



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, March 7, 2022

6:00 PM

Cloverleaf Farm Room A

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 6:00PM.

2 Roll Call

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

Adjunct Member Drew Brown.

ABSENT: Councilmember Richard Paul.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Attorney Pam Whitmore; Director of Administration Cassandra Tabor; GIS Manager Cory Richter; Economic Development Specialist Ruth Tucker; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

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

Absent: 1 - Councilmember Paul

3 New Business

3-1

Northtown Revitalization and Redevelopment Master Plan

Attachments: [Draft Northtown Redevelopment Master Plan](#)

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the City of Blaine has

been working on a master plan for revitalization and redevelopment of the Northtown Area since August 2021. The city hired Damon Farber to assist in the master planning efforts. The consultant last presented to the City Council on November 16, 2021. Significant design work and public outreach has occurred since the last workshop. Staff noted the consultants had a presentation for the council. It was noted completion of the master planning study is expected in April/May with a final presentation being made to the city council at that time.

Tom Whitlock, Damon Farber, commented on the work that has been done since November on the vision plan for the area around Northtown. He stated this was a vision that was reflective of community input, market feasibility, along with being vetted with staff and stakeholders. He noted these were long redevelopment projects and this vision plan was the first step for the district. He then reviewed the preliminary vision plan with the council and stated he has received a great deal of engagement from the public. He reported transportation within the district was being considered and it was noted discussions have been held with Anoka County. He discussed the main themes that were heard from the community, noting there was a need for various types of housing, integrated green spaces, mixed uses, quality retail/restaurants, and improved pedestrian access.

Jeff McMenimen, Damon Farber, discussed the meetings that have been held with the Washington Prime Group and stated this organization understands retail. He reported they would like to see the Northtown area transformed into a lifestyle center, similar to the highly successful lifestyle center in Scottsdale, Arizona. He indicated the dynamics were different between Scottsdale and Blaine. He reported the Washington Prime Group wants to do what's best for Blaine. He commented further on how he would define a lifestyle center noting it includes higher quality restaurants, entertainment, park spaces, and experiences for the consumer.

Councilmember Hovland explained the income levels surrounding the center in Scottsdale versus the Northtown area in Blaine were completely different. He stated the area in Blaine were lower income and the city had to be careful in how it redevelops to ensure the neighbors can support the uses.

Further discussion ensued regarding the future plans for the Northtown area.

Councilmember Jeppson asked if the roadways in this area would be redesigned along with the commercial properties. Mr. Whitlock reported

this would occur as the two would go hand in hand as the area redevelops into the new vision plan. He explained the city would not invest in public roadway improvements until private development was secured.

Mr. Thorvig stated he was very pleased by the conversations the city has had with the Washington Prime Group and noted they have a short-term vision (1-5 years) for the mall that was in alignment with the city's vision for the area.

Councilmember Hovland requested further information regarding the housing that would be surrounding the Northtown area. He explained he had concerns with the amount of housing, and type of housing that was being proposed. He indicated the people living in this area were making \$30,000 to \$60,000 a year. He suggested condos or townhomes be considered versus all apartment buildings. Mr. McMenimen reported the market research says there is capacity for all types of housing within this district and noted the vision plans shows this as well. He stated the market would drive the housing and noted the city's vision would help guide this. He understood there was a need for market rate housing in Blaine today.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he would like to see what the market wants to do with the area prior to the council creating TIF districts. He indicated he would not support a TIF district for housing. He explained the community wants more amenities and restaurants and he hoped this would happen. Mr. Thorvig reported TIF may have to be considered by the council to assist with renovations to the mall itself.

Councilmember Massoglia explained he looked forward to seeing how much the Washington Prime Group would be investing in this project, because he did not believe this was a project that should be driven by the city. He asked if the business park would be office and warehouse space. Mr. McMenimen reported this area would be office/medical uses and co-working spaces.

Councilmember Hovland discussed the proposed roundabouts and stated he would like to see a traffic study done to see if these areas would be better served by traffic signals. Mr. Whitlock agreed a separate traffic study should be completed.

Councilmember Robertson stated she believed the vision plan was fantastic. She appreciated the fact that the consultants were thinking outside the box, including roundabouts and closing off Highway 10. She explained this vision would create a more pedestrian friendly area. She requested further information on the market study and if there was a need

for more medical. Mr. Whitlock indicated the study did show there was a market for more medical. He discussed the high level of competition for retail in the metro area and stated the market study shows there was not a need for more retail, but rather for a different type of retail.

Councilmember Robertson reported she saw the city's investment in this study as being its way to create interest in the redevelopment of this area. She reiterated that the vision plan was just concepts and asked when the next community engagement event would be held. Mr. McMenimen explained this would occur in April when the plan was a little further along. He agreed that this plan would generate excitement and grant opportunities for public infrastructure once the vision plan was completed. He noted that this was a long-term vision for the area and could take upwards of 30 years to complete.

Councilmember Hovland questioned if Home Depot was included in these discussions. Mr. McMenimen stated Home Depot and Cub Foods would remain a part of the development.

Councilmember Jeppson encouraged the consultants to keep in mind the communities that would be impacted by this dramatic change. Mr. Thorvig reported any development proposal that comes to the city would go through the normal process, which includes public hearings and review by the planning commission and city council. He stated the road connections would not go through or change until owners want to do something different with their properties. He indicated this may not occur for another 20 to 25 years.

Mayor Sanders thanked the representatives from Damon Farber for their presentation and stated he appreciated all of their work the vision plan. He encouraged the council to keep an open mind regarding all of the tools that were available to the city when considering the redevelopment of this area.

Discussed

3-2

Strategic Plan Refresh Input Review

Attachments: [Staff Strategic Plan Refresh Ideas](#)
 [Council Strategic Plan Refresh Comments](#)
 [Blaine Strategic Plan](#)

Communications Manager Hayle stated at the 2021 fall city council retreat, staff received direction from council to begin a process to refresh the city's strategic plan. The strategic plan was created in 2019 and the implementation was delayed due to multiple circumstances including staffing changes, council turnover, and the pandemic. This refresh is designed to update the plan metrics, targets, and measures to reflect

current realities. This is not a completely new plan or rewrite of the existing plan. If council desires to continue strategic planning in the future, a new plan would be developed in 2023 or beyond. It was noted staff has been meeting to assess progress on strategic plan elements and to identify opportunities to update the plan. He commented further on the strategic plan refresh and noted the council would be addressing this matter in further detail at the April strategic planning session.

Discussed

3-3

Sight Distance Triangle Discussion

Attachments: [Attachments](#)

City Planner Sellman stated in September 2021, staff was made aware via a complaint of a fence that was being erected on a corner lot that did not meet city code requirements related to the site distance triangle. The fence was installed without a permit. Staff worked with the homeowner and a plan was submitted that met the necessary code requirements. Upon inspection of the neighborhood, staff observed other fences that were erected without permits that did not meet city code requirements related to the site distance triangle. Unfortunately, there are likely many instances in other parts of the city where this issue exists. The issue was discussed at a city council workshop in December 2021 and direction was given to staff to review the city code and present options to amend the code.

Ms. Sellman commented the site distance triangle is defined, “in the case of 90 degree intersecting streets, shall be described as the area within the triangle formed by connecting the following three points: the point of intersection of the curb lines adjacent to the lot of the intersecting streets, a point 60 feet from said point of intersection along one curb line, and a point 60 feet from said point of intersection along the other curb line. In the case of all other intersecting streets, the intersection sight distance triangle shall be defined by the Zoning Administrator”. If the City Council is amenable to an ordinance amendment, the amendment would be brought forward expeditiously as homeowners begin to install fences in the spring. Additionally, staff will need to review existing fences that staff is aware of that were in violation and determine the appropriate action, if any. It is likely that some of these fences will no longer be in violation based on the proposed changes, however there are likely opaque fences that will be in violation.

Councilmember Robertson stated before this went through she would want to see if some type of grandfathered language included in the ordinance.

Councilmember Jeppson thanked staff for their efforts on this matter.

Councilmember Hovland indicated the previous ordinance addressed tree and shrub pruning. He explained he did not understand why there was a need for a change based on one complaint.

Councilmember Robertson discussed the complaint the city received and how the vision triangle impacted their ability to fence their yard. She stated the current ordinance was too "one size fits all" and minor changes were needed to assist residents that had uniquely oriented homes.

Councilmember Jeppson reported this was the third time this matter has been before the council and she believed due diligence has been done regarding the matter.

Councilmember Smith indicated there were residents installing fences without receiving permits and noted this would continue going forward.

Council consensus was to direct staff to move forward with the sight distance triangle ordinance.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Sanders requested staff speak to redistricting for the remainder of the meeting. GIS Manager Richter discussed the restricting plans for the city per the results of the 2020 census. She reported 80% of adults were registered to vote. She stated the goal was to keep polling locations around 1,750 people. She reported with the reapportionment, the polling locations was now up to 27. The composition of the wards was discussed in further detail along with several different restricting options. It was noted the city's redistricting plans would have to be reviewed and approved by the council by March 29, 2022.

Councilmember Hovland reported staying with the horizontal system would create less change and confusion for voters. City Clerk Sorensen commented this would be the case.

Councilmember Jeppson indicated she was in support of option 2B. She explained she had a hard time with the horizontal system because this divided the city. She wanted to see a plan that brought the east and west sides of the city together.

Councilmember Smith stated the council would have to consider what type of system should be put in place to accommodate the full build out of the city, and if the city could have six wards at some point in the future. He noted he gravitated to option 3 because it kept like neighborhoods together.

Councilmember Robertson commented she gravitated to option 2B. She understood that 20 years from now, the wards may have to be reconsidered.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he liked options 2 and 2B as well.

Mayor Sanders concurred.

Council consensus was to direct staff to proceed with option 2B.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:15PM.

Adjourned