2. 2026-45 Montean Meadows Concept for Property at 3621 131st Avenue NE (CONCEPT25-0004)

Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Community Development Director

Community Development Director Sellman and City Engineer Dan Schluender stated a concept plan for 3621 131st Avenue was reviewed by the city council at the August 4, 2025, city council workshop meeting. The plan included 101 homes including 8 80-foot wide lots and the remaining 93 lots split approximately evenly between 65-foot and 70-foot lots. At that meeting, council provided feedback that all lots should be 70 feet wide or wider. The applicant has met with staff several times since then to refine their plans while also going through environmental review processes. Approximately three acres of upland are required by the DNR to be preserved due to rare plants. The applicant located the narrower 65-foot-wide lots interior to the development, so all lots visible from 131st Avenue will be 70 feet wide. The revised concept plan has a total of 86 lots, down from the 101 lots originally proposed. With the 86 lots, the project has a gross density of 2.2 units per acre and a net density of 2.7 units per acre when removing wetland, endangered plant preservation areas, and required wetland and rare plant buffers from the site acreage. The comprehensive plan guides this property as low density residential which allows for a net density of 2.5 to 6 units per acre. The parcels to the west, east and south are zoned FR and guided LDR and are vacant. The parcels to the north are in the city of Ham Lake. Staff commented further on the proposed project and requested feedback from the council on this project.

Councilmember Massoglia noted he met with the developer and stated he would like to see all the lot sizes at least 70 feet wide. In addition, he would like the project area to remain R-1.

Councilmember Newland indicated there were 15 lots that were not meeting the 70-foot wide request at this time.

Councilmember Massoglia reported this was the case and noted he tried to discuss using pooled TIF to assist with meeting the developers' financials, but noted no changes were proposed by the developer at this time.

Councilmember Larson questioned what type of development was just north of this property in Ham Lake. Mr. Schluender indicated Ham Lake had homes that were on one-acre lots just north of this site.

Councilmember Larson agreed with Councilmember Massoglia that the lots should be at least 70 feet wide within this development, especially considering how this property abuts Ham Lake.

Councilmember Newland indicated he was more concerned about what worked for Blaine than what was developed in Ham Lake. He explained this development was only 15 lots away from reaching a compromise and moving forward.

Councilmember Massoglia commented he wanted to see this development work, but he believed he was already compromising with the 70-foot lot width when 80-foot lots were required. He reiterated that he wanted to see this development follow the R-1 zoning requirements.

Councilmember Larson stated she understood the city wanted to work with this developer, but she did not want a precedent to be set for future farm residential developments. She explained she supported the way the northern portion of the city was zoned and she did not support making a change.

Councilmember Robertson indicated this project was all about finding a balance. She commented she wanted to defer to the Ward 3 councilmembers as this was their ward then reiterated that nothing that was left to develop in Blaine was easy. She explained she did not have the right answer, but she wanted to see this area developed while taking into consideration all the special circumstances on the property.

Mayor Sanders asked what the average size lot was for the homes in the Wagaman neighborhood. Ms. Sellman anticipated the lots were one-quarter acre in size.

Mr. Schluender inquired if there was support for a cost-share proposal for street and sanitary sewer costs.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he could support a cost-share proposal if the developer could get to the 70-foot wide lots.

Councilmember Newland explained he could support the city administrating and providing guidelines for the street and sanitary sewer.

Councilmember Massoglia agreed.

Councilmember Robertson asked that staff provide the council with residential examples of this type of cost-sharing that has been done in the past.

Council consensus was to require 70-foot wide lots at a minimum and would consider cost-share proposals for street and sanitary sewer.

3.3. 2026-46 Anoka Regional Crime, Technology, and Information Center (ARCTIC) Overview

Sponsors: Brian Podany, Safety Services Manager/Police Chief

Safety Services Manager/Police Chief Podany and Police Captain Mark Boerboom provided an overview of the Anoka Regional Crime, Technology, and Information Center (ARCTIC). Currently, there are various sources of information and platforms that the Police Department utilizes to assist in call response, investigation, and planning. The city utilizes unmanned aerial systems currently for a variety of purposes, in addition to different camera platforms in the community as well. Most of these systems operate independently of each other. The ARCTIC is currently being researched and developed on a Countywide basis through the Anoka County Sheriff's Office. An overview of the ARCTIC was shared, including the various technologies and tools that will combine to greatly increase public safety in Blaine, as well as the entire County. Information was provided regarding the license plate reader (LPRs) that were being used throughout the City of Blaine and details were provided regarding how the data from this system was assisting with solving crimes in the community. Additional information was presented on the long term costs and funding plan for this project.

Councilmember Newland inquired if the city was looking into expanding the FLOCK cameras in the community. Police Chief Podany discussed the real-time center that would be located at the Anoka County Sheriff's Office that would be staffed in conjunction with the dispatch office. He commented on how the city was covering the expense for LPRs and noted this expense would rise over time. He stated the plan was to have this expense rolled over to Anoka County and Joint Law Enforcement Council. He indicated the plan was to have the number of FLOCK cameras increasing throughout the County over time.

Chief Podany provided the council with further information on the proposed drones as first responder program and described the types of calls that would be utilized by these drones. He reported the agencies that were using this technology were seeing a 10% to 30% reduction in calls they have to respond to. He reported the use of LPRs was having a positive force multiplier for public safety agencies. He explained if the city were to pursue a program like this, it would be done in conjunction with the county as part of the regional crime center. He further discussed the benefits the drones as a first responder program would have on fire services as well. Additional information was provided regarding the streetlights traffic program and funding sources for the proposed ARTIC program were reviewed with the council.

Councilmember Robertson requested further information regarding the drones as first responders from Minnetonka and how they were utilizing the drones.

Councilmember Massoglia inquired if the FLOCK cameras were made in China. Police Captain Boerboom reported the FLOCK cameras and drones were now being made in the US.

Councilmember Larson questioned if any other counties were working with FLOCK. Chief Podany explained to date only cities have worked with FLOCK and noted FLOCK was excited to be working with Anoka County to create the first safe county.

Councilmember Newland indicated the county fire chiefs endorse the use of drones and FLOCK cameras. Chief Podany reported this was the case, especially after an event that occurred in Nowthen. He discussed how state and federal lobbyists were working on funding for the proposed drone and LPR camera program.

Councilmember Newland asked if this program would go live in 2027. Chief Podany stated the hope would be to have this program in place in 2026.

Councilmember Larson requested further information regarding the FLOCK cameras that were currently in the city. Chief Podany stated the city currently has 29 LPR FLOCK cameras and the new system would have 60 cameras in Blaine and 163 throughout the entire county. He indicated the drones were separate from the LPRs and would be placed strategically throughout the county. He reiterated that the city's existing cameras would remain in place and would not have to be replaced.

3.4. 2026-47 Municipal Cannabis Partnership Update
Sponsors: Ruth Tucker, Economic Development Specialist

Ms. Sellman stated council has previously met on multiple occasions regarding selection of an operating partner for the city's municipal cannabis retailer license. Following prior deliberations, council directed staff to continue working with Voyageurs Cannabis Services. Since that direction, Voyageur has submitted a business plan and pro forma for the proposed operation. These materials are currently under evaluation by the Central Minnesota Development Company (CMDC) as part of the city's due diligence process. These materials will be sent to council in advance of the meeting. Subsequent to council's earlier direction, Twisted Hat Cannabis submitted additional correspondence outlining four alternative partnership structures for council consideration. Staff has completed an initial review of these options. One proposed option would require an ordinance amendment to allow additional private cannabis retail licenses within the city. Another proposed option would result in the city holding a minority equity interest in the operating entity, which may not be permissible under current Office of Cannabis Management (OCM) guidance. A formal determination from OCM would be required in order to further evaluate this option. Given the continued interest from multiple parties and the need for clarity on next steps, this item is before council again to determine how the city wishes to proceed.

City Manager Thorvig commented on conversations representatives from Twisted Hat have had with councilmembers and noted it has been challenging for staff to navigate this situation because the direction to staff was to move forward with Voyageur. He indicated Twisted Hat provided the city with an alternative proposal and the options within this proposal were further discussed with the council. Staff asked if the city should proceed with Voyageur or the other group.

Councilmember Robertson indicated the consensus of council was to move forward with Voyageur.

Councilmember Newland agreed and suggested the city council request a tour of the dispensary in Anoka.

Councilmember Massoglia explained he was one of the councilmembers Twisted Hat reached out to and he stated if they wanted to match Voyageur's proposal they could let the city know. However, this has not been done, and he apologized if his meeting with Twisted Hat was taking up staff time. He was of the opinion that the building at 8634 Central Avenue would be a good location for the dispensary. Mr. Thorvig stated what was challenging with this was if the city council wanted to share Voyageurs' proposal with Twisted Hat or should this be considered privileged information.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he did not view the proposal as privileged information because Twisted Hat could go and view the contract that Voyageru had signed with the City of Osseo. He understood Voyageur was offering the city the best deal.

Councilmember Robertson reported that when companies come before the city council, submit a proposal and the council directs staff on how to proceed, she did not believe councilmembers should then be giving direction to other vendors that differed from the consensus of the council. She expressed frustration with the conversation that was held and wanted to see the council's be held to their word.

Mayor Sanders explained the city had not gone through a formal RFP process for the cannabis partnership but rather proposals were submitted and staff was given direction to take the next steps with Voyageur. He clarified that the conversations held with the vendors were allowed.

Councilmember Massoglia recalled that the council was moving forward with Voyageur but that the city was still open to changing their proposal to match Voyageur.

Councilmember Robertson indicated there should be no further dialogue surrounding the other vendors, especially after there was council consensus, adding this was an uncomfortable topic for her too because she personally did not support it.

Councimlember Newland stated after the city hears from the CMDC, we should be close to having a strong agreement with Voyageur. He agreed that the council did not have conversations that encouraged Twisted Hat to amend their proposal. He explained he did not support giving proprietary information from Voyageur to Twisted Hat. He supported the city continue with Voyageur for the city's retail dispensary.

Councilmember Massoglia clarified for the record that he had not provided Twisted Hat with any proprietary information from Voyageur.

Councilmember Newland explained he understood this was a difficult subject, but noted the city could benefit from the new revenue stream if this use were to move forward.

Mayor Sanders indicated he wanted to learn more about the proposed revenue streams to ensure the establishment would be profitable before completing a contract with Voyageur.

Councilmember Larson inquired where the dispensary would be located. Mr. Thorvig stated a location has not yet been identified for the retail cannabis dispensary and could prove challenging. He reported this item would be coming back to the council in early April.

Council consensus was to continue evaluating Voyageur's proposal and request a tour of the city of Anoka's dispensary.

3.5. 2026-48 Council Meeting Open Forum Procedures
Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, City Manager

City Manager Thorvig stated open forum is an item placed on every regular meeting agenda. Language is read by the mayor, who states that *"Open forum is an opportunity for the public to share comments, concerns, or input on other items. While open forum is not intended to provide for response or discussion opportunities, if follow-up is needed, city staff will work to contact the speaker(s) outside the meeting to arrange for follow-up. Each speaker will be limited* *to 3 minutes with a maximum of 15 minutes set aside for open forum."* Open forum held by public bodies is not required by statute, charter or ordinance. Each city, county or school board has the discretion on how to structure their open forum. Procedures around open forum, including time allowed, etc. have been amended over the years. Blaine's regular city council meetings have had an agenda item for open forum dating back to the 1970s. The 15-minute maximum has been in place since at least the 1980s. Language has changed within the last ten years, noting that open forum was intended for citizen input to now stating that open forum is for the public to make comments. Language in the preamble noting that *"open forum is not intended to provide for response or discussion opportunities"* was added within the last year. This had generally been past practice, however was added to clarify to speakers that the purpose of open forum is not intended to debate an issue with council.

Mr. Thorvig reported concerns and questions that are brought up at open forum can be policy related or address an item to be voted on which is under the purview of the city council. Residents who speak about a specific item to be voted on use open forum as a method to make statements which is an effective way to convey information to the city council prior to a vote. The public has also requested policy or ordinance changes. Methods of communicating with elected officials have changed over the years. While decades ago the most effective way to communicate with the city council was to show up to a regular council meeting, other methods now exist, including email, phone, text and social media communications. Additionally, residents or the public will express questions or concerns about a city-related matter that is best answered by staff. Whenever possible, the appropriate department head will connect with the speaker in the atrium outside the council chambers to follow-up with the resident. This process is generally effective. Residents should be aware that they always have the ability to reach out to city staff, outside of open forum, to discuss a specific city-related issue. Overall, the processes outlined above are generally effective, however can be confusing for the speaker and/or the public observing the meeting and give the perception that the council or staff are not addressing concerns raised. Staff would like to discuss potential changes to the process and/or language provided to speakers.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she supported the process being followed by the city. She explained the city had a lot of repeat speakers that were looking for closure, but the current process was working. She did not support dialogue being held with speakers and appreciated how staff has addressed this concern. She reported she did not appreciate the fact there were speakers that were putting down council and staff members, but she noted the council was always available for a phone call or email and she appreciated how staff was willing to meet with these individuals in order to address problems.

Mayor Sanders suggested he work with staff to revise the language that was read prior ot the open forum to ensure the public knows it was not a time for back and forth dialogue. He suggested business cards from staff members be available at the sign in table for residents that may be seeking additional information. He explained he understood what he signed up for when running for public office, but he agreed he did not like the public going after staff members, especially when the information was unfounded. He stated he did not know how to address this in real time during meetings.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated the council could state the open forum was for bringing new information to the council's attention and for those residents coming to every meeting could be addressed and encouraged to bring new information to the council. Mr. Thorvig stated this was a practice he saw followed by another community.

Councilmember Larson wanted residents to be free to bring their comments or concerns to the city, but she understood some individuals were repeat speakers.

Councilmember Newland understood there was a lot to be said about some topics, but he wanted speakers to bring forward information of value to the council. He suggested an expanded dialogue be held with individuals at a workshop meeting in order to address the residents that have ongoing concerns.

Mayor Sanders stated while it was important for the council to hear from residents it is also important to execute the work of the city. He explained he was not interested in allowing residents to speak for several hours on topics not on the agenda.

Councilmember Robertson supported allowing the public to speak, even if it was on topics that were not always pertinent to the city and noted staff could respond to how they have followed up with repeat speakers in order to make the record clear. She indicated the order of the agenda could be amended to have communications after open forum to allow for a time for staff to respond to questions or offer clarity on certain situations.

Councilmember Larson indicated she did not support changing the agenda, because this could create a situation where the public will always expect a response from the city in a public meeting. Mr. Thorvig stated if responses are not given at the public meeting, he could still state that staff was willing to meet with individuals outside of council chambers in order to address the speakers' concern.

Council discussed ways to connect with speakers such as having business cards available or sign-in cards if they are looking for a response. There was discussion on how to address speakers who negatively focus on staff and possibly using the time for only new items for the council's attention. Consensus was to continue to evaluate the open forum process for potential changes.

3.6. 2026-49 105th Redevelopment Discussion
Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, City Manager

Mr. Thorvig stated council discussed this topic last week and further discussion was needed regarding funding for a parking facility on the west portion of the redevelopment district. He commented on the revenue sources that were being created through this development and explained staff was interested in having these revenues directed to payback debt after 20 years. He asked the council to further discuss this topic and provide staff with direction on how to proceed.

Councilmember Massoglia supported the city paying down debt with additional revenues.

Councilmember Newland indicated the city has committed to $180 million for this project and noted the city council was aware an additional $7 million would be needed for a parking structure. He explained he could not support the city offering more than that. He reported the city council gave the public their word that this project would not be funded by property taxes. He stated he could support the city offering $7.5 million, but he was not interested in offering the developer the full $15 million. He suggested the new cannabis revenues be directed to the parking structure for the next seven years. He indicated he did not want to say no to this portion of the project, but rather he was working to find a compromise.

Councilmember Larson explained he spoke with staff earlier today and questioned if the parking structure could be combined with the 3% tax. Mr. Thorvig stated the sales tax projections closely mirror the Scheel's debt and the east parking ramp. He noted if the sales tax revenues come in higher than projected, these dollars could be directed towards the west parking ramp.

Mayor Sanders anticipated the initial tax projection numbers were very conservative. He stated the lodging numbers could be much higher than estimated. Mr. Thorvig discussed how the debt for the parking ramps would be paid off in 20 years, but noted the sales tax would run for 30 years, which meant the city would have an additional 10 years of $6 to $7 million annually that could be used within the district. He noted he would like to speak with Baker Tilly to further consider how to leverage these dollars for the city.

Councilmember Larson indicated she did not support using the cannabis revenues for the parking structure because she would rather see these revenues used to alleviate the pressure on the tax levy. Mr. Thorvig commented there would be other sources that could be used to cover the debt levy for the west parking ramp.

Mayor Sanders explained the city had to consider the worst case scenario and then find ways to protect the levy.

Councilmember Robertson stated the city would have to stop spending money and had to cut costs in order to reduce the levy. She indicated the city should not be relying on cannabis revenues to address the levy concerns. She explained she appreciated Councilmember Newland's comments, noting she was having a difficult time with the numerous requests from the developer. She reported she was having a hard time because she did not want the city to own a stadium nor did she want the city to levy for a parking structure. She indicated she did not want to stop this project and appreciated the new businesses that would be coming into Blaine. However, she requested staff speak with the developer to see if they would be willing to meet the city halfway on the parking structure. Mr. Thorvig reported the financing behind this project has been creative and fluid. He stated he would be willing to have a conversation with the developer regarding the parking structure.

Councilmember Massoglia inquired when the roundabout would be coming before the city for consideration. Mr. Thorvig indicated the council would be considering the roundabout next Wednesday.

Mayor Sanders stated the construction that would occur this summer would be very exciting as this project begins to go vertical.

4. Other Business

Mr. Thorvig shared about the scheduled Chamber of Commerce luncheon that would be held on February 10 and discussed the FAQs page that would be posted on the city's web page in response to federal immigration enforcement activities.

5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 8:01PM.

Signed by ______________________
Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by ______________________
Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk