



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

April 13, 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; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Fire Chief Dan Retka; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Public Works Director Nick Fleishhacker; and City Attorney Eric Larson.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2026-79 Utility Franchise Fee Implementation Timeline (30 Minutes)
Sponsors: Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Mayor Sanders reported the city's request for a local area sales tax was heard by the senate and noted he was hopeful a tax bill would be approved this session. He explained this matter would be heard by the tax committee on Wednesday, April 15 at 8:30AM.

Finance Director Zimmerman stated in conjunction with workshops held on [January 13, 2025](#), [September 8, 2025](#), [November 17, 2025](#), and [January 23, 2026](#), City staff conducted meetings with all local gas and electric providers, including CenterPoint Energy, Xcel Energy, Connexus, and Centennial Utilities. These meetings occurred alongside the ongoing workshop series to inform providers of the City's intent to establish franchise fees, discuss the formal process for renegotiating expired agreements, and collect the necessary data for fiscal modeling. Under Minnesota Statute 216B.36, the City maintains broad authority to negotiate these franchise ordinances for the use of public rights-of-way. While certain natural gas agreements remain in effect, others with Xcel Energy and Connexus have expired and must be updated to ensure uniform provisions across all providers before a fee can be officially implemented.

Mr. Zimmerman reported staff explored a flat-fee model based on the City of Lakeville's structure, which is estimated to generate approximately \$5.9 million in annual revenue. This benchmark was selected because it reflects current market conditions in a comparable community and aligns closely with the debt and levy portions of Blaine's 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan. Unlike property taxes, which rely on fluctuating valuations, a flat-rate franchise fee provides a stable, predictable revenue stream that includes contributions from tax-exempt properties such as educational institutions and public property. Financial modeling indicates that this approach is equitable for most residents and businesses; for example, the median residential property would see a net benefit of approximately \$17.61 annually when comparing the franchise fee to the property tax increase that would otherwise be required to fund these capital needs. While implementing franchise fees requires significant administrative coordination and active negotiation with utilities, the long-term fiscal benefits include immediate revenue from new construction and a diversified funding base that reduces the overall debt burden. If the City Council proceeds with implementation in 2026, the first significant impact on the annual debt levy would likely occur by 2029. This would allow for a full year of revenue collection to validate budget projections and ensure a prudent transition toward cash-funding essential infrastructure.

Mr. Zimmerman explained If the Council reaches a consensus to move forward with the process as drafted, a mandatory 60-day notice period for utilities could begin on April 15, 2026. This would lead into a staggered legislative path where the Franchise Ordinances, the legal agreements themselves, would tentatively be slated for a first reading on May 17 and adoption on June 1. Following this, the Fee Ordinances, which define the specific rates and classes, would move toward a public hearing and first reading on June 14, with a targeted adoption date of July 6. Because this is a preliminary planning document, the dates are meant to illustrate the significant lead times required by statutory and contractual obligations. For example, once an ordinance is adopted, a 90-day notification and publication period must occur before any fees become active. Under this current conceptual model, the effective date would be October 5, 2026. However, the core objective of this workshop discussion is to ensure the Council is comfortable with the proposed pace and the legal requirements of the transition before any formal notices or publications are initiated.

Jacob Saufley, Attorney with Eckberg Lammers, presented the procedural framework and necessary timelines for establishing new franchise and fee ordinances. He explained the city had three gas companies and two electric companies operating in Blaine. He explained the notice process would begin over the next six weeks if the council were to proceed with the

utility franchise fee implementation. The proposed fee structure and public hearing process for the franchise ordinance was further reviewed with the council. Sample ordinances from other communities were discussed along with the proposed timeline that would have to be followed in order to get the franchise fees in place by January 1.

Councilmember Newland asked how the city would address the franchise agreements that were current. Mr. Saufley explained the active franchise agreements were similar and would not require any changes or adjustments at this time. He noted amendments could be made to get the franchises on the same 20-year cycle.

Councilmember Newland inquired how the franchise fee would appear on a utility bill. Mr. Saufley reported there would be a line item on the bill for a city franchise fee.

Councilmember Newland anticipated it would be easier to have a smaller monthly fee charged to residents than for a larger amount to be charged quarterly to residents. City Manager Thorvig agreed, noting communication with the public would be key.

Councilmember Larson questioned what type of fee would be charged to residents. Mr. Zimmerman reviewed the fees that are being charged by other communities and noted the Lakeville scenario was the recommendation from staff.

Mr. Saufley stated cities tend to prefer a flat fee being charged to users because this was more predictable versus a consumption-based fee.

Mr. Thorvig reported staff supported the flat fee model because this would provide the city with consistent revenues. He requested direction from the council on how to proceed.

Councilmember Robertson thanked staff for the presentation and explained she supported the city moving forward with the proposed flat franchise fee following the Lakeville model. It was her hope this item could move forward and did not believe this topic needed to be brought back for further discussion at a workshop meeting.

Councilmember Massoglia supported the franchise fees moving forward following the Lakeville model as well.

Councilmember Newland and Councilmember Fleming agreed with this recommendation.

Councilmember Ford supported staff moving forward with the franchise fees.

3.2. 2026-80 SBM Fire Department - Quarterly Update (30 Minutes)
Sponsors: Daniel Retka, Fire Chief

Fire Chief Retka provided the council with a quarterly update from the SBM Fire Department. He explained the SBM Fire Department was now serving over 106,000+ people with high quality services at one of the lowest costs in the country. He reported calls for service were up for the year while response times were improving due to the new staffing

models. He discussed how overlapping calls were continuing to grow, which was typical for a growing department. He thanked the fire corp for their continued dedication and service to the community. The training provided to SBM firefighters was discussed along with the training that was being provided to departments in Anoka and Ramsey Counties. He described how plans were moving forward for the new fire station. He reported SBM entered into an agreement with ICS to consider the department's space needs going forward.

Councilmember Larson thanked Chief Retka noting she greatly appreciated hearing the cost per resident for fire services was quite low when compared to neighboring communities. She asked how the department was able to achieve such positive cost-saving measures. Chief Retka explained the department had a very lean budget with zero waste and was operating more like a business.

Councilmember Ford questioned if the fire department had an ISO rating completed recently. Fire Chief Retka explained the department had an ISO rating of 3.

Councilmember Ford requested the calls for service information be broken down by station for the city council to review.

Councilmember Newland asked how the fire department back filled when overlapping calls occurred. Chief Retka discussed how staff back filled and how mutual aid was offered from neighboring communities when overlapping calls occurred.

Further discussion ensued regarding the benefits of having drones on scene prior to fire arriving. Chief Retka spoke to the rising number of list assist calls in the community.

Councilmember Robertson commended Chief Retka for the reputation that has been built for the SBM Fire Department.

Mayor Sanders thanked Chief Retka for his presentation and stated he was proud of the great work the fire department was doing in the community.

3.3. 2026-81 Petition to Modify Flowerfield Road (30 Minutes)
Sponsors: Daniel Schluender, Director of Engineering

Director of Engineering Schluender stated a petition was received on January 15, 2026, from Weston Woods on Rice Creek Association. The petition asks council to consider a reconfiguration of Flowerfield Road going east of Lexington Avenue to close it to through traffic by any means such that vehicles may not enter or exit at the city border between the City of Blaine and the City of Circle Pines. The council received the petition at their regular scheduled meeting on February 2, 2026, and recommended the item be sent to workshop for discussion. A brief history outlines that in September 2020, a resident approached the Traffic Commission with concerns about Flowerfield Road (Lexington Avenue to the eastern city limits). Based on the resident's request, the Traffic Commission directed staff to collect traffic data and present the information to the commission and also to invite the entire

neighborhood to that meeting. At the May 2021 Traffic Commission meeting, the Traffic Commission was presented the collected data and heard testimony from the neighborhood. The neighborhood concerns about Flowerfield Road included traffic volume, traffic speeds, lack of pedestrian facilities, and the rural nature of the roadway section. Their main concern, however, was the lack of pedestrian sidewalks or trails on Flowerfield Road. The Traffic Commission walked the neighborhood through the process of how to petition the city council for consideration of improvements. He noted a petition has been submitted with a request to alter Flowerfield Road in such a fashion as to not allow vehicles to enter or exit across the Blaine/Circle Pines border.

Councilmember Newland commented he met with the homeowners association and they readily agreed to separate the road from the development to the north. He explained the neighbors supported development but have questions and concerns about the road. He understood the road was not that old and nobody wanted to pay for improvements. He indicated he supported the residents and homeowners association and their interest to close the road, but noted the recommendations from the area police chiefs should also be taken into consideration. He suggested barricades be put up as this would be a show of support for the residents.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he did not support making any changes.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she has had polite engagement with the residents in this area of Blaine and understood their concerns but explained she was having a difficult time not taking into consideration the recommendations from public safety. She suggested no changes be made to the road at this time until the new development was completed, adding it did not make sense to close a road that was being used.

Councilmember Ford stated he agreed with Councilmember Robertson. He asked if the new development would push more traffic onto Flowerfield Road. Mr. Schluender explained the new development would have 37 units. Staff was estimating the development would generate less than 300 trips per day, with all vehicles using Flowerfield Road. He indicated staff was surprised that the petition that was brought forward did not address a path or trail along Flowerfield Road.

Mayor Sanders commented he was surprised the petition did not request a trail as well.

Councilmember Larson asked if the discussion surrounding the sidewalk was closed. Mr. Schluender explained a sidewalk request was not being requested at this time within the petition, but direction could be provided by the city council.

Mr. Schluender estimated the sidewalk improvements would cost \$500,000 to \$600,000 to update this road from a rural section to a roadway with a sidewalk.

Mayor Sanders stated it appears this was an unnatural stretch of roadway for walkers.

Councilmember Newland inquired if sidewalks and gutters would be added the next time Flowerfield Road was improved. Mr. Schluender stated this would be an item for discussion for the council to consider the next time this roadway was improved.

Councilmember Fleming asked how the city would cover the \$500,000 to \$600,000 expense for the sidewalk if this project were to move forward. Mr. Schluender reported this expense would be covered by assessments.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she believed it would be best for the council to take no action on this item until the new development was completed.

Councilmember Newland said he did not believe the council should tie improvements to the road to a specific development as this would complicate things. He supported the council responding to the petition at this time.

Mayor Sanders asked if there was enough room for a sidewalk along Flowerfield Road. Mr. Schluender reported the city had the previous developer dedicate right of way on the south side of Flowerfield Road. He indicated the developer on the north side would dedicate 75% of the north side, which would provide enough room for a street and sidewalk.

Councilmember Ford asked if it would be cheaper for the city to install a bike path than a sidewalk. Mr. Schluender stated trails were eight feet wide and were generally cheaper to install than a six-foot concrete sidewalk.

Mayor Sanders commented he did not support closing the road and explained he would be interested in learning more about the cost for a path or sidewalk and what the timing for this project would be. Mr. Schluender thanked the council for their feedback and stated he would have a conversation with the HOA.

3.4. 2026-82 Sidewalk and Trail Plowing Requirements (40 Minutes)
Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, City Manager

Mr. Thorvig stated the topic of sidewalk plowing has been discussed by the city council several times over the past year. The current city ordinance states that "no owner or occupant of any property, in front of which or adjacent to which, a sidewalk has been constructed for use of the public, shall allow snow to remain upon the sidewalk longer than 48 hours after the snow has ceases to fall thereon." In other words, sidewalk plowing is the responsibility of the resident. However, the current practice/policy is that the city plows all sidewalks within the city which conflicts with the ordinance. Research indicates the city has plowed sidewalks dating back to the 1980s. The city has a Snow and Ice Removal policy that was adopted in 2002 and amended in 2009, 2017 and 2020 through action of the city council. The city council has had discussions regarding the conflict in the ordinance and policy dating back to 2000. However, no action has ever been taken to resolve the issue. Information was presented at the January 2026 retreat regarding the financial impact on the city of plowing sidewalks. The city expended annually, on average, \$18,856 in overtime costs over the last four years to plow sidewalks. Yearly expenses vary depending on the amount of snow received. If the city were to not plow sidewalks, there would be savings in overtime expenses and also result in a reduction in the sidewalk plowing fleet over time. The city council requested additional information at the January retreat regarding enforcement if the residents were required to plow sidewalks.

Mr. Thorvig commented staff was able to obtain a survey completed by the City of Bloomington, who surveyed 14 cities on their policies for sidewalk plowing. There is a mix of policies which will be touched on later in this report. Additionally, Blaine staff surveyed eight comparable Minnesota cities that require property owners to clear sidewalks adjacent to their properties. The purpose was to document current practices regarding deadlines, enforcement approaches, notice procedures, clearance methods, penalties, and real-world outcomes. For cities that require residents to plow sidewalks, enforcement is complaint-driven in every case (no city uses proactive city-initiated inspections). Data was compiled from city responses in early 2026 and includes both quantitative details and qualitative comments provided by each city. Based on the Bloomington survey and data compiled by Blaine, there are several options that Blaine could consider based on the practices of other cities.

Option 1: Maintain current operations as-is. This would require a change to the current ordinance to be consistent with the practice.

Option 2: The City would maintain sidewalks adjacent to city property and trails (City and County); Residents/businesses responsible for sidewalks adjacent to their property.

Option 3: The City would maintain sidewalks adjacent to city property and trails (City and County); the City would maintain school zones and other primary routes; Residents/businesses responsible for sidewalks adjacent to their property. This option would require identifying school zone and primary routes.

Mr. Thorvig indicated Options 2 and 3 require enforcement by the city for residents and businesses who do not plow sidewalks. Based on the survey of other cities, staff would propose the following enforcement structure. An ordinance would need to be adopted identifying the requirements and enforcement. Staff provided the council with further information on the challenges the city would face when it comes to enforcement and requested direction from the council on how to proceed.

Councilmember Massoglia stated if the council was debating the expense of \$18,000 per year, he did not believe this was a big cost concern but was concerned about the expense of the \$250,000 sidewalk snowplow machines. He explained if the city were to move to Option 2 or Option 3 the city could go from six to two sidewalk snowplow machines, which was \$1 million in equipment savings.

Councilmember Robertson asked if the city had to clear the county trails and sidewalks. Mr. Thorvig reported this work was written into the JPAs.

Councilmember Larson indicated she supported the city moving forward with Option 2.

Councilmember Newland explained he supported Option 1 moving forward, but noted he was intrigued by the Burnsville model that charged residents that lived along a sidewalk a nominal fee for snow removal.

Councilmember Ford stated he supported Option 1 as well, noting he did not support the city taking away a service that has been provided to residents. He commented this was also

a safety concern for him as he wanted to see sidewalks free and clear of snow in a timely manner for children walking to school.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he supported Option 2, noting this was not an essential city service.

Councilmember Robertson reported she supported Option 2 as well.

Councilmember Fleming stated she supported Option 2.

Council consensus was to direct staff to move forward with Option 2.

- 3.5.** 2026-83 2027 Budget - Review of Small Group Meetings; Outcomes and Council Direction (30 Minutes)
Sponsors: Jason Zimmerman, Finance Director

Mr. Thorvig stated at the February 18 City Council Workshop, staff presented a review of the 2027 budget process with suggestions to improve the process going forward. Following the established schedule, the City Manager and Finance Department met with Council in small groups throughout late March and early April. These discussions focused on data-driven assumptions for operations, capital, and debt funding, ensuring that current staffing and service levels are maintained at projected 2027 costs. An outcome of these meetings will be the creation of a governing framework containing key themes, goals, and expectations for the 2027 budget and property tax levy. Pending informal consensus of the Council, this framework will be shared with departments to ensure all budget requests conform with Council direction. While further discussions will be required to address the wide spectrum of funds the City maintains, the initial focus of the budget kick-off will be on the 2026 property tax levy, as a preliminary, or maximum levy must be certified to the County Auditor by September 30 in accordance with state statute. He reviewed the summary statements from the small group outcomes and the remaining budget schedule with the council.

Mr. Zimmerman discussed how staff wanted to transform the conversation and improve budgeting processes for both staff and the city council.

Councilmember Newland indicated he believed the discussion points in the small groups were solid, and he appreciated the long-term forecast that was provided by staff. He explained he supported the path the city was on and appreciated the fact the city was pursuing franchise fees and municipal cannabis.

Councilmember Robertson stated she did not have a pleasant small group meeting and did not want to see another double-digit levy increase. She discussed how there has been a division in the council when it comes to the budget as year-end approaches and was hoping this would not happen this year as she wanted to see spending decrease. She anticipated there were homeowners in Blaine that were being impacted by the levy increases and requested staff continue to work to bring the proposed levy down.

Councilmember Larson asked how much funding within the 2027 budget would cover expenditures for the 105th redevelopment project. Mr. Zimmerman stated \$1.5 million of the 2027 budget was allotted to the 105th redevelopment project.

Councilmember Larson discussed how the city had paid \$500,000 in 2026 for the new turf fields and has been paying for properties within the 105th redevelopment area over the past several years. She explained it was difficult for her to look at the levy and not acknowledge that the city has been making choices to invest in the 105th redevelopment project. She wanted there to be transparency that the city has been spending taxpayer dollars on this project. She noted she would be firm in not supporting any further expenditures for the 105th redevelopment project. She discussed what services the city should be providing for its residents and feared the city was veering away from its primary focus. She wanted to see the council further questioning the expenses for the 105th redevelopment project especially when it comes to the new parking structure. She stated she was baffled by the fact the parking structure went from \$7 million to \$15 million and by the fact the council didn't discuss the fact another entity would be located on top of the parking structure.

Mayor Sanders reported the developer would be making better use of the space by co-locating another use on top of the parking structure. He explained the city would be growing its commercial district through this development, which would greatly benefit the city's tax base in the long run. He spoke to the reason why the city took a loss on some of the properties within the 105th redevelopment district noting this was due to the fact the properties had dilapidated structures. He understood the city had made initial investments in this project, but noted the city would begin to be paid back over time after the abatements take place.

Councilmember Larson expressed concern with the fact the council was not questioning the developer but rather was approving requests for relief without asking really tough questions.

Councilmember Robertson stated she did not believe this was a fair assessment. She noted Councilmember Larson has been privy to every conversation she has had regarding this development, which included all the questions she raised about the development.

Mayor Sanders indicated he initiated weekly conversations with staff and the development team.

Councilmember Larson questioned where the presentation was from staff for the developer's request for \$2.75 million in relief. She noted she had not received any information on this. She reported she was against the \$15 million that was spent on the parking structure. She expressed concern with the fact the council approved each and every expenditure request for the 105th redevelopment project but then was questioning staff about every expense from a city level.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated Councilmember Larson's questions may be better addressed through discussions with staff. He indicated he stood by his statements that were made at the last meeting. He reported the \$500,000 that was on the levy was set to be paid back in tax abatement in 2026. Mr. Zimmerman reported this was the case, noting the turf

abatement would be paid back through additional tax dollars being captured from the new development.

Councilmember Massoglia stated the tax levy has gone up because the city was spending \$4 million more per year and noted this was not due to the 105th redevelopment project. He indicated the parking ramp might be the only expense that would have to be paid for by taxpayers. He asked how much of the 2026 levy increase was due to the 105th redevelopment project. Mr. Zimmerman reported for 2026 the city would spend \$600,000 on the turf, but noted the city spent \$500,000 on turf in 2025.

Councilmember Massoglia commented this was only a \$100,000 increase from 2025 to 2026. He noted additional spending by the city was what was driving the tax levy up.

Councilmember Ford stated when the 105th project was first presented to the council there was excitement and he understood as the development went on things changed. He indicated he was not willing to put money back into the second parking ramp because this did not make financial sense. He commented he originally envisioned the 105th project serving the residents of Blaine, but noted the vision for this area has changed, and the area would now better serve visitors of Blaine. He discussed how the costs for services in the city have gone up because the city was growing. He supported the council providing staff with a roadmap if additional cuts were going to be made to the budget.

Mayor Sanders discussed how the redevelopment area would serve Blaine residents, noting there would be baseball games, concerts and events along with new amenities and shopping. He wanted to make sure the bike paths and trails were connected for residents. He stated on event days, the city would be receiving a revenue share for the parking ramp. He agreed this project should move forward with the focus being on residents first, noting this project would offer balance and create a destination for residents living in the north metro. He stated he understood this project had changed, but he was of the opinion the project had changed for the better. He discussed how the market spoke and there was interest from other users to get into this area. He appreciated how the council had worked to turn this dilapidated, old industrial park into a large revenue-generating development for the city. He explained if a project like this was not completed in Blaine, it would not happen in Anoka County. He indicated he was very comfortable with where this development was going because he believed it would be a win for Blaine. He was of the opinion the city's attorney and bond counsel had provided the council with sound advice.

Councilmember Robertson asked if there was consensus to direct staff to bring the budget down further.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he would like to see the budget come down further prior to the June budget workshop meeting. He explained he wanted to see spending leveling off.

Councilmember Fleming questioned what it would look like to staff to get the levy to 7%. Mr. Zimmerman reported the city would have \$400,000 in inflationary increases to the budget, which was approximately 1% of the levy. He noted if the council wanted to see the levy brought in closer to 7%, staff would need to cut \$1 million in expenditures.

Mr. Thorvig stated staff could commit to lowering the preliminary levy amount prior to the June meeting.

Councilmember Larson explained she was not supportive of the 105th project being on the 2027 levy.

Councilmember Newland asked where the council and staff would go from here. Mr. Thorvig indicated in the next two months staff would make a concerted effort to look at spending and to see if the 9.7% number could be reduced.

Councilmember Larson reiterated that she did not want 105th project expenses on the levy.

Mr. Zimmerman stated there was a \$1 million expense that was slated for 2027 that could be pushed out to 2030, but the city would then incur additional interest. He explained the council will have to consider how to proceed with this expenditure. He reported staff understood there should be a way to manage costs.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he was not comfortable with additional funding for capital consistent with the CIP.

Councilmember Robertson supported staff doing a hard review of the capital expenditures for the coming years.

Councilmember Newland explained he did not want to see 105th project expenses on the levy either and stated he believed the levy will level off over time, but noted it would take time for the city to get to this point.

Councilmember Ford commented if the recommendations from staff would help the city out financially down the road, he would support the council proceeding in this manner.

Councilmember Fleming stated she would like to review the permanent financing for the 105th project further. In addition, she wanted to discuss the strategic use of unrestricted reserves for capital equipment.

3.6. 2026-84 Council Requested Items for Discussion (20 Minutes)
Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, City Manager

Councilmember Newland asked if the council wanted to explore the viability of setting the SBM Fire Department up as its own Fire Taxation District to move SBMFD costs onto a separate property tax line item while simultaneously removing the same costs from Blaine's operating expenses. He explained staff asked the council to assess the positive and negative implications of an SBMFD Fire Taxation District in order to thoroughly understand whether this option strengthens or weakens safety services with the city and how to proceed. He explained per policy, this discussion will be limited to whether or not the council wishes to direct staff to prepare a future workshop agenda item for council discussion.

Mayor Sanders asked if there were four councilmembers that wanted to further discuss this topic.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned what kind of staff time would be required to investigate this item. Mr. Thorvig indicated this was a new topic and there were legal ramifications that would have to be investigated.

Councilmember Newland anticipated this item would not be brought back to the council until this fall.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if there was interest from Chief Retka to pursue this option. She indicated she did not support moving this item forward unless Chief Retka supported this matter. She stated she was not interested in mixing politics with public safety in Blaine.

Councilmember Larson stated she did not understand why the city would move forward in this manner.

Councilmember Robertson explained the proposal would be to have the SBM Fire Department its own taxing district that would show up separately on the service areas tax statements.

Councilmember Newland commented these were all questions that could be answered by staff if this item were brought forward at a future workshop meeting.

Councilmember Fleming stated she would like to hear from Chief Retka the pros and cons of moving forward with a separate taxing district for the SBM Fire Department.

Councilmember Ford indicated he supported taking a look at how the SBM Fire Department operates and if this would be a viable option for the department. He explained he wanted to consider what the best option for Blaine would be going forward.

Chief Retka commented he was not supportive of the proposed taxing district. He reported this model was typically more popular in rural areas than in metropolitan areas and did not anticipate Blaine would save any money if this change was made. He agreed that politics would be brought into public safety if the city were to change to this model. He indicated the current model was not broken, and he did not believe operations should change at this time.

Councilmember Ford stated there were politics in policing and fire already and he supported the municipality taking a closer look at how the city was spending its money on public safety. He believed the council had a shared responsibility to report to the public how services were being provided.

Councilmember Fleming indicated she did not support moving this item forward.

Councilmember Newland commented he believed there was still more information that could be gathered for the council to consider regarding this topic and that it was his hope the council would support staff pursuing more information.

Councilmember Larson stated the fire department was working really well on behalf of the community and if this was not the case, she would be more inclined to investigate this topic further. She did not support changing the current model for the SBM Fire Department.

Councilmember Fleming explained given the feedback provided by the fire chief, she did not believe it would be worth staff's time to investigate this topic further.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he appreciated Councilmember Newland's intent, which was to find ways to reduce the overall levy for Blaine taxpayers, but noted he did not support this topic moving forward.

Mayor Sanders reported there was not enough support from the council to move this item forward.

4. Other Business

None.

5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 9:28PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk