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 City Council and staff to discuss issues before them. It is not for the purpose of receiving public input.

Monday, May 2, 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 5:36PM.

2 Roll Call

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

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Deputy Police Chief Dan Pelkey; Police Captain Joe Gerhard; Fire Chief Dan Retka; Finance Director Joe Huss; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Attorney Chris Nelson; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

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

3 New Business

3-1 Government Relations Team Update

City Manager Wolfe reported representatives from Lockridge Grindal Nauen were in attendance to provide the Council with an update.

Cullen Sheehan, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, discussed the legislative deadlines that have passed for policy and finance related bills. He noted a recess was held for Easter/Passover and now legislators were back in session to pass omnibus bills. He commented on the hero worker pay bill that was approved. He indicated $2.3 billion was being used to refurbish the unemployment fund, which was a big win for the state and would be monitoring progress over the next three weeks.

Ann Lenczewski, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, discussed the work that was being done and noted the local legislators were actively championing the TH65 project. She noted the House would not be bringing forward any transportation bills then explained the Senate side transportation bill was out and included TH65. She reported she was feeling really good about where the bill was at.

Councilmember Robertson thanked the team for their efforts on behalf of the city and offered her assistance if needed.

Discussed

10 Minute Presentation

3-2 **SBM Fire Quarterly Update**

Fire Chief Retka presented the quarterly fire report. He commented on the personnel model for the SBM fire department and noted staffing was becoming an issue. He stated the department was able to find volunteer firefighters but was struggling to retain these individuals. He noted mailers would be sent and a training fair held this summer to assist with finding more volunteer firefighters. He reported calls for service were going up in Anoka County, especially medical calls. He discussed how there was a decline in EMTs/paramedics and noted this was impacting both police and fire. He stated there had been 38 structure fires in Blaine since January 1. He indicated fire prevention measures would be the focus for SBM firefighters in the coming years and that former fire prevention specialist Becky Booker would be brought in to assist with fire prevention.

Councilmember Jeppson thanked Chief Retka for his presentation and commended him for bringing Ms. Booker to assist with fire prevention and fire safety planning.

Councilmember Robertson asked if the lack of a fire station in the northeast corner was a concern with finding and retaining volunteer firefighters. Chief Retka stated this has not been a concern. He commented he was more concerned with creating a staffing plan going forward for the department. He then discussed the location of the SBM fire stations and noted there was a need to capture the center of the city.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned if staff had thought about asking for a longer commitment from volunteers when they initially sign up. Chief Retka discussed how volunteers are paid, which was all through a pension. He noted volunteers are not paid for their service with the department unless they serve 20 years. He indicated the newer generation of volunteers wanted to receive some sort of payment now when responding to calls versus saving for the future. He explained that SBM fire department was looking at different ways to provide bonuses for volunteers.

Mayor Sanders thanked Chief Retka for his presentation.

Discussed

30 Minute Presentation

3-3 Aquatore Bandshell

Attachments: Rendering
Site Plan

Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Krieger stated at the January 17, 2022 Council meeting, Council accepted a quote for $123,025 from ISG Inc. to design the Aquatore Bandshell project. Staff has been working with ISG Inc. and the Blaine Festival Committee on a preliminary design concept of the bandshell. Along with the design of the bandshell, ISG is also working on the trails and park lighting within the park.

Mr. Krieger stated the current budget for improvements to Aquatore Park, as approved by Council in January, is $1,347,500. Included in that total is $922,500 for design and construction of the bandshell and restrooms; $175,000 for lighting and $250,000 for trails and pavement improvement. Staff met with ISG and the Festival Committee to discuss interior products for the bandshell and ISG provided an update of the cost estimate for the project. As Council is aware, since the development and adoption of the budget, building material and other construction related costs have dramatically increased. Staff reviewed the original and revised estimates for the projects. It was noted representatives from ISG were in attendance to discuss the preliminary design of the bandshell, location, site work.

Mo Convay, landscape architect, discussed the site information with the Council and explained she has enjoyed working with staff and the Blaine Festival Committee on this project. The existing conditions were further described and it was noted ISG was providing a thoughtful plan for the bandshell. A survey of the site was reviewed along with the restricting factors on the property. Further discussion ensued regarding the proposed site plan.

Caitlyn Dansell, design architect, commented on the building design and location of the platform/stage. The location of the restroom facilities was discussed along with the area that would be used for storage. It was noted the restrooms would have simple finishes. Preliminary renderings were provided to the Council and the building materials that would be used on the structure were described.

Bob Michelson, ISG, reviewed the cost estimate for the bandshell in further detail with the Council. He reported he was proposing to use solid building materials in order to make the structure last while also being low maintenance. He stated the market was very volatile at this time and it was difficult to come up with an accurate estimate. He estimated the bandshell would cost $2.4 million which was $1 million over budget.

Councilmember Jeppson commented she believed some amenities had been added to the bandshell and asked why a meeting room had been added.

Councilmember Hovland stated he had the same concern. Mr. Michelson reported the original plans included a meeting room in order to allow the facility to be used for weddings.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she supported this project. She understood the budget and inflated costs were a challenge. She explained she envisioned the bandshell having a stage with storage and bathrooms, but with the stage area being open. She stated she was not expecting the plans that were before the Council with meeting space and requested further information on the plans and how the Council could work with the new costs. Mr. Krieger commented on the first drawing noting a meeting room had been included along with a tuck-under space for storage.

Councilmember Hovland commented he did not envision the meeting room as an actual meeting space but rather as a staging area for band equipment. He requested further comment on how the bandshell could be used, other than for concerts. John Merinan, Blaine Festival Committee President, stated the bandshell could be used for large family gatherings, reunions, and outdoor movies.

Councilmember Robertson explained she wanted to see the City partner with the Festival on this project in order to build a bandshell that met their needs. She stated her only concern with the proposed bandshell location was that there would not be sufficient parking. She recommended that additional parking be considered at Aquatore Park. Ms. Dansell indicated she understood parking was a concern and noted MAYC and side streets could also be used for overflow parking.

Mr. Merinan cautioned the Council from removing too much greenspace within Aquatore Park for parking.

Mayor Sanders requested further information regarding the estimate and budget. He asked what the Council had already approved. Mr. Krieger stated at this time the budget includes $1.355 million for the bandshell. He estimated there was a deficit of $1.2 million for this project.

Mayor Sanders questioned what the biggest cost drivers were at this time. Mr. Krieger commented the cost for supplies and the square footage of the bandshell. He indicated the meeting room design could be reconsidered. Finance Director Huss commented further on the scope of this project and discussed other park projects that were planned for the next year or two. He indicated these projects could be deferred in order to complete the bandshell. He requested the Council assist staff with prioritizing what projects should move forward in order to assist with funding the bandshell.

Councilmember Jeppson asked if these restrooms would be open to the public at all times, or would they only be open when the bandshell was in use. Mr. Krieger stated the restrooms would be open from April 1 through October 31.

Councilmember Jeppson questioned if the meeting space at MAYC was being used. Mr. Krieger indicated there was an increase in rentals at MAYC the past eight months. He reported MAYC had one custodian who worked to clean this space after being rented.

Councilmember Jeppson inquired if the bandshell space, meeting room and additional restrooms would require another FTE to keep the space clean and well maintained. Mr. Krieger explained the City had parks workers to clean the building and restrooms.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if the existing restrooms would be removed and replaced by the bandshell. Mr. Krieger reported this was the case noting the existing restrooms would be removed and the new restrooms would be tied into the bandshell.

Mayor Sanders stated he would need to better understand what the Council would have to say no to in order for this project to move forward or could the plans be adjusted to help reduce costs.

Councilmember Hovland commented if the meeting room were eliminated the overall footprint could be reduced and this would create a savings. He stated this may be a step in the right direction. He asked if there were funds available with the capital improvement fund to assist with this project. Mr. Huss reported there were funds available, but noted these funds could not be used without approval from the Council.

Councilmember Hovland recommended the footprint of the bandshell be reduced, that the costs be reconsidered and brought back to the Council for further discussion.

Mr. Merinan questioned what amount the city would be contributing to the bandshell. Mr. Huss reported the city would be contributing everything minus the $600,000 that has been contributed by the Festival committee.

Mayor Sanders indicated the Council would have to further discuss what projects are not going to be completed in order for the bandshell to move forward.

Mr. Merinan commented the Festival committee donated $150,000 to the city with the thought this project would begin in three years or the Festival committee would get their money back. He explained the Festival committee has been willing to put more money towards this project and was hoping the City would be willing to match this amount, versus contributing less. He stated the Festival could put up to $1 million towards the bandshell, but this would take several years to accrue.

Councilmember Robertson explained this project would not be considered by Council if not for the generosity of the Festival committee. She indicated the Council was very grateful for the committee's donation and the Council understood the committee's funds were limited. She stated that increased costs were a surprise to the Council and the Council had to work through this prior to moving forward with the bandshell. She cautioned the Council from taking money from other park projects to fund this project. She indicated she did not want to say no and she also did not want to see the footprint changed, because this was the festival's project. She reminded the Council that this was a partnership project and she supported the city pursuing grants for this project and recommended staff find other means to assist with funding this project.

Councilmember Jeppson commented she was not trying to derail this project. She wanted to see this bandshell completed for the festival committee. She indicated her issue at this time was that the cost has almost doubled and in order to be fiscally responsible, she needed to ask questions to better understand why this occurred. She recommended the Council do their due diligence to better understand what must be included and what did not within the bandshell plans. She wanted to understand if meeting space was necessary within the bandshell given the fact there was meeting space available at MAYC. She appreciated the fact the festival committee was donating money to this project but she also needed to take a look at this project in order to account to all taxpayers.

Mr. Huss stated the city's park plans could be revised in order to provide the Council with updated park fund balances.

Mayor Sanders stated this would be helpful information, along with scaling down the plans for the meeting room per the Council's direction and for the costs to be adjusted. Mr. Krieger thanked the Council for their feedback.

Council consensus was to direct staff to find additional funding options to address the increased budget and to bring this item back to a future workshop meeting.

30 Minute Discussion

Mayor Sanders recommended Item 3.5 be discussed prior to Item 3.4.

3-5 **Ward 1 Council Vacancy Appointment Discussion**

Ms. Sorensen reported the Council had a vacancy for a Ward 1 seat. She discussed the process that has been followed to fill the Ward 1 vacancy and noted applications were reviewed and ranked by the Council for this position.

Mayor Sanders commented on the input received by the Council noting Tom Newland was the highest ranked candidate for the open position and received a ranking from all members of Council. He said for that reason he was of the opinion the Council did not need to hold interviews but rather could appoint Mr. Newland at an upcoming Council meeting.

Councilmember Hovland supported the Council formalizing a system or process for this type of scenario because it has happened in the past and he anticipated it would happen again in the future. He stated he supported Tom Newland being appointed to the Council vacancy.

Mayor Sanders reported the city received great applicants for the vacant Council seat. He thanked each candidate for caring enough about the community and for wanting to serve. He stated he appreciated how well Tom Newland would fit and could step into the vacant seat.

Councilmember Hovland questioned when Tom Newland would officially be starting with the City Council. Mayor Sanders commented the official start date would be May 16.

Councilmember Robertson thanked staff for all of their efforts and for properly communicating the vacancy to the public. She explained she was very pleased by the pool of candidates who applied to fill this vacancy. She anticipated the Council would see these individuals applying for candidacy this fall.

Councilmember Hovland stated he appreciated how transparent the process was for declaring the vacancy and working to make an appointment.

Mayor Sanders questioned if the Council supported the appointment of Tom Newland to the Ward 1 Council vacancy.

Councilmember Massoglia indicated Tom Newland was his top choice. He noted some candidates may be upset if interviews were not held and recommended the mayor communicate to the public that Mr. Newland was unanimously the Council's top pick.

Tom Newland stated he was humbled by the Council's comments and explained he appreciated how well the city was run as an organization. He encouraged the Council to communicate clearly with all the candidates for transparency purposes. He indicated he looked forward to serving with the City Council.

Council consensus was to formally appoint by resolution Tom Newland to the Ward 1 Council vacancy at the May 16 meeting.

20 Minute Disiscussion

3-4 **An Ordinance Amending Chapter 42, Health and Sanitation, Article II, Tobacco, Division 1 and 2 and Article X. - Licenses for Rental Dwellings of the Municipal Code of the City of Blaine**

Attachments: Chapter 42 Health and Sanitation - Tobacco

This item was postponed to a future workshop meeting.

Postponed

30 Minute Discussion

4 Other Business

Ms. Sorensen discussed a change that would be needed to the consent agenda, reporting Item 8.12 would be removed.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:25PM.

Adjourned