



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, June 6, 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 5:40PM.

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; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Stormwater Coordinator Megan Hedstrom; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Attorney Chris Nelson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Community Development Specialist Elizabeth Showalter; Deputy Finance Director Alison Bong; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

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

3 New Business

3-1 **Federal Lobbyist Update**

David Cooper, Ferguson Group representative, introduced the team members working on behalf of the City of Blaine. He reported his firm has been working to advance municipal efforts in Washington DC for the past 40 years. He commented on the 2023 earmarked funding requests he has been working on for the TH65 project. He explained he

appreciated meeting Councilmember Jeppson and Councilmember Robertson when they visited Washington DC. He stated last week he learned two senators have approved and forwarded the city's request on to the House Appropriations Committee for further consideration. He commented further on the 2023 transportation bill and noted \$5.5 billion was being considered for separate bills. He indicated the city's project request was strong, competitive and shovel ready, which was all good and would be following up with the Senate committee in July. He stated staff has been a pleasure to work with and commented further on several grant opportunities he was pursuing for the city's bandshell. He explained he was looking forward to visiting the City of Blaine and would be gathering information from department heads when he comes.

Informational: no action required

15 Minute Discussion

3-2

State Lobbyist Update

Cullen Sheehan, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, stated there was not a lot to report at this time. He explained the governor and legislators have not come to an agreement on final budget numbers and were still in negotiations. He discussed the items the legislators and governor have come to an agreement on but noted there were still policies to be resolved. He reported the Senate adjourned on May 22 and the House adjourned on May 23 without an agreement and that the governor was pushing for a special session to find some resolution. He indicated it was unfortunate that the budget remains unresolved, but he stated this was not unforeseen because this was an election year.

Ann Lenczewski, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, offered her sympathies to the families that were impacted by the fatal accident that occurred on TH65 earlier today then stated this was another reminder of the important work she was doing on behalf of the City of Blaine. She noted the city's bill was reviewed by the Transportation Committee and a House tour was held. She reported Senator Newman had heard the city's plea, however leaders could not come together. She believed the city had made major strides and appreciated the efforts of staff and council. She commented on how the legislative session would be different next year due to redistricting and discussed how this would impact the city's efforts in 2023.

Mayor Sanders thanked everyone for their efforts on behalf of the City of Blaine and said he believed the city was well positioned if a special session were held as well as next year.

Informational: no action required

15 Minute Discussion**3-3****TH47/TH65 Safety Study PEL**

Public Works Director Haukaas stated a consultant was in attendance to review the findings of the safety study PEL that was completed for TH47/TH65.

Chris Bauer, MNDOT, introduced the team members in attendance and reviewed the area included within the safety study and discussed the crash history within the corridor. He reported MNDOT does not accept the number of fatal crashes that were occurring within this corridor and was looking to improve safety. He reviewed the short-term solutions put in place in 2020 and 2021, discussed the medium-term improvements that would be put in place in 2025, and the future vision for TH47 and TH65 was reviewed.

David Aldean, MNDOT, discussed the public engagement that has occurred in conjunction with the safety study. He stated in 2020 MNDOT worked with agency partners and the public to complete analysis of the future conditions within the study area. He commented on the public engagement meetings that would be held yet this year noting these meetings would assist MNDOT with gathering public feedback. He stated the PEL study would conclude in the fall of 2023. It was noted the first round of the Phase II public feedback meetings would be held in July of 2022. The schedule of meetings was detailed with the council. He encouraged the city council and residents to visit MNDOT's expanded website and thanked the council for their time.

Councilmember Hovland questioned if any overpasses were being considered for this project. Mr. Bauer stated overpasses were being considered then reviewed several slides that showed the potential plans for the project area.

Councilmember Jeppson explained the city had hired a consultant to work with the city for the redevelopment of the Northtown Mall area and asked if MNDOT had seen this study. Mr. Bauer stated the primary and secondary needs for MNDOT were being considered along with creating a cohesive or consistent plan for the city.

Councilmember Jeppson reported Blaine would be a huge partner in this project and she recommended one of the public meetings be held at the Northtown Library or MAYC. Mr. Bauer stated this was a really good suggestion.

Mr. Haukaas reported this was the early stages for planning and noted the plans would continue to evolve over time as MNDOT receives public feedback.

Councilmember Paul thanked MNDOT for their efforts on this project. He encouraged MNDOT to consider how to improve pedestrian safety in the corridor area. Mr. Bauer reported this was a priority for MNDOT given the number of pedestrian/vehicle crashes that were occurring in this area. Mr. Haukaas stated pedestrian safety would be a major focus for this project.

Informational: no action required

30 Minute Discussion

3-4

Housing Improvement Area Policy

Attachments: [Draft Policy](#)
 [Housing Improvement Areas Overview](#)

Community Development Specialist Showalter stated at the April 4, 2022, workshop the council considered a request by the Parkshire Woods Homeowners Association to have a Housing Improvement Area (HIA) established to finance repairs caused by water damage. At that meeting, Council indicated an interest in adopting a policy governing HIAs but had questions and concerns regarding the specific request. At this time, staff has prepared a draft policy for council review. Staff provided an overview of HIAs prepared by the Minnesota House Research Department and commented on the key elements of the proposed housing improvement area policy.

Councilmember Robertson stated she was not supportive of the council pursuing an HIA policy as she did not support the city being a backup or financier for townhome associations in need up updates or renovations.

Community Development Director Thorvig commented on the discussion the council had at a previous meeting stating there was general support for a policy to move forward but there were questions about the proposal that was brought forward.

Councilmember Paul stated he had concerns about how much tax would be pushed onto the townhome residents and supported the council receiving feedback from the community on this topic.

Councilmember Jeppson commented she was not a huge proponent of this. She recalled the council did not support funding the proposed request but after thinking about this more did not support an HIA policy.

She questioned why the city would want to consider funding these types of projects when banks will not. Ms. Showalter commented on the differences between a bank lending money and the city lending money that become special assessments for townhome owners to make necessary improvements.

Councilmember Hovland reported the city has had programs in place to help businesses and homeowners with low interest loans. He indicated these loans were financed through private groups. He recommended this townhome association seek this type of loan versus the city assuming this role.

Finance Director Huss discussed how an HIA policy would assist with addressing townhome associations that deteriorate to the point of becoming blighted and indicated this policy could be used only as a final option by council when needed.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he has some of the same concerns that have been voiced and indicated he was not supportive of the city financing improvements for townhome associations.

Councilmember Jeppson thanked staff for their efforts on this policy and stated when a situation occurs the council could reconsider this matter.

Councilmember Hovland reported the city has had townhome associations that have gone belly up. He explained this can be chaotic which was the reason former Councilmember Swanson always opposed small townhome associations. He encouraged the council to consider the size of townhome associations going forward.

Councilmember Paul requested further information regarding the city's home loan programs. Ms. Showalter discussed the home loan programs that were already in place. She noted these loans cannot be used for common places within a townhome association.

Councilmember Jeppson asked if staff should be reaching out to the aging townhome associations in Blaine to give them a heads up on how to plan for future repairs. Mr. Thorvig stated there should be a state solution to these concerns, versus the matters being a city concern.

Councilmember Robertson supported the council taking no action on the HIA policy at this time and any cases that do come before the city could be reviewed on a case-by-case basis. She reported this type of funding was not a primary function for local government.

Mayor Sanders requested further information on why these requests were falling to cities and not the state. Mr. Thorvig stated some HOAs were not planning for their future and other HOAs have emergency situations. Ms. Showalter reported in most cases, the city would not be advancing its own fees, but would be bonding for a project and the bonding would be paid back by the HOA.

Councilmember Hovland stated he has never been in favor of private roads but private roads have been installed in order to accommodate more homes within developments. He believed there was an opportunity to educate townhome owners as to the responsibilities they have with maintaining their development. He indicated he would be in favor of staff pursuing an educational program with the city's aging or older townhome associations.

Councilmember Newland asked if the townhome association that made the previous request has received feedback from the city. Ms. Showalter explained staff informed them a policy was being considered by the council. She reported she would inform the association that the council was not interested in pursuing an HIA policy and they would have to seek assistance elsewhere.

Council consensus was to not move forward with the HIA policy at this time.

30 Minute Discussion

3-5

Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Trailheads and Potential Future Trails

Attachments: [BWS - Trailheads and potential future trails](#)
 [Open Space CIP 2022-2026](#)

Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Krieger stated in December 2020, the Natural Resources Conservation Board (NRCB) and City Council met jointly to discuss the conceptual trail plan for the BWS. The consensus at the joint meeting was to reduce the total length of trails to allow for a more cost-effective trail system. Trail loops were removed, and priority was given to connecting trailheads with surrounding neighborhoods. A subcommittee of the NRCB was formed to consider the cost to construct trails, the permitting process, and trail locations. City staff has been evaluating options for the build-out of the BWS trail system that will minimize wetland impacts while providing trail connections to surrounding neighborhoods. Consideration will be given to limit the installation of trails directly behind homes, as that was a request frequently brought up by residents at previous public meetings.

Stormwater Coordinator Hedstrom explained recent restoration work in the southern portion has helped staff to distinguish between the uplands

and wetlands in the BWS. In turn, this will help develop an updated conceptual trail plan. This topic is being brought forward for discussion at this time based on development of North Meadows which has led to a high volume of inquiries staff has received regarding the next phases of trail construction. Additionally, residents have increased utilization of the haul roads that were established during the restoration project in the winter of 2021. The haul roads were intended for contractor access during the restoration project and are not suitable for regular residential use. Staff commented further on the proposed trailheads within the BWS and requested feedback from the council on how to proceed with this project.

Councilmember Jeppson stated she supported staff moving forward with the trailheads and future trail plans. She recommended that whoever is hired, that there be clear communication to the residents about what the plan was. She explained she supported the city installing a parking lot on 109th Avenue to connect other neighborhoods to the BWS.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated he could support the city sending out an RFP and requested further information on the process. Mr. Krieger discussed the information that would be gathered through the RFP process considering all that has changed on the BWS site since 2014.

Councilmember Massoglia requested further information regarding the wetland credit sales. Ms. Hedstrom explained the Site 7 wetland bank has a total of 81 wetland credits and the city had sold a total of 40 wetland credits to date. She indicated there were a few acres that would require additional investment from the city.

Councilmember Robertson stated she believed the city has a solid idea of where trails can be located. She reported she could support the RFP moving forward but encouraged staff to make this the last request. She encouraged staff to refine the numbers within this project to ensure there were no major surprises going forward.

Councilmember Hovland commented on the parking lot that was installed along 109th Avenue stating it was not large enough and questioned if the city could add onto it or install another parking lot along 109th Avenue.

Councilmember Robertson suggested the city consider trading its own wetland credits to install a larger parking lot.

Council consensus was to support the action for an RFP.

30 Minute Discussion

4 Other Business

None.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:20PM.

Adjourned