



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

July 6, 2026 | 5:00 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 5:35PM.

2. Roll Call

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Terra Fleming, Chris Ford, Leslie Larson, Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Chris Massoglia.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Erik Thorvig; Housing Program Coordinator Elizabeth Showalter; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Jason Zimmerman; Director of Administrative Services Scott Johnson; Director of Engineering Dan Schluender; City Attorney Eric Larson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

3.1. 2026-135 Concept Plan for Christian Brothers Automotive at 10919 Austin Street NE.
(30 Minutes)

Sponsors: Sheila Sellman, Community Development Director

Housing Program Coordinator Showalter stated in 2022, Christian Brothers Automotive sought feedback from the City Council regarding a proposal to construct an auto repair facility within the Lexington Meadows development, located just south of 109th Avenue. Accommodating the proposed use would have required an amendment to the Planned

Business District (PBD) zoning district to permit auto repair facilities. The City Council indicated that it was not supportive of amending the PBD ordinance to allow auto repair uses or of permitting such a use within the Lexington Meadows development. Earlier this year, a conditional use permit was approved for the North Meadows development (North of 109th Avenue). The CUP included the following uses: general retail, office, animal hospital, restaurants, outdoor dining, zero lot line shared access/parking. Since the property is zoned Development Flex (DF), the uses and development standards are approved through a CUP. Auto repair was not approved with this CUP and therefore is not allowed in this development without a CUP amendment. Staff requested feedback from the council on the concept plan and determine if auto repair should be allowed in this location.

Councilmember Newland stated he was familiar with the Christian Brothers in Andover and stated this was a very nice facility and that based on the proposed renderings he felt the proposed use would be a nice addition to the city of Blaine.

Councilmember Robertson reported the council's decision in 2022 was very strategic at the time when considering what uses to include or exclude and noted auto repair was not part of the vision for this site. She indicated she did not support an amendment to PBD because this could create a precedent that would lead to future requests the council would also have to approve.

Councilmember Ford stated he supported the proposed use, noting Christian Brothers would provide Blaine residents with a place to have warranty work completed. She questioned if there would be pushback on the proposed use from the neighboring townhomes.

Councilmember Larson indicated she has visited the Christian Brothers in Andover and noted she did not have a problem with the proposed use.

Todd Kaufman, Wellington, explained the proposed use was discussed during the neighborhood meeting, along with the other proposed uses within the retail area. He reported no concerns were voiced to him regarding the proposed auto use within the proposed development then discussed how this would be an auto repair shop with a high-quality aesthetic.

Ms. Showalter indicated staff's main concern with the auto repair use was with the direction the bay doors would face, noting the proposed doors would face southeast, which was away from the adjacent residential.

Councilmember Fleming thanked Christian Brothers for choosing Blaine then asked if Christian Brothers would have all onsite vehicles parked inside at night or would there be overnight storage of vehicles on the property. Mr. Kaufman reported generally all vehicles are stored securely within the bays overnight.

Councilmember Fleming stated she was uncertain if this use fit into the strategic plan for this area.

Mayor Sanders commented that while he loves Christian Brothers he felt this use did not fit the vision for Lexington Meadows. He stated this was a dynamic commercial corner and the

council's vision for this area included uses beyond auto repair and banks. He reported residents were looking for new uses in this area. He explained he could potentially support the auto repair use if other amenities were brought to this development. He stated this project was more of a timing issue for him, versus an absolute no.

Councilmember Larson asked what uses would be more desirable for this area.

Mayor Sanders indicated the city does not choose the uses but hoped restaurants, a boutique grocer, or amenity-driven use would locate on this corner. He discussed how residents were getting upset with how big chains, fast food, credit unions and dentist offices continue to pop up around the community and that he wanted this development to be something different that residents were excited about.

Councilmember Fleming commented on how the council had the option to say no to this project because the use did not fit the current zoning and hoped this would show the public the council was trying to be strategic with this development.

Councilmember Ford reiterated that Blaine does not have many auto repair businesses in the city and supported this use, especially a facility of this caliber. He supported the council letting the market drive the uses within this development and noted Christian Brothers has done their research and wanted to open a business in Blaine.

Mayor Sanders reported he did not disagree with this sentiment and understood Blaine was an attractive market for new businesses. However, the council was working to be strategic within this development in order to attract unique or amenities uses.

Councilmember Ford anticipated it would be difficult for unique small business owners to come in and occupy this space because the land was expensive. He stated this was the reason national chains continued to flood the market. He was of the opinion the council's vision for this area was skewed because small business owners did not have the funding to make this vision possible.

Mr. Kaufman discussed how he had been working on this development for some time. He described how the properties off the main road (109th) would be service-oriented or a destination use. He explained these uses would bring good paying jobs but would not be retail uses. He anticipated if the city were to make Christian Brothers wait two or three years to develop within this area, they will find another location for their business.

Councilmember Newland stated the vision for this area was created back in 2020 and noted the market has changed since that time. He indicated he would be disappointed if the city lost out on a great business such as Christian Brothers coming to the community just because the use didn't properly align at this time. He was of the opinion this business would fill a need in the community.

Lisa Diehl, local representative with Christian Brothers, further discussed the proposed concept plan with the council. She explained she has worked with Christian Brothers for the past nine years then discussed how Christian Brothers has grown organically over the years and noted the Blaine community was asking for this use. She commented on how many businesses were struggling at this time provided further information on how Christian

Brothers was employee-owned.

Council provided the applicants with feedback regarding whether they would support allowing auto repair at this location.

3.2. 2026-136 Police Department 2025 Year in Review (45 minutes)
Sponsors: Brian Podany, Safety Services Manager/Police Chief

Safety Services Manager/Police Chief Podany provided a Blaine Police Department 2025 Year in Review. He reviewed the department's mission and core values. He discussed staffing and noted the department has five vacancies at this time. He commented on the number of calls for service for 2025, noting calls were down slightly, but were on the rise for 2026. He discussed how the department would have having more bike patrols in order to address the e-bike/e-scooter concerns in the community. The commented further on the calls addressed by the K-9 unit, CSOs and retail unit. He noted the department would be conducting alcohol, tobacco, massage and cannabis compliance checks in 2026. The number of drone deployments in 2025 was reviewed with the Council, along with the number of community engagement events his officers attended. He discussed the awards and promotions that occurred in the previous year. The reviewed the new initiatives that were being pursued in 2026. He then requested feedback from the council to obtain input on desired future communications and asked the following questions:

- Do you have any questions about the 2025 Year in Review that was presented?
- How often would you like a police department update (current frequency, quarterly, monthly, every 6 months)?
- Do you want the weekly email updates to continue?
- Would you like the updates to be presented at workshop or a regular council meeting for public education?

Councilmember Larson asked how many Level 3 sex offenders were located in the community. Chief Podany stated Blaine only has one at this time.

Councilmember Newland inquired if the east side booking office would be reopening. Chief Podany explained he had met with Sheriff Stewart when he was in office to discuss this matter and said while the Sherriff's Office was interested in reopening this office they do not have staffing to support this facility.

Mayor Sanders supported the police chief giving the council quarterly reports for the police department in the council chambers. He stated he greatly appreciated the weekend updates from the police chief and noted the quarterly reports would be beneficial for the public.

Councilmember Robertson explained she believed the communication between the police department and the city council has been very good. She indicated she would support the police chief providing an update twice a year or quarterly to the city council at council meetings going forward. City Manager Thorvig reported the question as to how police updates should be managed came up after a resident inquired as to why the police chief didn't provide regular reports at council meetings.

Councilmember Newland supported the fire chief providing information to the council regarding fire events that occur in the community.

Councilmember Ford thanked Chief Podany for his great communication with the council and for doing a great job on behalf of the community. He indicated he supported the police chief providing the council with an update on a quarterly basis.

Councilmember Fleming stated there was a great deal of pride in the community on how well the police department operates in this community and thanked the police chief for providing the council with weekend updates.

Council provided feedback for future communications that included updates at council meetings for the public's benefit as well as council's and to provide council with significant fire incidents as well.

3.3. 2026-137 Council Subcommittee Updates (15 Minutes)
 Sponsors: Erik Thorvig, City Manager

Mr. Thorvig stated annually there are mayoral appointments to external boards that city council members participate on. In an effort to inform the full council about activity on these boards, the city manager has asked for a brief update of two of these boards from the representative members at the workshop. The city manager envisions this being a quarterly update going forward with updates on different boards at each meeting.

Councilmember Fleming provided the council with an update from Twin Cities Gateway.

Mr. Thorvig stated the Anoka County Joint Law Enforcement Council updated would be done at the next workshop meeting.

4. Other Business

Chief Podany shared an update on an accident that occurred at 99th and Lexington noting this accident was not the result of the electrical box location but rather the result of an e-bike.

Mr. Thorvig shared updates with the council for upcoming events noting the opening ceremony for the USA Cup would be held on July 14.

5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 6:59PM.

Signed by



Tim Sanders, Mayor



Signed by

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Catherine M. Sorensen".

Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk