



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

June 1, 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; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; Parks and Recreation Director Jerome Krieger; Economic Development Specialist Ruth Tucker; City Attorneys Eric Larson and Joe Van Thomme; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2026-115 Municipal Cannabis Partnership Update (45 Minutes)
Sponsors: Ruth Tucker, Economic Development Specialist

Economic Development Specialist Tucker stated council has held multiple discussions regarding the selection of an operating partner for the city's municipal cannabis retailer license, including review of materials submitted by Voyageur Cannabis and a presentation

from the city of Anoka regarding its municipal cannabis operation and potential partnership approach. At the previous meeting, council directed staff to further vet Voyageur Cannabis and continue discussions with the city of Anoka to better understand potential partnership terms. Both Voyageur Cannabis and the city of Anoka have expressed interest in partnering with Blaine to operate a cannabis retail facility under the city's municipal license. Each option presents a different operational structure for council's consideration. Additional information will confidentially be provided to council prior to the workshop. Staff requested the council select an operating partner and authorize staff to proceed with a letter of intent.

Kevin Morelli, City of Anoka, suggested that a joint powers agreement may be considered as part of the negotiations as it may limit some of the liability for each jurisdiction.

City Attorney Eric Larson outlined the need for both site control as well as the partnership between the cities in order to really begin the process, adding once a site has been acquired a more formal contract will be drafted and that the letter of intent could be accomplished by the end of July.

Councilmember Fleming asked for input on the area of Blaine that may be best. Mr. Morelli said the border of the city is best to capture customers from other cities.

Councilmember Larson said she felt comfortable with partnering with Anoka as they best understand city operations.

Council consensus was to move forward with the City of Anoka to partner on Blaine's municipal dispensary license. Discussion was held on possible locations.

Mr. Thorvig thanked council for the clear guidance on the partnership and said next steps will be identifying start-up costs, proforma on projected sales, and locations for upfront costs and said a letter of intent will be drafted in the near future.

3.2. 2026-116 City Attorney Contracts (30 Minutes)
Sponsors: Scott Johnson, Director of Administrative Services

Director of Administrative Services Johnson stated the current contracts for both civil and prosecution services with Eckberg and Lammers will end on December 31, 2026. In 2018, a request for proposals was conducted with seven proposals received, and three firms selected for interviews. City council directed staff to present contracts for both civil and criminal prosecution with Eckberg and Lammers for approval at the October 4, 2018, city council meeting. In 2023, the city council discussed whether to continue services with Eckberg Lammers or go out for RFP for legal services. The council chose to continue services with Eckberg and not do an RFP. Eckberg submitted a proposal for a three-year renewal of the contracts which commenced January 1, 2024, through December 31, 2026. The 2024-2026 criminal prosecution agreement included a 3% increase each year of the contract. The 2026 annual fee for prosecution is \$300,000. Given the expiration of the contract, the council can choose to go out for RFP or continue services with Eckberg and negotiate a contract. If the council chooses to continue services with Eckberg, the 2027 rate will be provided in a proposal from Eric Larson at Eckberg and Lammers (staff will provide the

proposal when received). Currently, the city has a hybrid agreement for civil legal services which includes a monthly retainer and an hourly rate. The hourly rate is dependent on the type of legal services required. Staff reviewed the proposal noting the fees in greater detail.

City Attorney Van Thomme provided background information on the civil and criminal sides of the firm, discussed the number of cases that were addressed by the firm, and commented on other data. He noted Blaine was a very active municipality when it comes to civil cases, which was due to the high level of police presence in Blaine.

Mayor Sanders stated the number of referrals for criminal matters was higher than other communities and questioned if this was due to population or geography. Mr. Van Thomme stated this would be hard to determine then explained his firm represents a number of cities and noted those with trunk highways receive a lot of traffic cases and cities with large retail, receive a lot of prosecution cases.

City Attorney Larson explained he has enjoyed working for Blaine for the past three years and said it was his hope he would be able to continue with Blaine.

Mayor Sanders stated he appreciated working with Eckberg and Lammers and commended them for the great work they were doing on behalf of the city.

Councilmember Newland requested further information regarding the civil matters the city attorneys were addressing. Mr. Larson explained this work included the 105th redevelopment project and litigation with the City of Lexington.

Councilmember Fleming appreciated how well Eckberg and Lammers knew the city council and staff members.

Councilmember Massoglia reported he has been very happy with the services provided by Eckberg and Lammers. He stated he has felt well represented throughout the entire 105th redevelopment project.

Councilmember Newland agreed and stated he would like to see the city remain with Eckberg and Lammers for continuity purposes.

Safety Services Director/Police Chief Podany explained he has been very happy with the prosecution services provided by Eckberg and Lammers.

Council consensus was to support renewing the Eckberg and Lammers contracts and forward with formal approval at a future council meeting.

4. Other Business

- 4.1.** 2026-117 Early Voting Locations (15 Minutes)
Sponsors: Cathy Sorensen, City Clerk

City Clerk Sorensen stated a law change was approved in the last legislative session that

allows municipalities the option to be open for in-person absentee voting the full 46-day period, which begins June 26, or just the final 18 days for early voting, which begins July 24. The primary is held on August 11. Because the turnout for primary elections has historically been low, staff will work with Anoka County to shift in-person absentee voting for Blaine voters to the Anoka County Elections office from June 26 through July 23. Beginning July 24, Blaine voters will be able to vote in-person at City Hall and place their ballots in the tabulator directly, which has become increasingly important to voters and reflected in law changes this year which extended the early voting period from 7 days to 18 days. This shift will result in election judge cost savings of approximately \$3,000, which does not include staff time to manage, close, and balance nightly. This shift will also help alleviate some of the impacts due to the planned construction and access changes to city hall. The 2022 primary had a total turnout of 13.48% and the 2024 state primary, which didn't have any city races, saw only 156 voters at city hall during the last week before the election. Staff will use the primary to gauge the impact on voters before making any decisions for the general election and will create a communication plan to inform voters about the availability of the longer period for early voting and other voting options. In addition, city hall will also be open for early voting on Saturday, August 8 from 9AM-3PM and until 5PM the day before the election.

Councilmember Larson said she supported the proposed shift as a more efficient way to use taxpayer dollars.

Police Chief Podany shared background information on FLOCK data in response to some recent social media activity and noted he wanted the council to be educated on how the department was using this technology. He commented further on how the retail unit is present at Northtown Mall now that Asia Mall is open.

City Manager Thorvig provided the council with a construction update on the 105th Avenue redevelopment project. He noted a building permit has been issued for the parking ramp and staff was working with the developers' PR firm to align messaging for this project. Further information was provided regarding the progress that has been made on the roundabout.

Councilmember Massoglia mentioned the possibility of an expanded 4th of July celebration to recognize the country's 250th year. Parks and Recreation Director Krieger noted the Blaine Festival will be donating an additional \$10,000 to create an expanded fireworks display. Further discussion was held on the city's parade float.

5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 6:46PM.

Signed by



Tim Sanders, Mayor



A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Catherine M. Sorensen", is written above a horizontal line.

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk