



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes

Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
Blaine MN 55449

City Council Workshop

While this is a public meeting where interested persons are welcome to attend, it is a work session for City Council and staff to discuss issues before them. It is not for the purpose of receiving public input.

Monday, November 7, 2022

5:30 PM

Cloverleaf Farm Room A

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 6:00PM.

2 Roll Call

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Wes Hovland, Julie Jeppson, Chris Massoglia, Tom Newland, Richard Paul, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; City Engineer Dan Schluender; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; City Attorney Chris Nelson; and Communications Manager Ben Hayle.

Present: 6 - Councilmember Robertson, Councilmember Paul, Councilmember Hovland, Massoglia, Sanders, and Councilmember Jeppson

3 New Business

3-1

Upon motion and by unanimous vote, the Council closed the meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.03, Subd. 1(b) to discuss collective bargaining for Local Union 49, LELS Local 165, and LELS Local 340. Upon conclusion, the Council moved back to open session.

30 Minute Session

3-2

Blaine Town Square Property Future Use

Attachments: [Site Location Map](#)

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the Blaine Town Square area planning began around 2000 when land was acquired for the current City Hall site and other commercial and residential development along Radisson Road and 109th Avenue. The land was initially purchased by the Blaine Economic Development Authority (EDA). Various parcels were sold to private developers and any remaining vacant land has been transferred to the City of Blaine. The last property sale occurred in 2019 when the City sold land for the Synergy Center. Through the various property transactions, the Blaine EDA was made whole on the initial purchase costs. The City owns 5.66 acres south of Town Square Drive, adjacent to City Hall. In 2016, this land was identified as the preferred community center site which failed via voter referendum. Since then, the City has been holding the land. The land was discussed during the 105th Avenue redevelopment area visioning discussion but no decisions were made regarding the future of the property. Recently there has been interest from multiple development groups along with a desire by the SBM Fire Department to have the City consider holding the land for a future fire station.

Mr. Thorvig reported staff is seeking direction from Council whether to hold the land to allow for future fire station/operations discussions to occur, or instead, market the property for private development. If the latter is chosen and there are multiple developer interests, it's likely each developer would need to make a proposal to the City for consideration and a developer selected from that process.

Safety Services Director/Police Chief Podany discussed how difficult it was to find volunteers to serve as firefighters at this time. He explained this meant there would be a shift within the SBM fire department to duty crews with set staffing hours. He stated the parcel adjacent to City Hall was centrally located and would be a great location for a fire station. He noted there was also 12 responders located out of City Hall. He commented on how City Hall did not have enough parking and described how the proposed fire station would assist in addressing this concern.

Interim Fire Chief Retka stated he was in the early stages of discussing how to address the staffing concerns. He reported the staffing concerns were occurring nationwide. He explained the SBM fire department was down 24 members at this time. He commented on how a station adjacent to City Hall would allow the department to draw from a larger pool of candidates and volunteers as well as describing how a duty crew would assist with keeping the City protected.

Policy Chief Podany suggested a task force or committee be formed to further discuss the future of the land adjacent to City Hall.

City Manager Wolfe explained staff was discussing parking and storage needs for the next 20 years.

Councilmember Newland stated he liked the proposal. He asked if the fire department would wait to move to a duty crew until the proposed fire department was built. Interim Fire Chief Retka explained he does not have the numbers to move to duty crews at this time. He reported he has infrastructure concerns that need to be addressed prior to making this change. He commented further on how duty crew models assist with improving response times. He believed in the long run the duty crew model would be leaner and more effective for the community.

Councilmember Jeppson explained she saw the need for a change within the fire department and stated she supported the City forming a working group to further discuss this topic.

Councilmember Hovland supported the City further discussion the options for the site. He reported he supported sharing the site, noting he did not believe housing was an option.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he saw the merit in moving to a duty crew model. He believed it was premature to move forward with plans for this site until a fire chief has been appointed.

Councilmember Paul supported the Council investigating this matter further.

Councilmember Newland and Councilmember Robertson volunteered to serve on the working group.

30 Minute Discussion

3-3

2023-2027 Transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP)

Attachments: [2023-2027 Transportation CIP as of 2022.10.27](#)
[5 Year Transportation CIP Map 2023-2027](#)
[2023 Transportation CIP Map - Numbered by Project](#)
[2023-2027 Transportation CIP Presentation](#)

City Engineer Schluender stated public works and engineering staff have collaborated with the Finance Department to develop a traditional format for the Five-Year Transportation Capital Improvement Program (CIP) for 2023-2027. Staff recommend changing the program name to

Transportation instead of the historically used Pavement Management to better align with industry standards for the breadth of activities funded through this program. The program is vetted annually by staff and projects are programmed based on staff expertise, data including current pavement conditions, and Council guidance. Projects in the out-years (2024-2027) may be delayed, accelerated, moved forward in priority based on regular budget and program discussions, emergent conditions, and other factors including economic pressures. Staff reviewed the projects that were included within the 2023-2027 CIP in further detail with the Council.

Councilmember Hovland asked if 89th Avenue would be included in the five-year plan. Mr. Schluender stated 89th Avenue was in the five-year plan but was not in the plans for 2023.

Councilmember Hovland recommended the medians along 89th Avenue also be addressed and improved in the next five years.

Councilmember Massoglia discussed how traffic was increasing along Ulysses Street and asked if it was more common to have a signal or roundabout installed to address this concern. Mr. Schluender stated he could share some studies with the Council regarding the 20-year traffic predictions for the City. He explained the City would like to put a roundabout at 121st and Ulysses Street, but because there was a bridge approach with elevation, a roundabout would not be possible.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if the projections for traffic would be reduced once TH65 was completed. Mr. Schluender explained the traffic projections were not this detailed.

Deputy Finance Director Bong explained the 2023-2027 CIP includes \$89.94 million in capital improvements including preservation activities, safety improvements, and major roadway reconstructions. Staff was recommending 16 projects for funding in 2023 with total appropriations of \$18.96 million; seven of these projects are multi-year projects with recommendations for future year appropriations.

Councilmember Hovland stated he appreciated the fact the City had a five-year CIP in place. He supported the City getting this plan out to the public to make them aware when their streets were slated for replacement to better prepare for assessments.

Councilmember Jeppson thanked staff for all their work on the five-year CIP. She discussed how times were tight for families and commented on how and \$8,000 assessment would adversely impact Blaine families.

She supported the Council further discussing the City's assessment policy. She encouraged the City to get creative to find new ways to pay for street maintenance.

Councilmember Hovland supported the Council reviewing this process on a regular basis. He encouraged the Council to remember that in the past, 100% of the expense of roads were assessed to homeowners. He stated today the situation was much improved. He believed the program works but should be reviewed again.

Councilmember Jeppson explained she wanted to see the street work done, but she wanted the City to further consider how the work is paid for. Mr. Schluender commented staff could bring this item back to a future workshop meeting and provide the Council with information on how other communities were managing street improvement projects and assessments. City Manager Wolfe stated this item could be added to workshop agenda in the first quarter of 2023.

Councilmember Robertson stated she also struggled with the growing number of assessments. However, she also had to take into consider past practices and the number of people who have already paid their fair share of assessments for street improvements. She requested staff provide the Council with information on how other communities manage assessments and the number of people that request an exception.

Councilmember Paul commented on how assessments were impacting families and stated inflation was compounding this concern.

Ms. Bong reported the five-year CIP would be further considered for approval by the Council at the November 21 City Council meeting.

30 Minute Discussion

3-4

Proposed 2023 Parks Capital Improvements Budget and Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan

Attachments:

[2022.10.25 2023 Parks Funds Budgets](#)

[2022.10.26 2023-2027 Parks Capital Improvement Program](#)

[2023-2027 Parks CIP Presentation](#)

[5 yr Plan Park & Trail Pavement Maintenance Cost \(2023-2027\) Draft](#)

Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Krieger stated as requested by City Council, the Park Board, and the Natural Resources Conservation Board, staff have prepared a traditionally formatted Capital Improvement Program for the parks programs. All park projects are being presented together and are grouped based on the fund they are reported in. Staff

presented the proposed 2023-27 Parks Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) to the City Council for the Council's review and input. It was noted staff will adjust the CIP according to Council feedback, after which staff will present the Council adjusted CIP to the Park Board and Natural Resources Conservation Board for review and recommendation.

Ms. Bong discussed how the parks and recreation and finance teams were evaluating the City's current park dedication fees. She commented on how this fund will be used to sustain the City's parks over time.

Brent Larson reported Braun Intertec evaluated the City's 76 miles of trails and proposed a future maintenance plan. He reviewed this study in further detail with the Council and noted staff would like to get a maintenance plan in place for budgetary purposes.

Ms. Bong explained the Council would be discussing how to fund ongoing trails maintenance at a future workshop meeting.

Councilmember Hovland questioned where the funding would come from for the trail's maintenance. Finance Director Huss explained as the City becomes fully developed less and less park dedication would be paid in. He reported the levy for parks and trails has been expanded to \$500,000 to address the trail needs in the community. Mr. Krieger stated he was proposing to put \$200,000 aside each year for trails maintenance going forward.

Councilmember Robertson supported the City pursuing grants to assist with the trail's maintenance. She explained she had a very hard time spending other people's money and was concerned with the dialogue for additional funding for hockey rinks and the Lexington Athletic Complex. Mr. Krieger stated the DNR has grants available every year but noted Blaine does not meet the free and reduced lunch numbers to qualify for these grants.

Councilmember Massoglia asked who made the decision to put Pioneer Park on pause until 2027. Mr. Krieger stated the trees along the trail would be addressed and the remainder of the park would be reconsidered in 2027.

Councilmember Massoglia explained he would not vote for this plan. He believed the Council was very clear on how to proceed with Pioneer Park and noted there was not support for pursuing a wetland bank at this time. Ms. Wolfe stated she could review the minutes, but it was her understanding the Council wanted the trails along the trail addressed.

Councilmember Jeppson indicated this park needs to be restored and there was work that needs to be done, but it would not be done in the near term.

Councilmember Massoglia reported the core decision was if the Council would be creating a wetland bank. He recommended the \$400,000 being set aside for Pioneer Park in 2027 be removed from the CIP.

Councilmember Jeppson requested staff consider additional park locations that were already lit for hockey rinks, such as the baseball fields near the airport.

Mayor Sanders commented on the need for outdoor ice for the Blaine/Spring Lake Park hockey association. Mr. Krieger explained staff was speaking with this organization to see what they would be willing to donate to the City to assist with pursuing more outdoor rinks.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary building had been pushed out. Mr. Krieger stated this structure had been pushed out to 2027 based on costs. He indicated this would allow the City to focus on trails in the meantime.

Mr. Krieger thanked the Council for their feedback. He noted the five-year parks CIP would go to the park board on November 22 and would come before the Council in early December for review and approval.

30 Minute Discussion

4 Other Business

None.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:35PM.