



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

March 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 Terra Fleming, Chris Ford, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Leslie Larson.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: Community Development Director Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Assistant Finance Director Kyle Stasica; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; and Parks and Recreation Director Jerome Krieger.

3. New Business

- 3.1. 2026-67 Northtown Updates
Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Community Development Director

Community Development Director Sellman stated in late 2025, Council requested an update on activities in the Northtown area. The current owner has owned the mall since 2023. The mall's vacancy rate continues and several stores have closed (Hobby Lobby, Torrid, Trade Home Shoes, Bosslady, Shoetique, Best Buy and 2 Bros Sports Collectibles). Cushman Wakefield has spaces inside Northtown Mall that are actively listed for lease, and outlots are

for sale. Seven outlots are for sale that mostly consist of existing parking lots/vacant lots. There have been several calls to the city about car washes, a gas station and cannabis for a couple of these outlots. Staff has had discussions with potential hotel owners, but no application has been made. Asia Village construction is underway, and several tenant finish permits have been pulled. No opening date has been provided.

Ms. Sellman explained since the adoption of the plan, Northtown mall was sold in 2023. The "new" owner is not interested in redeveloping the mall as the plan suggested, has subdivided some property and created outlots to sell for development, and subdivided the space for Asia Village. The Council created a new mixed use zoning district for this area, County Road 10 mixed use. The comp plan designation changed slightly for some of the parcels as part of the rezoning and Medium Density Residential/Community Commercial (MDR/CC) was introduced. Many of the action steps outlined above, and the majority of the plan, were based on a partnership or action by the mall ownership. Small implementations of the plan can take place, and have, but it is difficult when the city does not have ownership or a developer interested in redeveloping the area. WSB and Associates created an opinion of probable costs to the area based on the results of the AUAR including sanitary sewer improvements, storm sewer improvements, and transportation improvements. Staff provided further information on Northtown, including police calls for service and noted staff has been receiving calls for car washes and dispensaries for the Northtown Mall area.

Councilmember Newland inquired if staff had any recent conversations with the current property owner. Ms. Sellman explained she had spoken with property owner who shared his disappointment with the staff report because it painted him in a poor light.

Councilmember Ford asked if the property owner was responsible for the outdoor lighting. Ms. Sellman reported this was the case.

Councilmember Robertson questioned what the market value was for the EDA-owned lot in the Northtown area. Ms. Sellman stated the value of this lot was \$130,000.

Councilmember Ford asked where apartments could be located so as not to disturb the adjacent homeowners. Ms. Sellman suggested apartments be located on lots 3 and 4.

Councilmember Robertson inquired if Kraus Anderson had proposed any changes to their property. Ms. Sellman explained Kraus Anderson had a performing location that was profitable as is.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he recently visited the Maplewood Mall and was surprised to see how that mall was leaning into experiences, along with retail and questioned if the mall could be sold Spring Lake Park or Fridley. Ms. Sellman indicated the land would have to be annexed to Spring Lake Park.

Mayor Sanders thanked staff for the update on the Northtown Mall area.

Sponsors: Brian Podany, Safety Services Manager/Police Chief, Jerome Krieger, Park and Recreation Director

Safety Services Manager/Police Chief Podany and Parks and Recreation Director Krieger stated there have been a multitude of items that have surfaced for discussion regarding ordinance changes and safety/livability in the public use of our parks and open spaces, as well as our trails/sidewalks. Various items will be brought to Council for discussion pertaining to conduct in the parks and at the beach, including the use and operation of e-Bikes, e-Scooters, and other mobility devices. They said discussion would be held on a proposed ordinance pertaining to this, as well as other potential measures to address this issue. There has been an increase in the use and operation of these devices, some of which are being operated illegally or in an unsafe manner. Discussion was held regarding an overview of the issues, as well as potential ordinances for council consideration. Additional safety measures beyond ordinances were also presented for council consideration.

Councilmember Massoglia asked when people could not swim at the beach. Police Chief Podany stated when the park is closed, people should not be swimming in the water, adding the park closed at 9PM.

Councilmember Newland questioned if the park board had reviewed the proposed ordinance amendments. Mr. Krieger stated the park board would be reviewing this information later this month.

Councilmember Newland stated he supported the proposed changes to the ordinance. He appreciated the fact city staff was being proactive.

Councilmember Robertson inquired how the removal of this language would increase the city's liability at the beach. Mr. Krieger reported the proposed language was directly from the League of Minnesota Cities. He explained that the majority of the swimming beaches in the metro area have gone away from lifeguards and only have city staff present. He stated lifeguards are only in place at pools.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if it would benefit the city to have tools in place to be able to require people to leave the beach area based on certain behaviors. Mr. Krieger stated any rough play at the beach would cause an individual to receive a warning before an individual is asked to leave. He reported Recreation Manager Nate Monahan conducts training with staff every year about how to address situations at the beach.

Mayor Sanders commented there were times people needed to be removed from the beach, and he appreciated the fact there was a heavy police presence at the beach. He supported the city making the proposed changes to the ordinance.

Councilmember Newland reported this was a popular park, and he appreciated how the city has adjusted the rules over time, taking into consideration how this space was being used by residents. He asked what kind of police presence would be assigned to the beach in May when the beach opens. Police Chief Podany explained the beach would have officers dedicated every day along with the trailer, noting the trailer may be pulled at times for other events in the community. He stated if the ordinance amendments were to be challenged

this year, the city council could consider additional language changes for next year.

Mayor Sanders indicated this ordinance was asking parents and guardians to be responsible for their kids at this family park and should be appropriate for people of all ages. He asked if the term picnicking should be removed from the ordinance in order to allow visitors to bring in a cooler for lunch within the beach area. The council supported picnicking in the beach area.

Councilmember Ford inquired if vaping was allowed in the park. Mr. Krieger stated vaping was not allowed in city parks.

Police Chief Podany reviewed the language that was proposed for appropriate swimwear and noted the city attorney had reviewed this language.

Councilmember Robertson expressed frustration with the fact the city had to address appropriate swimwear because now this brought attention to this topic. She indicated she did not support the swimwear language because she did not want further attention brought to the city. Chief Podany indicated the city council did not have to bring this language forward for consideration.

Councilmember Fleming agreed, noting this language change would draw attention to this topic. However, if the city were to not approve the language change, people could be topless at the beach and the city would be receiving calls.

Councilmember Ford commented he agreed with Councilmember Robertson on this issue. He recommended the city not move forward with this language.

Councilmember Newland stated he had thought the council had already approved this language. He explained he understood the concerns being voiced by the council, but noted he would rather the city had language in place because then police officers would have an ordinance to enforce if a concern were to arise.

Further discussion ensued regarding the proposed language. Chief Podany reiterated that this language would only apply to public spaces.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he would like to see the city be proactive when it comes to this matter.

Mayor Sanders commented he did not believe this was an issue the city needed to address, but noted he could support the proposed language changes. He recommended staff bring back the ordinance amendments together as one agenda item for the council to consider. The council was in agreement.

Chief Podany inquired how the council wanted to address e-bikes and e-scooters.

Councilmember Robertson supported the helmet requirements but did not recommend the city move forward with color-coated trails given how the state may take action to address e-bikes and e-scooters. She asked if the city could put speed limit signs on city trails. Chief Podany stated the city council could approve this action. Director of Engineering Schluender

indicated he was hesitant to post speed limit signs on trails that did not have great visibility. He anticipated Anoka County would not support speed limit signs being posted on their trails.

Mayor Sanders stated he wanted people to be safe on the trails and be considerate of others. He questioned if e-bikes and e-scooters had speedometers. He supported police officers educating e-bike users versus writing speeding tickets. He suggested the city also address this matter in an upcoming city newsletter.

Councilmember Ford agreed public service information would be valuable for this topic, noting a little courtesy would go a long way when it comes to e-bikes and e-scooters in the community.

The consensus of the council was to require helmets on individuals under 18, to support officers addressing the careless or reckless driving of e-bikes and e-scooters, and to not pursue color-coding trails.

Chief Podany asked if the council supported setting a speed limit for e-bikes and e-scooters at 15 miles per hour. Further information was provided to the council regarding how state statute defines reckless and careless driving.

Mayor Sanders questioned what speed a normal bicyclist rides in the city. Chief Podany estimated a normal bicyclist rides at 7 to 12 miles per hour and an avid cyclist would be at 14 to 17 miles per hour. He noted active cyclists could be upwards of 20 to 25 miles per hour, but then they should be on the roadway.

Councilmember Newland supported the city start by addressing the easy items, noting e-bikes would continue to grow in popularity. He stated modifications could be made to the ordinance over time.

3.3. 2026-69 Financial and Budget Software
Sponsors: Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Finance Director Zimmerman stated the city's financial software manages all the monetary transactions and data of the city. Main fiscal tasks such as accounting, utility billing, payroll processing, accounts payable, capital assets, and cashing are contained within the financial software. Additional financial data is pulled into the financial software through interfaces with other city software (IMS-BuildingInspections/Community Standards; Questica-Budget; CivicRec-Recreation). The financial software is the central repository for vendor invoices, employee timekeeping/payroll, and utility billing customer service. On June 18, 2009, a public hearing was held in order to utilize the capital improvements fund for the purchase and implementation of a new financial system provided by New World Systems, which was authorized with a \$600,000 budget, and was intended to serve as the primary accounting, payroll, and utility billing software for the city. Following its 2011 implementation, the New World financial system has remained the city's primary platform. The agreement is currently subject to an annual renewal fee of approximately \$150,000. In 2015, New World was purchased by Tyler Technologies, who currently supports the product. The software was originally purchased as an on-premise server license, but in 2026 will be

moving to a cloud solution to increase security and reduce internal IT staff demand. The software is slowly being discontinued with new subscriptions no longer being sold since 2021. Updates from New World are for minimum required items such as changes in federal laws, without any new functionality planned. Tyler Technologies is moving towards one primary financial system — Enterprise ERP.

Assistant Finance Director Stasica explained this migration to a Software as a Service (SaaS) model effectively modernizes our technical infrastructure by addressing the "where" and "how" of our data access and serves as the foundation for the next critical phase of our digital transformation. While SaaS optimizes our backend operations, a new financial software solution is necessary to modernize our business operations. By transitioning from backend stability to operational excellence, we ensure that the tools we use to conduct the city's business are as agile and sophisticated as the cloud environment that hosts them. As part of the 2026 budget, the city council authorized funding to move from a locally hosted (on-premise) environment to a SaaS model with Tyler Technologies. In the legacy model, the city owned the servers, managed the SQL databases, and was responsible for the physical security of the room. In the SaaS model, Tyler hosts the New World environment and provides access via a secure web connection. Moving our Tyler New World software to a cloud-based "SaaS" model is like switching from owning and maintaining our own power plant to simply paying a monthly utility bill. Instead of our IT staff spending time fixing physical servers and managing complex security updates, Tyler Technologies handles all the "under the hood" technical work in a secure, professional data center. This move protects the city from losing data during local disasters, ensures our software is always up-to-date with the latest features, and replaces unpredictable, expensive hardware repairs with a steady, manageable annual budget. Moving to a SaaS model not only provides capacity for our IT department to focus on other initiatives, it aligns us with the modern software industry, where almost every top-tier solution now requires a cloud-based approach. A new financial software would have many advantages, including better productivity, ease of use for finance and non-finance staff, and better financial reporting. A new software would also assist with implementing new accounting principles and possibly provide for better connectivity with other city software. Staff commented further on the key objectives for a new financial software solution. The cost of new financial software would vary based on the product chosen. In 2024, the city did receive a quote from Tyler Technologies to migrate from New World to Enterprise ERP for one-time implementation costs of approximately \$500,000.

Councilmember Robertson stated this was not her area of expertise and she did not understand what would make the finance team more efficient. She explained if the team felt they could transfer the information to Tyler Technologies, this should be done. She indicated she had a hard time with hypothetical situations, but she did understand the new software would come at a cost. She expressed concern learning about the reserves that were available to cover this expense, noting this funding could have been used to reduce the levy for 2026.

Councilmember Massoglia requested further information on why the new software was requested. Mr. Zimmerman provided further information on how the existing software was not able to address the no-tax on overtime or create the reports needed by the city. He indicated the level of support from New World was not where it needed to be either.

Councilmember Newland discussed the software being used by Lakeville and Woodbury noting these programs were able to send out utility bills with franchise fees. He noted this would be valuable to the city, given how Blaine was considering franchise fees. Mr. Zimmerman clarified the franchise fees would be billed out by a separate entity and not the city. He explained the city runs its utility billing on the same platform as the general payroll and accounts payable.

Councilmember Newland appreciated how the finance department was now properly staffed and asked when the new budget software would be purchased. Mr. Zimmerman reported the current budgeting software would expire in July 2027. He noted it would cost the city \$50,000 to \$75,000 to continue with this software, but noted there was another option available to the city, which was the software staff was proposing to purchase.

Councilmember Fleming asked if the safety of one product was better than the other. Mr. Zimmerman explained the current finance software was cloud based and any future product would be cloud based, which was the best case scenario for the city.

Councilmember Massoglia requested further information regarding the SaaS conversion and questioned if the city should be going through an RFP process for the financial software. Mr. Zimmerman reported the SaaS conversion does not require an implementation fee but rather only has a yearly fee. He commented that another vendor would host the product. He stated the city could go through an RFP process, but noted the city does not have to have the cheapest financial software, rather staff was recommending a product that was the best fit for the city.

Councilmember Newland indicated it appears staff has a direction they would like to move forward with, and he was comfortable supporting staff's recommendation. He supported staff purchasing the software that was necessary to get Blaine to being a top 10 city in the state. He asked how long it would take to bring a consultant on board. Mr. Zimmerman anticipated this would take three or four months.

Councilmember Newland and Councilmember Ford supported staff moving forward with the new financial software as proposed.

Councilmember Robertson stated her only concern with the consultant was if the cost was \$80,000. Mr. Zimmerman explained he would not commit to spending dollars on a consultant until the city has put out an RFP, but he estimated a consultant would be \$50,000+.

Councilmember Ford inquired if software vendors could come in and provide staff with presentations on their programs in order to avoid the consultant fee. He commented city staff could also speak with other cities to learn about what they like and do not like about their current financial software programs.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if one path worked better than others. Mr. Zimmerman reported staff does not have a definitive timeline, but rather wanted support from the council to move forward with a new financial software product. He stated he would like to reach out to an implementation consultant in order to see what assistance would cost.

Councilmember Newland supported staff reaching out to peer cities as well in order to see how they were managing their financial software.

4. Other Business


Mr. Zimmerman reported small group meetings with the council would be scheduled for later this week for the 2027 budget process.

Councilmember Robertson requested the city council fill out the survey from Trader Joe's.


5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 7:52PM.



Signed by 

Tim Sanders, President

Signed by 

Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk