



City of Blaine

City Council Workshop

August 17, 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 5:34PM.

2. Roll Call

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

ABSENT: Councilmember Chris Ford.

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 Attorney Eric Larson; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3. New Business

- 3.1.** 2026-385 State Lobbying Agreement Discussion
Sponsors: Scott Johnson, Director of Administrative Services

Director of Administrative Services Johnson stated the city's current state lobbying contract expires at the end of 2026. The current contract is with Lockridge, Grindal, and Nauen. Requests for proposals were solicited in June for lobbying services in 2027 (and beyond depending on the length of contract). The firms who responded to the RFP are Lockridge,

Grindal, and Nauen, and Capitol Hill Associates. The proposed RFP amounts are as follows:

Lockridge, Grindal, and Nauen - \$38,000 per year

Capitol Hill Associates - \$42,000 per year

Mr. Johnson explained staff has requested two 20-minute presentations from the firms who responded to the RFP. Staff will request the firms leave the workshop after their presentations to allow for City Council discussion/direction on the top choice. It was noted a formal contract will be considered at a later date.

Ann Lenczewski and Alex Hassel, Lockridge, Grindal and Nauen representatives, provided the council with a presentation on their organization. The Lockridge, Grindal and Nauen team was introduced to the council. The meetings held with local legislators during the previous legislative session were discussed. The representatives were very proud of the great work that had been done to secure funding for the TH65 project. Further information was provided on the services their organization could provide the city, and it was noted Lockridge, Grindal and Nauen looked forward to continuing to work with the city of Blaine.

Councilmember Newland asked what kind of relationship building was taking place at this time. Ms. Hassel explained there was not much of an interim anymore and noted she continued her relationships with legislators all throughout the year. She commented on how her team was preparing for the upcoming election. Ms. Lenczewski further discussed how her bipartisan firm works with all individuals without choosing sides.

Councilmember Robertson questioned how the city could push back on the fact it appears Blaine has more than one ask for funding, when in fact the National Sports Center was owned by the state. Ms. Hassel discussed how her team worked to properly message the city's requests separate from the NSC. Ms. Lenczewski commented on how she worked to make legislators aware of the fact the NSC was not owned by Blaine, but has been subsidized by the city. She encouraged the city to pursue a bonding bill again this year.

Councilmember Massoglia inquired how Lockridge, Grindal and Nauen prioritized their time between the various cities they work for. Ms. Lenczewski explained her company does not take on every city and but rather works with the best cities. She commented on how she valued the relationship she had with the city.

Mayor Sanders thanked Lockridge, Grindal and Nauen for their professional presentation and comments.

Reid Lebeau, Nichole Ramalingam and Nick Zerwas, Capitol Hill Associates representatives, provided the council with a presentation on their organization. The entire Capitol Hill Associates team was introduced to the council. Detailed information was provided on the services their organization could provide the city, along with information on how their organization would assist the city council with navigating their legislative priorities. The representatives noted they have a great relationship with Senator Klobuchar, in the event she becomes the next governor. If Senator Klobuchar was not elected governor, this firm would put itself in the position to win regardless of the legislative makeup. It was noted the firm's goal was to remain balanced while getting the city to yeses during the 2027 legislative

session.

Mayor Sanders thanked the Capitol Hill Associates representatives for their presentation and for their lobbying efforts at the federal level.

Councilmember Newland asked what the differences were between lobbying in St. Paul versus Washington DC. Mr. Lebeau noted federal lobbying relies heavily on discussions with staff members while state lobbying allows for one-on-one discussions with legislators. He discussed how lobbying has become an art of persuasion.

Councilmember Robertson questioned what the city's biggest hurdles were at this time. Mr. Lebeau explained he was not hired to bring about the ideas to pursue for the city, but rather was hired to pursue the goals as directed by the council.

Mr. Lebeau thanked the council for allowing him to provide a presentation on his organization and stated he would love the opportunity to do more for the city of Blaine.

City Manager Thorvig discussed the history the city had with both lobbying firms.

Councilmember Fleming inquired if it would be best for the city to position itself with a lobbyist that has a relationship with the new governor once elected. Mayor Sanders stated relationships are key when it comes to lobbying and anticipated the next governor would be more involved with the legislature than the current governor.

Councilmember Newland questioned why the council had to decide on a lobbyist now, versus waiting until after the election. He was of the opinion that both presentations were well done, but he was reluctant to make a decision at this time. Mr. Thorvig indicated staff was seeking a decision now in order to establish relationships and get meetings set up for the upcoming legislative session.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he believed the presentation provided by Capitol Hill was very well done, and he liked how this organization was focused on results. In addition, he appreciated the federal lobbying efforts that were completed by Capitol Hill for the TH65 project.

Councilmember Fleming indicated she supported moving forward with Capitol Hill as well.

Councilmember Robertson asked that staff speak with local legislators to see how well they have worked with Capitol Hill in the past.

Councilmember Newland stated he supported remaining with Lockridge, Grindal and Nauen given their history with the city.

Councilmember Larson inquired if either lobbyist company had worked to address local control. Mr. Thorvig commented Lockridge, Grindal and Nauen knew the city's position but relied on Metro Cities to champion the efforts around local control.

Councilmember Larson reported she did not believe it would matter who was governor as it appears both firms were bipartisan. She stated if she had to choose one she would support

moving forward with Capitol Hill.

Mayor Sanders agreed, noting the priority was to have lobbyists that can work to get bills through the legislature.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she could support either lobbyist team, but noted she was leaning towards Capitoll Hill.

Council consensus was to move forward with Capitol Hill Associates and the council directed staff to schedule formal contract approval for the September 9, 2026, city council meeting or shortly thereafter.

4. Other Business

Community Development Director Sellman provided an update on the possibility of rezoning Pizza Pub/Prime to PBD as it would open up more possibilities for signage and if supportive of the concept, staff would bring this item forward to the September planning commission meeting. She indicated an update will be brought forward for the 105th Avenue redevelopment district in the future as well.

Mr. Thorvig discussed an event that occurred at Tom Ryan Park over the weekend and commented on the behavior occurring in the adjoining Veterans Memorial Park. He reported there were more than 150 people involved, and only 125 people were allowed in the park, which resulted in the event being shut down by the police department.

5. Adjournment

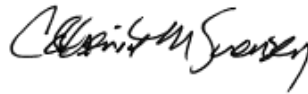
The workshop adjourned at 6:59PM.

Signed by



Tim Sanders, Mayor

Signed by



Catherine M. Sorensen, City Clerk