



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.

Wednesday, February 23, 2022

5:30 PM

Cloverleaf Farm Room A

Councilmember Smith will be joining the meeting virtually from the lobby of Fitger's Hotel, 600 E. Superior St, Duluth, MN 55802

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 Julie Jeppson, Chris Massoglia, Richard Paul, Jess Robertson, and Jason Smith (attending remotely 600 E. Superior Street, Duluth MN).

Adjunct Member Drew Brown.

ABSENT: Councilmember Wes Hovland.

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 Chris Nelson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Director of Administration Cassandra Tabor; Deputy HR Director Sheri Chesness; and Senior Management Analyst Lisa Derr.

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

Absent: 1 - Councilmember Hovland

3 Legislative Delegation

Mayor Sanders thanked Senator Newton, Representative West and Representative Erin Koegel for joining the meeting.

Senator Newton reported the first few weeks of the legislative session started slowly. He noted the February forecast would be provided on February 28 which would provide the Senate with real numbers that can be assigned to committees for bills. He stated the House and Senate have been hearing from administrative entities, along with hearing the initial budget from the governor. He indicated this was the starting line and the Senate would get to work on the year's budget this coming week. He discussed how he was working on TH65 bills in order to get this project done. He explained he would also be requesting \$12 million for the National Sports Center to address updates for this property. He noted he would not be seeking reelection in the Senate but would be seeking election for House District 35B.

Mayor Sanders thanked Senator Newton for making his priorities the priorities of the city of Blaine. He appreciated the help he was providing for the TH65 project and the National Sports Center.

Representative Nolan West thanked the council for their time. He stated he was working on making sure TH65 gets done and was optimistic this project would get funded. He noted the State of Minnesota was the only divided legislature in the entire country. He commented on the funding gap the State had for unemployment and he hoped this would be addressed first thing by the House and Senate. He discussed funding being proposed for front line workers and how he would like state taxes to be eliminated from social security for the elderly.

Representative Erin Koegel stated her main priorities were to help working families. She reported she has been holding good listening sessions and understood the State was in a good position, but there were people still struggling. She noted the State was discussing funding for frontline and essential workers. She indicated the State was working to maximize the federal infrastructure funds (IJA).

Mayor Sanders thanked the representatives for their presentation to the council. He reiterated that TH65 funding was critical for Blaine, along with support for the National Sports Center because this was a strong community asset. He then discussed House Bill 3256 and Senate Bill 3259 noting these bills would obliterate local control. He requested staff speak to Blaine's approach and describe how this bill would cripple the city.

Community Development Director Thorvig explained the Legalizing Affordable Housing Act was being heard in committee at this time and noted the League of Minnesota Cities has taken a strong stance against this bill. He indicated a one-size fits all approach does not work for all

cities and explained Blaine has done an admirable job working with developers on housing. He expressed concern with the fact the proposed bill would hinder the city's ability to require certain building materials, would now require duplexes in all single-family zoning districts, would allow the building community to limit the housing size, and one stall garages would be allowed. In addition, the city would be required to review and approve building permits within 60 days, which would be extremely difficult given the fact Blaine considers over 5,000 building permits each year. He stated while there were some good things within the bill, there were others that stripped local control which was concerning to the city of Blaine.

Mayor Sanders encouraged the Representatives to contact him with any comments or concerns they may have over the coming weeks and months. He then opened the floor for further comments.

Councilmember Robertson explained she was grateful for Blaine's Representatives and stated she was proud of the fact these individuals were working on behalf of the city of Blaine.

Senator Newton hoped that dollars would make their way back to taxpayers and that tax cuts would be made to the two lowest tax brackets. He commented further on the proposed bonding bills.

Representative West discussed how rising interest rates meant now was the best time to get TH65 done.

4 New Business

4-1 Christian Brothers Automotive Development Proposal (109th and Lexington Avenue)

Attachments: [Attachments](#)

City Planner Sellman stated Christian Brothers Automotive (CBA) is looking to enter into the Blaine market. CBA offers repair service and maintenance for every type of vehicle. There are 250 franchised partner locations in 30 states, four of which are in Minnesota located in Andover, Lakeville, Maple Grove and Inver Grove Heights. The typical store has a two-tone brick finish. Information regarding typical operating procedures, etc., for the business. CBA has looked at various sites in Blaine and generally want to be located along the Lexington Avenue corridor. After reviewing various sites with staff, CBA is specifically looking at Lot 2, Lexington Meadows 4th Addition at the corner of Austin Street and 108th Avenue adjacent to new North Memorial Health clinic currently under construction. This property is zoned Planned Business District (PBD). Staff reviewed the intent of the Planned Business District. Automotive

repair is not currently permitted in the PBD zoning district. CBA would like to discuss the feasibility of amending the zoning code to allow automotive repair or to modify the zoning for the site.

Ms. Sellman explained the council shall consider whether the proposed project is in harmony with the overall Lexington Meadows project and whether it meets the vision the city council has for development in this area. The council has discretion whether to allow this type of use due to the requirement of a rezoning or code amendment. If there is interest by the city council in allowing the use, staff will determine the appropriate procedure and process moving forward. Alternatively, if the council is not interested in the project in this location, staff can continue to work with the business to find an alternative site that may be more conducive to the use.

Billy Green, Christian Brothers representative, thanked the council for considering his request and noted he was available for questions.

Lisa Deal, Commercial Real Estate Broker in the Twin Cities, explained she has been working with Christian Brothers for the past four years. She reported they have over 250 locations nationwide in 30 states. She noted this business began in Lakeville and has since expanded to Andover, Maple Grove, Inver Grove Heights, Savage and Chanhassen. She noted Christian Brothers completes automotive maintenance, oil changes, and tire repair. She discussed the number of automotive maintenance centers in the community and indicated the Blaine market was being targeted by Christian Brothers. She noted the prototype building was approximately 5,500 square feet in size.

Todd Kaufman, stated after speaking with Ms. Deal and Christian Brothers he believed this site would work well. He commented on the other uses that were being considered for this property, noting there were a lot of moving parts at this time.

Mayor Sanders thanked the group for their work on this project and for choosing Blaine. He agreed this site may suit this use, but noted he was somewhat tied to the current zoning for this property. He discussed how the site would change if the entire corner were rezoned.

Councilmember Robertson stated it was nice to see how businesses wanted to come into the community. She thanked the applicant for meeting with the Mayor and Council in order to bring his vision to life. She indicated she generally did not like making zoning modifications. She believed the council had a different vision for this area and did not believe this was the right property.

Mayor Sanders reported the council would be happy to work with Christian Brothers should they find another property in Blaine.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he would be open to it because of the proposed aesthetics of the building. He noted he has visited the Christian Brothers in Andover and it is surrounded by restaurants. He understood the concerns that have been raised on what other uses would come into the site if the property were rezoned.

Councilmember Jeppson commented she agreed with the Mayor and Councilmember Robertson on this issue. She noted this property was a blank canvas and altering the zoning of the site would completely alter the canvas. She did not believe the applicant was proposing a bad product, but rather she wanted to see what else would happen in this area prior to moving forward with this use.

Councilmember Paul stated this area was wide open at this time and if this business did not fit, he would hope the applicant would seek another property in Blaine.

Mr. Green thanked the council for the feedback then asked if this use was not welcome at this time or at any point in the future.

Mayor Sanders reported the city has a vision for this property and explained rezoning the site would change this vision and would be premature at this time. For this reason, he did not see how the proposed use would fit onto the site.

Ms. Deal discussed the amount of traffic that would be expected onto the property per day (24 cars) and estimated the site would have seven employees. She reported the use would only be open Monday through Friday.

Mr. Green added that very few cars would be parked onsite overnight and noted his business offers a shuttle service to return people to their place of employment or home after dropping off a vehicle.

Mayor Sanders thanked Mr. Green for this information and stated he would like to see this business in Blaine on a property that fit the zoning requirements.

30 Minute Discussion

Attachments: [Sod Program Images](#)

Public Works Director Haukaas reported there has been a significant amount of sod failures this year on Street Reconstruction projects that were constructed in 2019 and 2020. The sod on these projects were successfully growing prior to the high temperatures and drought that occurred in the summer of 2021. The city council desired to better understand the current process, the root causes of sod failures, and discuss options to reduce this on future projects. Staff commented further on the sod failures and asked how the council wanted to proceed.

Councilmember Jeppson reported this issue was brought up to her by several residents last summer. She believed the sod failures were the city's responsibility. She recommended barriers be put in place and that the city take responsibility for the sod failures.

Councilmember Robertson anticipated she received many of the same phone calls as Councilmember Jeppson. She supported the city fixing the sod failures for these residents.

Councilmember Massoglia thanked Councilmember Jeppson and Councilmember Robertson for taking calls from residents. He questioned how the city would determine if the sod was bad or did the resident fail to water it. Mr. Haukaas described the process staff follows to determine if sod is established or not.

Councilmember Paul questioned how far into the yard the city would replace the sod. Mr. Haukaas estimated four to 10 feet of sod were added to residential yards in the project area.

Councilmember Robertson thanked staff for reviewing all of the project areas and for laying out the percentage of dead sod. She questioned if hydroseeding was an option for these areas. Mr. Haukaas reported there was a difference in the reliability and how much the hydroseeding was watered. He noted sod was warranted for 30 days and the city assisted with watering the sod for this timeframe to assure it is established.

Mayor Sanders commented on how the underlying soil may be a concern. Mr. Haukaas explained the city does have a base of black dirt spread out before sod is laid.

Councilmember Massoglia believed that a lot of the dead sod was due to lack of watering and was not the city's responsibility.

Councilmember Jeppson supported the city pursuing hydroseeding for the sod that needs replacement and that the city only be responsible for

60 days.

Mayor Sanders supported this recommendation and encouraged staff to clearly communicate with the residents that have been impacted.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if hydroseeding required more maintenance than sod. Mr. Haukaas stated this was the case.

Councilmember Massoglia recommended spot hydroseeding only be done for those residents that have complained and tried to take care of their sod.

Mr. Haukaas stated he would report back to the council with options and costs. He recommended the hydroseeding not be pursued until the fall.

30 Minute Discussion

4-3

Traffic Commission Review

Attachments: [1 - Traffic Commission Ordinance](#)
[2 - Traffic Commission Organizational Meeting \(Do's & Dont's\)](#)
[3 - Traffic Commission Meeting History 2020-2021](#)
[4 - Traffic Commission - Traffic & Engineering item process](#)
[5 - Traffic Complaint Response Implementation Needs](#)

City Engineer Schluender stated the Traffic Commission was started in 2017 based on direction of the city council following a tragedy on 119th Avenue. At their first meeting there was a list of council directives as to what the commission would give input on and what it would not. Generally, the Traffic Commission was directed to focus on only neighborhood issues, the Traffic Commission was explicitly directed to not address issues on state and county highways, new developments, or the comprehensive plan. The first 2-3 years of the commission held 5-6 meetings annually as a number of traffic items were submitted and reviewed. These meetings were based on issues or requests that were submitted to engineering or PD. Approximately 80% of the issues dealt with neighborhood speeding, requests for stop signs or no parking. Requests to the Traffic Commission have been significantly less in recent years. A summary of the last two years, 2020 and 2021 of traffic commission meetings was reviewed with the Council. It was noted there were only three meetings held in each of these years. Councilmember Jeppson believed the city's boards and commissions offer valuable direction to the city council. She was of the opinion the traffic commission was never given a clear directive on how to handle the severity of traffic issues. She believed this group could be far more

valuable and was currently being underutilized.

Councilmember Robertson stated the people on this commission were extremely talented. She reported this commission allows people to be heard and be engaged with the city but she was uncertain if this was occurring under the current format.

Councilmember Massoglia commented he heard a lot of traffic concerns when he was campaigning. He explained he saw value in having a commission that allows people to discuss these traffic concerns in order to allow them to be heard. He stated he would like to see this group bringing issues to the city council versus referring all matters to the police department for a traffic study.

Councilmember Smith indicated he agreed with Councilmember Jeppson that there were a lot of great people on this commission. He reported if this group were to remain as is, he was dubious of the value, but if their role were expanded, the skills of the individuals on this commission would be better utilized.

Commissioner Paul stated there has been little connection between the traffic commission and the city council in the past few years. He supported the city council working together better with this group.

Councilmember Jeppson understood traffic was a major concern in the entire metro area. She believed the city had an opportunity to make the work of the traffic commission far more robust. She suggested a joint meeting be held with the traffic commission, especially when traffic matters are being discussed with the county.

Mr. Schluender thanked the council for their input. He discussed how the sporadic and varied meeting schedule impacted the traffic commission.

Mr. Haukaas stated a quarterly meeting schedule could be considered for the traffic commission with on-call meetings held when required.

Councilmember Massoglia reported the chair of the traffic commission can call meetings when necessary in order to deal with traffic complaints.

Councilmember Paul supported the traffic commission meeting four times per year.

Mayor Sanders discussed how the frequency of meetings would be adjusted once the scope of the group expands.

Mr. Schluender thanked the council for the feedback and noted he would plan to invite the traffic commission to attend the May or June workshop meeting.

30 Minute Discussion

5 City Manager Performance Evaluation Summary

Mayor Sanders summarized the city manager's performance evaluation completed at the last closed workshop meeting.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:30PM.