



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

August 3, 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; City Attorneys Jacob Saufley and Lida Banninck; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2026-152 Closed Session Pursuant to MN Statute 13D.03 Subd. (1)(b) - Labor Negotiations Update (30 Minutes)
Sponsors: Scott Johnson, Director of Administrative Services

After a motion and second, the council moved to a closed session meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.03 Subd. (1)(b) to receive a labor negotiations update.

3.2. 2026-153 Community Engagement with FlashVote (30 Minutes)
Sponsors: Ben Hayle, Communications Manager

Communications Manager Hayle stated one year ago, staff began the onboarding process with FlashVote to provide a new method for community engagement through short issue-based surveys. Through summer and early fall 2025, staff worked alongside FlashVote to build the system and grow the survey panel. The initial goal was to have 300 residents sign up for the survey panel. This would allow for statistically valid data for a city the size of Blaine. By the time the first survey launched in fall 2025, nearly 500 residents had signed up to be on the survey panel. Today we have over 900 residents on the survey panel, and we see growth each time we conduct a survey. Surveys are intended to be conducted quarterly with the option to do two additional surveys each year if a need arises. Surveys are sent by email, text message, or by phone. When signing up, the resident is able to choose how they receive the survey notification. FlashVote surveys are always five questions and are designed to be completed in less than one minute. The survey is open for 48 hours and then the results are delivered to everyone who took the survey. The results can be broken down by council ward, police patrol districts, and other standard demographics. It was noted the city completed surveys on the following topics:

- Community Satisfaction
- Communications
- Parks

Mr. Hayle shared how information was gathered through the surveys and provided informed decisions and new opportunities to educate and engage, then shared demographics of the survey panel. He said staff appreciated how strong participation was from the survey panel and noted the survey panel was growing after each survey. Further information was provided on the results from the three surveys that have been completed to date.

Councilmember Fleming stated she appreciated this tool and how the city was working to better hear the voices of residents. She questioned how FlashVote was being advertised to the public. Mr. Hayle explained FlashVote has been promoted in the city newsletter, on social media and through targeted advertisements before the initial launch.

Councilmember Newland asked how confident staff was that the respondents were from Blaine. Mr. Hayle stated respondents have to go through an address verification process in order to sign up for the platform.

Councilmember Newland questioned how many times a resident could take a survey. Mr. Hayle reported residents are only allowed to take a survey once.

Councilmember Newland inquired how much FlashVote would cost the city going forward. Mr. Hayle indicated FlashVote had an annual cost of \$13,000.

Councilmember Newland encouraged staff to consider how this tool could be used for economic development. Community Development Director Sellman explained she had

spoken with Mr. Hayle about creating targeted questions for the Northtown area.

Councilmember Larson recommended a survey be completed on the 105th redevelopment project then asked about the demographics of the survey panel. Mr. Hayle reviewed the demographics for the survey panel.

Mayor Sanders suggested a survey on the 105th Avenue project be completed after the city takes the time to explain what would be included in the development.

Councilmember Fleming explained she would like to know if the community would value a "coffee with a councilmember" type event, stating she would be willing to host this type of event with residents.

Further discussion ensued regarding the expertise the FlashVote team has added to the city's issue-specific surveys.

Councilmember Fleming suggested the city complete a survey regarding a potential community center. Mayor Sanders stated he supported this suggestion, but recommended the survey drill down to the amenities that residents were looking for.

Councilmember Robertson suggested the new fire station be considered as a future survey topic as well.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he believed FlashVote was a great tool for the city, but noted he was hesitant about allowing the survey results be used to inform decisions. He stated it was very important for the city to consider how the survey questions are phrased.

Councilmember Newland inquired if feedback should be pursued regarding the upcoming comprehensive plan update. Mr. Hayle indicated staff had already discussed how this could be a useful way to engage with the public.

Mayor Sanders appreciated the data staff was gathering surrounding parks and park maintenance noting this information would be valuable for the council going forward.

Council discussed topics and community issues that council would like to explore through future FlashVote surveys, including community and economic development opportunities, the proposed fire station, a community center, the comprehensive plan update, airport, and others topics.

4. Other Business

City Manager Thorvig provided the council with details on Night to Unite and explained staff would continue to monitor the city's water systems in response to recent cyberattacks on water systems at other cities.

Safety Services Director/Police Chief Podany provided the council with an update regarding the Flock camera/license plate reader (LPR) system the city had in place then discussed the real-time crime center the city and county were considering and provided further information on the

drone-assisted response program component. He reported if Anoka County were to pursue a real-time crime center, this would be the first county-wide center of its kind. He discussed where the drone-assisted LPRs would be located in order to provide county-wide coverage. He stated the goal would be to get the first four or five drone units in place by the end of the year, with one unit being installed in Blaine. He encouraged the council to bring resident concerns or comments to him regarding Flock cameras or LPRs. Further discussion ensued regarding how the real-time crime center would assist with addressing a stolen vehicle, an active shooter situation or active fire.

5. Adjournment

The workshop adjourned at 6:56PM.



Signed by

Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by

Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk