



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 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, April 20, 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 crisis 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; Communications Coordinator Ben Hayle; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; Communications Technician Roark Haver; 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

PUBLIC HEARING NOTIFICATION BOUNDARY REVIEW

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

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the topic of public notification for development items has been discussed over the last couple of years. This typically occurs on controversial items where residents at the podium have made the claim that they were not notified of the proceedings. As this has not been addressed between staff and Council, staff would like to take this opportunity to discuss the topic, understand the concerns, and be provided with direction on where modifications could occur, if any. Staff reviewed the current requirements per State Statute regarding Public Hearing notifications, discussed the various ways the City was putting out its notices and requested direction from the Council on how to proceed.

Councilmember Hovland stated every once in a while a developer brings a project before the City that would benefit from a greater notice area and in these instances wanted to see staff make a judgement call on how far out the City should notify.

Councilmember Swanson supported the use of public notice signs. He was of the opinion that this would assist the City in reaching the public. He questioned if the City had the right to require developers to hold a neighborhood meeting. Mr. Thorvig stated the City did not have a mechanism to require the meeting but explained staff could recommend a neighborhood meeting be held.

Councilmember Jeppson commented holding to the State Statute of 350 feet was a good parameter. However, if some developments required the City to communicate with an entire neighborhood, this had to be done. She believed it was not fair for staff to bear the brunt of communications for these large developments and encouraged staff to consider how to have the developer field more of the calls, questions and complaints from the neighbors.

Councilmember Robertson stated there could never be too much communication between the City and the neighbors. She supported the City requiring neighborhood meetings and that public notice signs be posted. She understood it was hard to get residents to engage with the City and the more ways the City was reaching out to its residents the better.

Mayor Ryan estimated the Council has addressed this topic about ten different times during his time with the City and discussed how the notification policy has changed over time. He stated he liked the 350-foot requirement and feared that opening it up too wide may bring about confusion.

Councilmember Garvais asked if the Civic Ready program had the capability to push out notifications to people living within 1,000 feet of a certain address. Communications Coordinator Hayle reported the program could complete this task but explained at this time the program was only being used for emergency

notifications.

Councilmember Paul supported the developer working harder for the project versus City staff working so hard for each development. He recommended City staff investigate what other cities were doing for open houses or neighborhood meetings. Mr. Thorvig stated staff could investigate what other cities were doing at a staff level for neighborhood meetings.

Mayor Ryan was of the opinion the public notification signs were key.

Councilmember Hovland supported the City putting some of the onus back on the developers and requiring an Open House.

The Council supported the use of public notice signs where appropriate and for staff to explore requirements of developers to host neighborhood meetings with possible staff attendance for larger projects. The Council recommended this topic be further discussed at a future Council retreat.

Discussed

30 Minute Discussion

3-2

COVID-19 UPDATE

City Manager Wolfe explained staff would be providing the Council with an update on COVID-19.

Mr. Hayle discussed the Johnsville area garage sales noting staff has been in discussions with a representative from this neighborhood encouraging them to postpone the event. The lead representative posted a message on their webpage and Facebook page asking residents to not hold garage sales until it was safe to gather as a community again. He reported his contact information was placed on this page to allow residents to contact him with comments or questions. He explained the reaction to the posting has been well received by the public.

Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Podany provided the Council with an update from the Emergency Management Team. He described the work this group has been doing on behalf of the community which included mail procedures, facilities cleaning, PPE, along with responding to Stay at Home order violations. In addition the team has been working with schools to address graduations and school events.

Mayor Ryan thanked Chief Podany and the Emergency Operations Center for their tremendous service to the community.

Finance Director Huss discussed the costs the City has incurred for cleaning

supplies, laptops, salaries, wages, and PPE as a result of the COVID-19 pandemic. The total expenses to date was \$131,000.

City Clerk Sorensen discussed the new liquor sale law that allows restaurants to sell beer/wine with food pickup until restaurants were able to open again. She explained staff sent an email to all liquor license holders regarding the new law then requested Council consider prorating liquor license fees one month or two given the fact all bars and restaurants have been closed since mid-March.

Mr. Thorvig described how the City has been managing staff reviewal of plans and building inspections. He stated plans were being submitted electronically, along with payment. He thanked staff for being flexible with the new process. He explained masks have been given to all City inspectors and homes were being inspected when homeowners were not at home or were being completed virtually. He commented the City was tracking permit activity compared to 2019 and noted there was not much of a change. He stated this could change over the next two months.

Ms. Wolfe discussed how the Public Works Department staff was staggering its shift start and end times. She reported the City has had successful payroll and utility billing occurring remotely. She indicated the Parks and Recreation managers were working to create a Rec At Home program for online recreational activities.

Mr. Hayle commented further on the recreational videos being created on the history of Blaine's parks. In addition, he noted a coloring and sidewalk chalk contest had been created by the City. He reported the City was taking requests for video messages from the police and fire department for children's birthdays.

Councilmember Garvais thanked the City for pursuing the Rec At Home programming and encouraged City staff to promote this programming.

Councilmember Paul questioned if police calls were on the rise. Police Chief Podany reviewed the number of police calls that have occurred and stated there was a slight increase in domestic disputes but noted the department has had less traffic crashes.

Councilmember Paul asked how the City was supporting its small businesses. Ms. Wolfe reported the City had shared the assistance programs available for small businesses. She stated the City had loosened its restrictions on signage to allow businesses to place additional informational signs on their property to inform the public they were still open for business. Mr. Thorvig commented on federal small business loan programs and noted they may be funded again to assist small businesses. He explained all of this information would be made available to local

business owners.

Mayor Ryan thanked all of the local restaurants for offering drive-through, curb-side and delivery options because this was providing families dining options, jobs and keeping the economy going during the crisis.

Discussed

30 Minute Discussion

4 Council Calendar Review

Ms. Wolfe reviewed the Council Calendar.

OTHER BUSINESS

Public Works Director Haukaas provided the Council with an update on the 93rd Avenue/I-35W repair and shared photos of the work that had been completed. He also discussed the Jefferson Street Phase II reconstruction project noting construction began this week.

Councilmember Swanson recommended the Mayor speak to the importance of residents filling out their census information as soon as possible. Mr. Hayle agreed on the importance of the Census and noted the City of Blaine had a 70% response rate as of Friday, April 17.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:06 p.m.

Adjourned