



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, October 10, 2022

6:15 PM

Cloverleaf Farm Room A

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 6:15PM.

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; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Safety Services Manager/Police Chief Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Deputy Finance Director Alison Bong; City Engineer Dan Schluender; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Deputy Public Works Director Nick Fleischhacker; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3 New Business

3-1 **Tunnel Carwash Discussion For Property at the Southeast Corner of 122nd Avenue and Lexington Avenue**

Attachments: [Attachments](#)
[Presentation](#)

City Planner Sellman stated Tommy's Express Wash is interested in the 1.67-acre lot at southeast corner of 122nd Ave NE and Lexington Avenue. The site is currently zoned Planned Business District (PBD) and has a land use designation of Planned Commercial. Staff reviewed the intent of the Planned Business District and explained standalone

carwashes are not currently permitted in the PBD zoning district. Gas stations with carwashes are a CUP in the PBD district. Kwik Trip is across 122nd Ave from the site and they have a carwash. Tommy's Carwash is requesting consideration of a rezoning or code amendment to allow their carwash in this location. Staff suggests exploring the B-2 zoning district that allows for carwashes rather than amending the PBD district to allow this use.

Kyle Fryer, Tommy's Express Wash representative, thanked the Council for considering his request. He provided a brief history on Tommy's Express Wash noting the company was 50 years old. He noted 130 sites were now open for this franchise, including sites in Mounds View and White Bear Lake. He described the reclaim water system that would be in place noting these systems allow the car wash to use 60% less water than other car washes.

Shawn Abelson, Tommy's Express Wash, noted he was a resident of Blaine and would be an owner of the proposed car wash. He explained there would be two other local families that would serve as owners as well. He stated he takes great pride in running the Mounds View Tommy's Express with his family and hopes to bring this same amenity to Blaine. He commented on how Tommy would be a good steward and sponsor for the community.

Mayor Sanders stated in getting to know the ownership group, he appreciated the fact that the individuals were local. He supported the City working to find a solution to bring Tommy's to the City of Blaine.

Councilmember Hovland asked if the smaller lot on the east side had wetlands, and if so, was this lot large enough to build on. Mr. Thorvig reported this lot was .68 acres in size and was mostly wetland. He indicated it would remain an undeveloped buffer between this lot and the adjacent neighborhood.

Councilmember Robertson stated she finds great value when members of the community want to invest in Blaine. She thanked Tommy Express for supporting local law enforcement and schools. She indicated she was having a challenge with supporting this use at this intersection because traffic was already so heavy. She understood that a traffic signal would not be installed at this intersection until 2024. She reported the neighbors were also concerned with the sound of the dryers. She asked that the applicant speak to how noise concerns are addressed and if there were any other sites being considered for this car wash.

Mr. Fryer stated alternative sites were still being pursued, but he had to

have a willing seller and right sized location. He indicated he would continue to pursue additional opportunities further to the west. He reported this site made a lot of sense for a lot of reasons, especially given the population and traffic counts in the area. He said he did not believe there would be a great deal more traffic in the area. He noted there would be a small gap between when the building was constructed, and a traffic signal would be installed. He explained he had several car washes that were installed adjacent to residential homes and noted there would be a very minimal impact given the fact this site would have a 300-foot buffer.

Councilmember Hovland requested further information regarding the vacuums that would be installed as he anticipated noise concerns from vacuums and recommended, they be oriented away from the residential neighborhood to assist with mitigating the noise.

Councilmember Newland commented on an email he received from a resident that opposed the proposed car wash. He indicated he also heard concerns about locating a car wash on this site across the street from Kwik Trip, given the fact they already had a car wash. He encouraged the developer to consider the concerns raised by the neighbors because many did not support the proposed car wash on this site. He suggested the developer continue to pursue other sites for this use.

Councilmember Hovland recommended additional landscaping, or a buffer be considered on the east side of the property. Mr. Fryer stated he could support this.

Mayor Sanders supported this recommendation and noted it would show the neighbors that the developer was hearing their concerns.

Mr. Thorvig reminded the Council that Mr. Car Wash received approval six months ago at 122nd Avenue and Ulysses Street and noted this car wash would be located adjacent to a residential neighborhood.

Mayor Sanders asked if Tommy's would be flexible with the hours of operation in the evening hours. Mr. Fryer stated the standard franchise hours were 7:00AM to 9:00PM but these hours could be adjusted to fit the community and neighborhood. He explained the majority of the washes occur between 10:30AM and 5:30PM.

Councilmember Paul questioned why Kwik Trip was allowed to have a car wash when this was not allowed in PBD zoning. Ms. Sellman explained Kwik Trip was allowed to have a car wash because they have

a gas station.

Councilmember Newland thanked the applicant for being willing to be flexible on the hours and with landscaping on the site. He asked if this site would be very similar to the Mounds View location. Mr. Fryer explained the Blaine site had more space which would provide more flexibility for parking and vacuum lanes. He reiterated that he would be willing to meet with the neighbors to further discuss the plans.

Councilmember Jeppson commented she was not opposed to the proposed car wash. She suggested the vacuum bays to be pushed further away from the adjacent residential homes. She explained traffic at this intersection was a concern and challenged the engineering team to consider how traffic would flow in and out of this site. She suggested a right-in only be provided off 122nd Avenue.

Councilmember Newland asked what would be located behind the free-standing vacuums on the east side of the building. Mr. Fryer stated there would be landscaping and fencing along this property line.

Councilmember Newland questioned if the color scheme was set. Mr. Fryer stated the proposed colors were the franchise standard but noted accommodations have been made in other communities.

Councilmember Newland requested further information regarding the proposed signage. Mr. Fryer stated there would be a monument sign along with a sign on the building.

Mayor Sanders thanked the applicant for being willing to work through the concerns that have been raised. He believed this use fit in well with the area and was comfortable with this project moving forward.

Councilmember Massoglia agreed this was a good fit and recommended there be a right-in only off 122nd Avenue. He commented there wouldn't be anything developed to the south of this site. He noted he has spoken to residents who were very excited about the car wash.

Mr. Thorvig discussed the site search for the car wash. He explained the developer has reviewed many potential sites in the community. He reported staff told them no on a quite a few other sites, which led to this site being considered.

Council consensus was to support the rezoning of this property to B-2 to support the tunnel carwash moving forward on this site.

3-2

Rezoning Discussion for the Area on the West Side of Highway 65 between 99th Avenue and 105th Avenue

Attachments: [Attachments](#)
[99th presentation](#)

Ms. Sellman stated the area north of 99th Avenue to 105th Avenue on the west side of Highway 65 has been identified in the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan as a priority redevelopment area. It has also been identified as one of the four priority areas by the City Council through the visioning process that occurred in early 2021. The other three areas (125th Avenue/ Lexington Avenue, 105th Redevelopment area, and Northtown) have been reviewed and various master planning and rezoning actions have occurred. The City Council has identified the desire to be proactive regarding zoning and development to encourage businesses and uses that meet the wants of the Blaine community. This approach was taken when creating a new commercial zoning district for the 125th Avenue/Lexington Avenue area in 2021. A similar approach will occur for the subject area where the City Council will provide feedback to staff on the desired land uses and overall design expectations as the properties develop.

Ms. Sellman explained the overall area being reviewed is approximately 70 acres. Most of the parcels in this area are zoned I-1 (Light Industrial) except for the two northern parcels that are zoned B-2 (Community Commercial). A majority of the I-1 zoning has existed since at least 1979 with various zoning modifications to portions of the overall area occurring in the 1980s and 1990s. The existing zoning for the overall area has been in place since the late 1990s. The 2040 Comprehensive Land Use plan has identified the parcels in this area as Planned Commercial (PC), Community Commercial (CC) and Manufactured Home Residential (MHR). Much of the existing zoning is not consistent with the 2040 land use designations and needs to be changed to prepare the land for future development consistent with the vision of the City Council. Having a clear understanding of the preferred uses will provide clarity to landowners, developers, and City staff as to what uses are desired in the area.

Ms. Sellman reported current uses in the area include a pool store, a retail doll store, Blaine International Village manufactured home community and vacant land. Historic uses included Gasoline Alley and the Hi-65 Drive-in theatre. The Blaine EDA owns 4.38 acres in the middle of the subject area. Staff discussed the boundaries of the district in further detail and reviewed the Planned Business District (PBD) and B-5 (Town Commercial) zoning regulations.

Mayor Sanders asked if the Council wanted the Blaine International Village (BIV) included in the rezoning. Mr. Thorvig commented on current ownership of this property noting the west portion was zoned for manufactured home and the former Gasoline Alley site was zoned

commercial. He said he understood that BIV would like to expand onto the Gasoline Alley site.

Councilmember Newland reported he spoke to the BIV onsite manager who shared about an expansion as well and questioned if BIV had provided the City with any feedback on the proposed rezoning. Ms. Sellman stated she had not received any feedback from the property owner. She reported she met with BIV's new ownership, and they were aware of the plans for TH65.

Mayor Sanders supported staff working with the ownership of BIV to soften the transition from the manufactured home community to the commercial development to the south.

Councilmember Robertson explained the City didn't have a vision in place for the TH65 corridor when BIV purchased additional property but does now and asked what the new setbacks would be for BIV given how the corridor would change. She encouraged staff to speak with the BIV ownership further to learn more about their future expansion plans.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if a single parcel could be zoned two different ways and suggested the east side of the frontage zone parcel be zoned commercial. Mr. Thorvig stated this was not encouraged but could be done.

Councilmember Newland suggested an apartment building be considered as a transition between the manufactured home community and the adjacent commercial development to the south. Mr. Thorvig stated the Council would have to consider if they wanted to preserve this space for commercial developments versus multi-family.

Mayor Sanders stated he supported the City creating a new zoning district that works with the vision the City has for this area.

Councilmember Jeppson commented she was not able or willing to answer the questions staff has regarding BIV then stated these properties were the gateway to Blaine. She explained the City has been very focused on redevelopment the 105th Avenue area and the Northtown Mall area and that she was not ready to start checking boxes for another redevelopment area without fully understanding buffers and setbacks for the BIV. She indicated she wanted this to be a unique district that compliments the 105th Avenue area.

Mayor Sanders agreed it would benefit Blaine to have cohesion between these two developments.

Councilmember Hovland asked staff to put together a ghost plat for what it might look like to have two or three different combinations for potential future redevelopments.

Councilmember Robertson supported Councilmember Jeppson's comments. She agreed this project should be cohesive with 105th Avenue. She questioned how far north the City was going to go with the rezoning. Ms. Sellman reviewed the proposed boundary for this district.

Councilmember Newland agreed this area should be tied together with the 105th area.

Councilmember Paul commented it would be important for staff to speak with the property owners to make them aware of the City's plans.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if a new visioning process would be pursued for this project. He stated he believed commercial made the most sense for this property.

Mayor Sanders anticipated this property would be similar to the planning that was done for Lexington Avenue and 125th Avenue.

Councilmember Robertson wanted to see the City be intentional about its planning for this area. Mr. Thorvig supported the Council identifying the uses they would like to see within this development to move this area forward.

Michael Sharp, Davis Health Care Real Estate, asked if the Council would consider having a medical user within this redevelopment area. He noted he has been looking at Blaine for a number of years as he believed the area was underserved, medically. He explained he was putting together a proposal for the best site in Blaine for a new medical office use. He estimated the size of the building would be four-stories and 100,000 square feet in size, which would take up 12.5 acres.

Mayor Sanders asked what type of medical users were being proposed in Blaine. Mr. Sharp anticipated this building would host primary care, specialty services, rehab services, surgery center and a pharmacy.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if a full-service hospital could be considered for Blaine. Mr. Sharp commented this would require State approval as there was a moratorium on hospitals.

Councilmember Massoglia inquired how much land would be remaining

for redevelopment if 12.5 acres were developed into a medical building. Mr. Thorvig estimated this would be about 40 acres.

Mayor Sanders anticipated a high-end medical clinic would assist with bringing additional high-end retail and restaurants to the community. He stated he supported the proposed medical building and the great jobs this facility would bring to the City.

Councilmember Jeppson indicated she was not opposed to the medical use so long as it would flow together with the surrounding properties.

Councilmember Hovland explained he supported the proposed medical use within this development.

Mayor Sanders stated he looked forward to further discussing the vision for this area. He explained the Council did not want to be a barrier to development. He encouraged the property owners to continue to market their properties and to have conversations with staff.

Councilmember Newland indicated he liked Councilmember Jeppson's cautious comments noting he could support a medical use so long as it was cohesive with the surrounding uses.

Maureen O'Neil, property owner, thanked the Council for their comments and for being insightful about this redevelopment project. She asked if the Council was interested in having a residential component as part of this project.

Mayor Sanders commented he was uncertain at this time.

Mr. Thorvig thanked the Council for their feedback and noted staff would begin working on potential plans/ghost plats for the project area.

3-3

2023 Budget Process Updates

Attachments: [2022.10.10 2023 Budget Process Update Presentation](#)

Finance Director Huss reported staff had an update on the 2023 budget schedule.

Deputy Finance Director Bong updated the Council on the process and timeline for all budgets set to be adopted for 2023. Staff requested Council confirmation of the next steps for the associated budgets and asked for questions about the budgets that have been presented.

Councilmember Newland commented on the capital equipment expenditures that were discussed at the Council retreat. He asked that

this topic be further discussed at a future workshop meeting. Ms. Bong stated staff would be addressing this topic and would be providing the Council with additional information at a future meeting.

Councilmember Jeppson thanked Ms. Bong for all her efforts on the budget and budget approval timeline.

Councilmember Massoglia requested the Council discuss spending park funds on utility capital projects. Mr. Huss reported the ARP funding would be part of the overall utility capital improvement plan. He believed it would be best to have a final discussion as to how these funds would be distributed. He suggested this topic be further discussed on November 14.

Mayor Sanders thanked Mr. Huss and Ms. Bong for all her work on the 2023 budget.

4 Other Business

City Manager Wolfe confirmed the City's congressional visit for Highway 65 on October 18 then noted The Ferguson Group was actively lobbying on this as well.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 8:18PM.