City of Blaine
Anoka County, Minnesota
Minutes
City Council Workshop

Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
Blaine MN 55449

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

To participate in the meeting join the Zoom Webinar at https://blainemn.zoom.us/j/93136264336

Questions? Email - Communications@BlaineMN.gov

Monday, May 4, 2020 **6:00 PM** **Due to the COVID-19 pandemic, city meetings will now be held as virtual meetings until further notice.**

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ryan at 6:00 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this meeting was held virtually.

2 Roll Call

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Planner Lori Johnson; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Communications Coordinator Ben Hayle; Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Recreation Manager Nate Monahan; City Attorney Chris Nelson; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

Present: 7 - Councilmember Garvais, Councilmember Jeppson, Mayor Ryan, Councilmember Swanson, Councilmember Robertson, Councilmember Paul, and Councilmember Hovland

3 New Business

3-1 **CITY OF BLAINE PAVEMENT MANAGEMENT PROGRAM**

Attachments: 5 Year Road CIP DRAFT
PowerPoint
Degradation Curves

Public Works Director Haukaas stated the City of Blaine's street infrastructure is critical to the operation of the City. The replacement cost of Blaine's nearly 260 centerline miles of roadway pavement is estimated at more than $475 million. Over the years, traffic, weather, water, and aging of asphalt and concrete all contribute to street deterioration. An underfunded Pavement Management Program results in deteriorated roadways and a backlog of preservation and maintenance projects.

Mr. Haukaas explained creation of a City of Blaine Pavement Asset Management Plan will proactively combat street deterioration in the short-term, and improves the integrity and service life of Blaine streets over the long term. Historically, street repair work focused on patching and crack sealing done by city maintenance staff as time and resources allowed from approximately April through October. A sealcoat program, asphalt mill and overlay, or full depth pavement rehabilitation was used for streets as funding allowed. Typically resources were low enough that very few streets were able to be maintained each year and many times a worst first selection method was used, which meant that good pavements were allowed to deteriorate past points of the inexpensive repair options. It was noted a street study completed on all Blaine City streets by Braun Intertec stressed the importance of preventative maintenance. Staff provided the Council with an inventory and conditions assessment. A five-year maintenance plan was reviewed in further detail along with information on the future costs for the City's streets.

Councilmember Jeppson asked if the ratings were based on the visual appearance of the road. Mr. Haukaas reported the surface gives staff a good indication of the roadways condition. He noted there were sections of the City's streets that are worse than others that required spot geotechnical.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if staff was prioritizing the streets based on traffic levels. Mr. Haukaas stated this was not in the calculations but within the City Engineer's judgement. He discussed how collector streets differed from neighborhood streets. He reported the City was trying to be fair on how the street replacements were completed.

Councilmember Paul inquired how long new pavement was supposed to last. Mr. Haukaas reported the City would be rebuilding its streets to last 20 to 30 years. He indicated concrete curb and gutter lasted quite a bit longer than this.

Mayor Ryan stated 99th Avenue west of Polk Street was in very poor condition near University Avenue. He indicated this was a County road and should be rebuilt. Mr. Haukaas explained the City has moved 99th Avenue up on its priority

list. He commented additional geotechnical work would be done on this roadway prior to work being completed in order to address the underlying concerns on this roadway.

Discussed

3-2 **COVID-19 IMPACT, SERVICE LEVELS, AND BUDGET**

Attachments: Weekly Permits Issued_Fees 2019-2020
Weekly Permits Issued_New Houses 2019-2020

City Manager Wolfe provided the Council with an update on COVID-19 plans and responses. She updated the Council on City's Emergency Operations Center (EOC) and discussed the EOC's meeting schedule. She reported City staff was tracking expenditures for potential future reimbursement. She discussed the City's staffing models for essential employees, employees working from home and employees working at City Hall. She indicated she was very proud of the fact the City's employees have been able to replicate proper City services remotely. She stated she would continue to monitor workloads in the coming weeks.

Councilmember Hovland thanked staff for their tremendous efforts to keep the City operational during the pandemic while also working to address cost saving measures.

Councilmember Jeppson asked what staff was doing to ensure staff documents and policies were being updated through the pandemic. Ms. Wolfe reported staff was working diligently with EOC Captain Pelkey to document changes to the City's policies and procedures.

Councilmember Paul thanked staff for all of their hard work. He asked if there were any employees at City Hall to take phone calls from the public. Ms. Wolfe discussed the communication strategy that was being used by the City. City Clerk Sorensen reported a phone tree has been utilized by the City noting voicemails were checked regularly hour and noted an online chat feature was also available on the City's website. Communications Coordinator Hayle commented further on the live chat and text functions that were available on the website.

Councilmember Garvais thanked staff for the cost savings measures that have been implemented. He stated he would like to better understand how the Council feels about placing tape around playgrounds to discourage use and when this will be taken down.

Councilmember Robertson thanked staff for being flexible and for adjusting to the new normal. She believed it was important for the City to let the residents know that the City is working for them and that all essential services were still being

provided.

Ms. Sorensen referred to the current liquor license renewals and commented unless there were objections by the Council that the City would be prorating liquor license fees by two months based on to the Governor's Stay at Home order.

Ms. Sorensen reported Council candidate filing would begin on May 19 and shared there was a bill being considered at the Legislature that would allow for electronic filing. She explained all forms would be available on the City's website.

Ms. Sorensen commented absentee voting would be moved to the Mary Ann Young Center for the August primary. She noted a bill had been proposed to have all ballots mailed to residents, however this item was being divided along party lines and likely will not pass so staff was working to prepare for the August primary and November elections being held in polling places as in the past.

Police Chief Podany reported a face mask drive was held at the Fire Department last week where almost 1,900 face masks were collected. He stated 1,000 of these masks were delivered to congregate care facilities in Blaine. He noted his department was working with Eagle Brook Church to distribute care packages to families in need. He discussed how Stay at Home violations and social distancing complaints were being addressed by the Police Department. He commented graduation plans and school related gatherings were being managed. He noted three CSOs would be starting tomorrow then discussed several donations the Police Department received and described how the department was using these items to help the general public.

Councilmember Hovland requested an update on the garage sales. Police Chief Podany provided the Council with an update on the Johnsville area garage sales and explained garage sales have been a topic of discussion state wide. He explained the Johnsville area garage sales have been postponed to this fall but noted single garage sales would be allowed.

Councilmember Jeppson expressed concern with the fact staff and the EOC was making decisions without coming before the City Council. She inquired if policies should be put in place regarding what items staff can decide and what matters should be coming before the Council. She stated those living in Ward 2 had questions about playgrounds, fireworks and the beach. Ms. Wolfe indicated there was a two-part test to consider and explained considerations of what authority was allowed under the City Manager form of government. She indicated there was some additional authority under the emergency declaration and stated there was also judgement taken by staff as well. She reported she requested feedback from the Council regarding the summer programs. She commented further on the

process she has been following for Council feedback.

Ms. Wolfe discussed the City's service levels. She explained all essential City services were being provided at this time. She commented service level impacts may be seen as summer approaches and rec programs are not being offered.

Councilmember Swanson indicated the City would receive negative feedback if City-owned vacant lots are not mowed this summer given the fact more people were at home.

Finance Director Huss described cost saving measures the City had put in place. He reported staff costs have been reduced by over $1 million, which was 4% of the budget for personnel costs. He stated the expense for supplies has been reduced. He explained the public may need to be notified that for cost containment purposes grass may be allowed to grow a bit longer. He commented in the conference/school category, staff would avoid spending on training and traveling at this time. He reported expectations were that the need for these cost containments would continue into 2021. He estimated the cost saving measures in place at this time were $1.3 million. He stated revenue projections remain fairly consistent. He commented on how revenue projections would be impacted if the economy had a downturn for the remainder of 2020. He reported the biggest question at this time was property tax payments. He indicated Anoka County collects 37% of its property taxes through escrow. He explained nothing has led him to believe that the level of cash on hand could not take the City through August. He stated the amount of water pumped in April was the highest that has been used in two years. He commented further on how the EDA will be impacted in the coming months.

Councilmember Swanson asked for information on home sales in Blaine. Mr. Huss stated he did not have this information but indicated this discussion could be had with the Anoka County Assessor at the May 11 workshop.

Councilmember Swanson requested staff speak with the County Assessor and provide the Council with information on housing sales at the May 11 workshop meeting.

Councilmember Robertson requested staff create a spreadsheet with revenues and expenses for 2019 compared to 2020. She indicated she was concerned the 2020 budget did not have enough reserves. She discussed how the water main break would impact the City's expenses, along with COVID-19. Mr. Huss stated he could provide the Council with more detailed information and specifics at a future meeting.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she wanted to learn more about the loss of

park revenues and how this would impact the City. Ms. Wolfe stated staff was gathering this information and would like to carry this conversation over to the May 11 workshop meeting. She explained the Council was planning to hold a retreat on May 29 and May 30 where the budget would be further addressed.

Mayor Ryan requested further information on how the City's parks and recreation programs would be impacted. Ms. Wolfe commented further on how the parks and recreation programs would be impacted and how this would impact the City both financially and through personnel. She recommended a closed session meeting be held on May 11 to allow for security topics to be discussed.

Ms. Wolfe stated staff was proposing to pull the yellow tape from playgrounds noting a lot of the tape had already been taken down. She anticipated this would lead to a number of complaints from the public but asked if the Council would support this action. The Council supported the yellow tape being removed.

Councilmember Robertson encouraged staff to review language the cities of St. Michael and Jordan used regarding their parks and playgrounds.

Mayor Ryan commented on how difficult it would be for the City to patrol the beach and keep residents off for social distancing concerns.

Ms. Wolfe reported the fireworks display has been canceled due to a funding source issue. She indicated charitable gambling funds have decreased and the Council has directed the funds go to homeless shelters and food shelves. She stated park shelter rentals would be allowed this summer if allowed by the Governor's executive order. She explained it cost the City $48,000 to operate the beach. She commented per the Governor's executive order the beach would not be allowed to be open at this time.

Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger updated the Council on the status of the youth sports leagues. He stated he has been in contact with the lacrosse and baseball associations and shared youth could play catch on fields in groups of five or less without a coach present. He explained the City has received calls when groups reach eight or more children. He indicated he would be waiting until May 18 to see what action the governor takes regarding summer sports.

Ms. Wolfe stated the City would have to work closely with the sports organizations given the fact the City has not hired the same level of seasonal staff in order to maintain the ballfields.

Councilmember Robertson anticipated the City could get help from leaders in the sports organizations in order to properly maintain the fields.

Mayor Ryan recommended the Council further discuss parks and recreation, the beach and athletics at the May 11 workshop meeting.

Discussed

4 Council Calendar Review

Ms. Wolfe reviewed the Council Calendar.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:31 p.m.

Adjourned