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.

Members of the public can join the Zoom webinar at https://blainemn.zoom.us/j/98068524149

Questions? Email - communications@BlaineMN.gov

Monday, March 15, 2021 **6:00 PM** **Council Chambers and due to the COVID-19 pandemic, city meetings will also be held as virtual meetings**

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Hovland at 6:00PM. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this hybrid meeting was held both virtually and in person.

2 Roll Call

PRESENT: Councilmembers Wes Hovland, Chris Massoglia, Richard Paul, Jess Robertson, and Jason Smith.

ABSENT: Mayor Tim Sanders and Councilmember Julie Jeppson.

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; Water Resources Manager Rebecca Haug; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Planner Lori Johnson; City Attorney Chris Nelson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Director of Administration Cassandra Tabor; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

Present: 5 - Councilmember Robertson, Councilmember Paul, Councilmember Hovland, Massoglia, and Smith

Absent: 2 - Sanders, and Councilmember Jeppson

3 New Business

3-1 **Legislative Update**

City Manager Wolfe stated the lobbying team from Lockridge Grindal Nauen had a legislative update for the city council.

Cullen Sheehan, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, explained the state received good news last week. After previously forecasting a $1.3 billion deficit, on February 26, the state now forecasts a $1.6 billion surplus, which does not include the third wave of federal stimulus dollars. He discussed the work that was being done by the finance committees for both the house and senate. He anticipated by the end of this week the governor would have a revised budget and the senate would announce their budget targets. He reported this was the unofficial start to the session for lobbyists and indicated there would be a great deal of activity from now until mid-April.

Angie Huss, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, discussed the meetings and hearings she has attended to address Blaine’s priorities. She commented on the meeting that was held with the Commissioner of MNDOT, the House Transportation Committee Chair Frank Hornstein, as well as other key MNDOT staff and state officials. She reported the Highway 65 bill had a hearing in the senate transportation committee. She looked forward to a hearing in the house on the regional training facility bill.

Ann Lenczewski, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, thanked the council for their time this evening then thanked Councilmember Robertson, Councilmember Jeppson and Mayor Sanders for testifying at some of these meetings. She said she looked forward to the hearing for the regional training facility bill then discussed how meetings were being held at the capitol and thanked staff and local representatives for their tremendous support. She indicated a great deal of work would continue between now and the legislative recess.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland questioned what the state had planned for the surplus and additional stimulus dollars. Ms. Lenczewski anticipated the state would spend every dollar of the surplus. Mr. Sheehan commented further on how the budget negotiations were progressing and agreed the state would be spending every dollar, adding the governor had a lot of leeway in how the federal stimulus dollars could be spent.

Councilmember Robertson thanked the lobbyists for allowing the council to be engaged and part of the process this year. She explained she appreciated the momentum being created for Highway 65 then asked how the state would be addressing Paycheck Protection Program payback going forward. Mr. Sheehan stated the republicans were completely on board in the house and reported the senate passed a tax bill as a statement. He commented on the house side there were other issues that will come into play given the tremendous cost of $400 million and said he anticipated debate would continue on how to address this matter in order to not further negatively impact business owners. Ms. Lenczewski explained she believed some legislation would pass, however, she was uncertain what this would look like. She noted discussions were being held and it was understood small business owners were struggling at this time.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland thanked the group for the update.

Informational: no action required

30 Minute Discussion

3-2 Aurelia Park Retrofit Project

Attachments: Aurelia Park Flood and Water Quality Improvements Submittal
Aurelia Park Graphics
Aurelia Park Stormwater Retrofit Project [Autosaved].pdf

Water Resources Manager Haug stated in partnership with the Coon Creek Watershed District (CCWD) the city has been working on developing a solution to reduce flooding and improve water quality in Springbrook Creek. Aurelia Park has been identified as an area for a potential stormwater/flood control project. An opportunity that has been identified is using the southwest corner of Aurelia Park for flood storage and water quality treatment. What is being proposed is an approximate 15,000 sq. ft. stormwater retention basin to treat the water from the 51.5 acre drainage area that is currently draining to Springbrook Creek without any treatment. The proposed basin would allow for settling of pollutants, provide storage and rate control to help with flooding issues, and potentially provide for stormwater reuse to irrigate the park rather than use city water. Staff commented further on the pollutants in this area.

Ms. Haug explained CCWD applied for grant funding from the Minnesota Board of Water and Soil Resources through the state's Watershed Based Funding which is the same funding source that helped with the Pleasure Creek Biochar/Iron Enhanced Sand Filter Project from 2019. The grant was awarded and the project will receive $77,542.00 for construction of the project. The grant funds must be spent by end of the year 2023. The city has budgeted $150,000 for this project plus staff time. It was noted part of this project includes a public engagement process. A public open house will be scheduled to discuss the local water quality impairments, the proposed project, and to gather feedback.

Renderings have been created showing what the area currently looks like and what it will look like after completion of the project. Regular project updates will be published to those who sign up for notifications, as well as an article in the city newsletter and on social media. The project also includes funds for the installation of a sign by the basin indicating the purpose of the project. The project includes replanting trees and restoring the area.

Justine Dauphinais, CCWD, thanked the council for inviting her to attend this meeting. She explained the CCWD has four streams that were currently not meeting the Clean Water Act standards, with one of these being Springbrook Creek. She reported she has been working with the city and three other cities to look at the entire system comprehensively in order to address flooding and water quality issues. She commented Aurelia Park was a prime location that would allow for a sizeable stormwater retention pond. She discussed the grant funds that had been received for this project and stated she was excited about this opportunity.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland asked if Springbrook Creek was a creek or a drainage ditch. Ms. Dauphinais reported the pond would slow the discharge of water into the creek, but she did not anticipate the retention pond would impact the flow of the creek.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland questioned if the retention pond would slow the flow of the water in the creek. Ms. Dauphinais reported the pond would slow the discharge of water into the creek, but she did not anticipate the retention pond would impact the flow of the creek. Ms. Haug explained the pond would help slow down the water flowing through Aurelia Park. She noted additional projects were being looked at to address the health of the creek.

Councilmember Paul inquired if this pond would impact any of the activities in the park. Ms. Haug stated the pond would be located in the southwest corner of the park and no activities within the park would be impacted.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland stated he was happy to see improvements happening to this park and within the CCWD creek system.

Councilmember Robertson asked what the overall cost for this would be. Ms. Haug estimated the cost would be $300,000 noting grant funding would cover $77,542 of the expense and the city has budgeted $150,000 for the project. She reported staff would be coming back to the council with additional information on this project when the plans are closer to being finalized.

Councilmember Robertson questioned how many trees would be removed for this project. Ms. Haug discussed the trees that would be removed noting they were approximately 20 years old. She indicated staff would continue to work with Wenk and CCWD to replant trees in this park then commented further on the education that would occur with the neighborhood about this project.

Councilmember Robertson inquired how long it would take to complete this project. Ms. Haug reported the grant funding has to be spent by the end of 2023.

Public Works Director Haukaas commented further on the benefits of the council moving forward with this project. He noted the city is required to provide additional stormwater management and treatment.

Councilmember Robertson noted this project was one piece of the puzzle to addressing the concerns along Springbrook Creek. She asked if turning the former Jimbo's restaurant property into a stormwater basin was still something that would be completed. Mr. Haukaas explained this would have to be further investigated to see if it would work as the high elevation of this property was a concern.

Councilmember Robertson commented she supported the project moving forward at this time.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland concurred stating this project was needed.

Councilmember Smith and Councilmember Paul supported the project moving forward.

Council consensus was to support the proposed project and staff was directed to bring this item forward for formal consideration.

30 Minute Discussion

3-3 Strategic Plan Implementation

Attachments: Strategic Plan Implementation
City of Blaine Strategic Plan

Communications Manager Hayle stated in 2019 the Blaine City Council along with city staff began a strategic planning process. That process culminated with the council adopting a three year strategic plan in October 2020. The strategic plan includes six strategic priorities which were: effective communication, financial sustainability, growth management, organizational health, TH 65 improvement, and well-maintained infrastructure. It was noted each strategic priority comes with a set of desired outcomes, key outcome indicators, targets, and strategic initiatives. Staff noted that cascading action plans will be built to put the strategic plan into motion.

Mr. Hayle explained once the city council adopted the strategic plan staff was tasked with implementation. Under the direction of the city manager the staff management team was asked to recommend individuals from their departments to serve on an implementation team and be responsible for monitoring the progress of the strategic plan over the next three years. This team will be organizational change champions as the strategic plan is implemented and work alongside departments and managers to make recommendations regarding the strategic plan, challenge the departments to meet their goals and analyze the data that they are providing. The team will help facilitate the conversations that need to be had surrounding progress in various departments as it relates to the plan. The team will report all progress to the city manager on a regular basis and a report will be provided to the city council on a regular basis. Further discussion ensued regarding how staff would track and report on their progress through the Envisio system. The details of the Envisio system were described for the Council along with the cost for the program.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland requested further information regarding the Envisio program. Mr. Hayle explained this platform was completely web based and would allow the city to track and manage its efforts while implementing the city council's strategic plan. He reported all data would be retained whenever the city ended its agreement with Envisio.

Councilmember Paul discussed how this software would assist with managing the implementation of the strategic plan for the city as it was his hope that fraudulent information would not be placed into this program given the fact it would be hosted online. He supported the city moving forward with this program for one year, with the understanding the contract could be extended if the program works well for staff. Mr. Hayle noted staff had verified how information would be stored on the servers and that all information would be secure.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland asked if the savings provided in the three year plan would be provided if the council started with only a one year contract. Mr. Hayle stated this was not the case but that sufficient funds were available for this expense.

Councilmember Robertson thanked staff for providing the council with additional information on this item but expressed concern about the high cost of the software. She requested further information on what data was trying to be collected. Mr. Hayle explained data included figures, dates, percentages and every aspect of the overall action plan. He commented further on how the system would allow the city to work towards the same goal as well as provide two additional work plans if selected.

Councilmember Robertson said she was concerned that the cost associated with this purchase was like the city hiring a part time staff member to manage this project. She asked what the council's role was in this noting she did not want to lose the human element within this project. Mr. Hayle commented staff was not turning the strategic plan over to the software but would be working the plan with the city council and would be a collaborative effort between staff and the council to implement the strategic plan.

Councilmember Robertson indicated her main concern with this software was the price tag and would support the purchase if on a trial basis. She explained she would like to better understand the value added from this purchase in the coming months and years. Ms. Wolfe thanked Councilmember Robertson for her questions and comments. She stated she has struggled with the rising cost of software over the years and reported she did not have staff capacity to take on this work. She was of the opinion the software was less of a commitment than hiring a staff person to manage this work, adding she had not filled a senior management position while workloads were being reassessed. Ms. Wolfe said it was her hope software and other tools could be used rather than another full time position and reiterated the strategic plan belonged to the city council and that staff was working to be accountable to the council's time and effort. She commented this program would gather more than just feedback but would drive the work on the implementation of the strategic plan.

Councilmember Smith questioned who would be filling out the action plans and who would be able to see the data or progress that was being made. Mr. Hayle reported staff can provide the council with as much access as they would like. He noted there would be a public dashboard for the community which would allow residents to view up to the minute progress and would include a staff dashboard as well.

Mayor Pro Tem Hovland discussed the cost for software and noted the prices were incredibly high. He stated while this was a great deal of money, he supported staff moving forward with the purchase.

Councilmember Smith requested comment from staff on the feedback received from other cities using this software. Mr. Hayle explained he spoke extensively with staff members from Maplewood and Minnetonka and both cities were using this software to implement their strategic plan and were very complimentary of the Envisio program.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if a proof of concept was completed by staff. Mr. Hayle stated staff completed a full demo using the Maplewood system and did not complete a proof of concept. Ms. Wolfe reported Maplewood's strategic plan was similar to Blaine's which demonstrated a real world example of how this program would work for city staff.

Councilmember Paul stated he supported the city pursuing this software purchase.

Mr. Hayle summarized the comments received from the council and questioned if he should proceed with a one year software contract. The council supported the recommendation of a one year contract with the vendor.

Informational: no action required

30 Minute Discussion

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:27PM.

Adjourned