Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
Blaine MN 55449

City of Blaine
Anoka County, Minnesota
Minutes
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, February 14, 2022	**6:00 PM**	**Cloverleaf Farm Room A**

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

1 Call to Order

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

2 Roll Call

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Wes Hovland, Julie Jeppson, Chris Massoglia (participating remotely 2390 Surfside Boulevard, Cape Coral, FL), Richard Paul, Jess Robertson (left at 7:30PM), and Jason Smith.

Adjunct Member Drew Brown.

ABSENT: None.

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; City Engineer Dan Schluender; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Deputy Finance Director Ali Bong; GIS Manager Cory Richter and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3 New Business

Mayor Sanders requested Item 3.2 be addressed first.

3-2 Redistricting 2022

Attachments: Redistricting Timeline
Redistricting Workshop PowerPoint

City Clerk Sorensen stated redistricting is the process of redrawing boundaries of election districts to ensure that the people of each district are equally represented. This process begins once the federal census is completed every 10 years. Using data from the 2020 Census, new boundaries will be determined that reflect population growth and shifts over the past decade and create new boundaries so each district has roughly the same number of people.

Ms. Sorensen explained the Minnesota State Legislature is responsible for redistricting Minnesota's congressional districts, Minnesota Senate and House districts and Metropolitan Council districts. Local governments are responsible for redistricting the remaining election districts, such as county commissioners, school boards, and cities. Once the Legislature has completed their work, the city will reestablish ward and precinct boundaries based on population shifts throughout the City. While the deadline for the Legislature to approve a redistricting plan is February 15, historically the Minnesota Supreme Court has had to issue redistricting plans establishing congressional, senate, and legislative districts. If that is the case again the City will await release of final plans then complete boundary establishment work in time for the March 29 deadline. Candidate filing begins May 17 and new ward and precinct boundaries will be in effect for the state primary election in August. Staff commented further on the 2020 census data and reviewed maps on the proposed redistricting.

GIS Manager Richter discussed how boundaries were established for redistricting. She reported the City was growing and commented on how the City had to balance the three wards and precincts going forward. She described how Ward 2 has changed in the past 10 years and what adjustments would be needed because of the development that has occurred over the past 10 years.

Councilmember Hovland asked if the precinct in Ward 1 that was in Ramsey County could be eliminated and incorporated into another precinct. Ms. Richter stated this could not occur because the city cannot cross the county boundary, even though no one lives in this precinct.

Ms. Sorensen reported the goal for the redistricting was to have equal representation and population balances within the new precincts. She commented further on how the city works with schools, churches and other organizations to secure polling places. She then reviewed the next steps she and her staff would be taking to address the redistricting which included a time for public comment and education.

Mayor Sanders thanked staff for their work then asked members of the

Charter Commission to introduce themselves to the Council.

Commissioner Dick Swanson indicated he did not like having all manufactured home communities in the same precinct and suggested staff find a way to bring Ward 1 up in order to separate the two parks into two separate wards. He proposed the Council consider breaking the city up into six wards at some point in the future.

Further discussion ensued regarding the changes that have occurred in Ward 3.

Councilmember Hovland questioned if staff had considered shifting the wards horizontally. Ms. Sorensen stated this was considered by staff during a brainstorming session. She indicated the council could consider making adjustments to how the wards are aligned, but noted this would be a major change for the community.

Commissioner Stephen Berk asked what the timeline was for amending the ward boundaries. Ms. Sorensen reported it would take eight to ten years to amend the ward boundaries.

60 Minute Discussion

3-1 Council Requested Items for Discussion

City Manager Wolfe stated a councilmember wished to discuss the Pioneer Park wetland preservation. She noted workshop agendas were currently full through April.

Councilmember Massoglia stated for the sake of clarity he would like more information regarding Pioneer Park. He explained he wanted to know more about the wetlands, the tree removal, etc.

Mayor Sanders questioned if the council supported putting this topic on a future workshop agenda.

Councilmember Smith supported this item being on a future workshop agenda.

Councilmember Hovland agreed stating staff should bring information forward on how the project can be financed.

Councilmember Robertson understood there were lingering items and for this reason she supported this item coming forward.

Councilmember Paul and Councilmember Jeppson also supported this item coming forward at a future meeting.

Safety Services Manager/Police Chief Podany explained he received notification last week that the law enforcement support office would be placing 150 armored vehicles throughout the state. He noted he was looking to put in for one, adding this would not be used as a primary vehicle but rather during a rescue incident or by neighboring agencies. He asked if the council would support him pursuing this piece of equipment.

Mayor Sanders supported Chief Podany pursuing this piece of equipment.

Councilmember Hovland asked if there would be a cost for the armored vehicle. Police Chief Podany noted there was no expense for the vehicle, but there would be ancillary costs to make the vehicle ready (graphics, lighting, etc.) to use for the department.

Council consensus was to support the Police Chief in pursuing this piece of equipment.

10 Minute Discussion

3-3 105th Avenue/Nassau St. Master Plan and Redevelopment Study

Attachments: Concepts
Street Precedents

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the 105th Avenue/Radisson Road industrial area has been identified in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan as a priority redevelopment area. It has also been identified as one of the four priority areas by the City Council through the visioning process that occurred in early 2021, and is also identified in the "Growth Management" portion of the City's strategic plan. Based on direction from the City Council, the City will embark on a visioning/design process for this area to assist in future marketing and development efforts. The industrial area consists of older industrial buildings that have either become antiquated due to their age or have excessive outdoor storage which is not consistent with the vision for the area. The EDA has been active in purchasing property over the last five years and continues to discuss further acquisitions as property becomes available. The National Sports Center (NSC) and Metropolitan Airports Commission (MAC) are also key property owners in this area.

Mr. Thorvig explained general discussions by the City Council identify this as a potential "city core" where the City should encourage walkable, entertainment type of uses that take advantage of the NSC and be an amenity to Blaine residents and visitors. Staff is suggesting a planning/design process that includes key stakeholders (city staff, boards/commissions, city council, property owners, NSC and MAC) to establish the vision for this area both visually and descriptively. An important aspect is an architect assisting in creating the visual plan for the area. An RFP was advertised in September seeking written proposals from qualified architects to assist the Community Development Department in preparation of a master plan for the 105th Avenue Redevelopment Area. Sperides Reiners Architects (SRA) was selected as the architect to assist with the project. Staff reviewed information on two concepts called Town Green and Lake + Main. It was noted the consultant would be providing an overview of these two concepts in order to solicit feedback to refine the concepts prior to a final meeting to discuss the master plan in March.

Mike Lamb, Sperides Reiners Architects (SRA), discussed the previous meeting he attended with the city council where options were discussed for the 105th Avenue/Nassau Street Master PUD. He commented on the meeting he held with the NSC and stated he was pleased by the discussion he had with them. He described how four concepts had been whittled down into two final concepts.

Councilmember Hovland asked if the proposed waterways could be interconnected. Mr. Lamb stated this was something that was desirable and could be considered.

Jonah Ritter, Sperides Reiners Architects (SRA), provided a detailed overview on the two plans (Town Green and Lake + Main) for the council. He explained a large amenity would anchor the Town Green concept while Lake + Main would have a water feature. He stated it would be important to program this space. He commented on how it would be important to tie both sides of 105th together by creating safe passage ways. The plans for Radisson Road were discussed in further detail. He requested the council provide written comments and final recommendations on these plans.

Mayor Sanders requested further information on how parking would be managed in both concepts. Mr. Ritter stated in the active or activity core (12 to 14 acres) would be primarily pedestrian oriented and the areas outside of this would be focused on multi-modal movement. He reported the idea would be to provide an even way for traffic to disburse through the area.

Councilmember Hovland believed parking was a key commodity to making these concepts work. He feared that people would not attend events in this new space if there was not adequate parking. Mr. Ritter reported structured parking may have to be considered for this area in order to accommodate visitors.

Councilmember Jeppson stated she loved how the consultants had tied the east and west sides of Radisson Road to the Town Square project. She asked if roundabouts were the best option along 105th Avenue. Mr. Ritter indicated the roundabouts work to address traffic speed and keeps traffic moving. He commented further on how roundabouts made it difficult to move pedestrians and stated other infrastructure may have to be considered in order to properly move pedestrians.

Councilmember Jeppson indicated she was more drawn to the Town Green concept plan at this time because this concept provided year-round activity for the community.

Mayor Sanders stated he liked the idea of having a mini Allianz field in Blaine. He questioned how the ownership and use of this field would be managed. Mr. Ritter stated this was a good question and noted he sees this as a public space that would be programmed and managed by the city. He commented further on how an outdoor pavilion or small amphitheater could be added to this space to support more activity.

Todd Johnson, NSC, thanked the council for having this conversation. He looked forward to working with the city on this project. He noted he was in favor of finding a way to work with the city on this project. He liked the idea of a mini Allianz and anticipated the city could speak with Minnesota United about this. He stated he was excited about the Town Green concept which included a soccer pitch and amphitheater. He commented further on how it would benefit the project to have a pedestrian bridge over 105th Avenue.

Mayor Sanders recommended the next concept plan include a pedestrian bridge. He stated he would love to see a baseball stadium included, but noted rugby or other pitch could be considered.

Further discussion ensued regarding the baseball stadium concept and the updates that were needed at the NSC.

Councilmember Hovland stated this was very exciting for the city to consider and pursue.

Mr. Johnson talked about potential skating parks that could be considered within the Town Green and reported he would like to pursue “Hockey Day in Minnesota” in 2025 or 2026.

Mayor Sanders indicated he liked the Town Green option best with a water feature.

Councilmember Smith stated he favored the Town Green option as well. He recommended a plaza area be considered with a small Allianz if the baseball stadium does not pan out.

Councilmember Jeppson explained she liked the idea of greenspace but anticipated more would be needed to attract people to this area. Mr. Johnson indicated a sculpture and community garden could be considered.

Councilmember Paul stated he favored the Town Green concept and he appreciated the unique options the city had available due to the NSC. Mr. Johnson discussed how the creative partnerships the city could have with the NSC would greatly benefit this project. He commented further on how the city and NSC would have to properly park the space for peak events.

Councilmember Hovland questioned how this project would start or be phased. Mr. Johnson commented he would begin by building off the success of Invictus. He understood this was a very tricky question because there were a lot of ways to attack this project. He stated it would be important for the city to build partnerships on this project with the county, state and NSC.

Councilmember Hovland stated as word gets out and the project begins to be built, the city has no idea what other ideas may come forward. He recommended the city remain flexible going forward because other elements may be added as time goes on.

Councilmember Paul asked how the activities would be built into this area and how would people be drawn to this area. Mr. Johnson reported the city would have to draw off of NSC and Invictus visitors to begin with.

Councilmember Hovland stated he really liked the idea of the mini Allianz field. He anticipated this would be a draw to the community.

Mr. Johnson requested the council fill out their comment cards and get them back to him sometime this week.

Mayor Sanders thanked the consultants for all of their work on this project. He stated he looked forward to this project moving forward.

Mayor Sanders recessed the workshop meeting at 8:01PM.

Mayor Sanders reconvened the workshop meeting at 8:06PM.

60 Minute Discussion

3-4 Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Pavilion and Restrooms

Attachments: Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Pavilion 2.7.22.pdf
Huffcut_building_Badger.jpg
Badger-Plan-and-Specs.pdf

Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Krieger stated at the November 15, 2021 regular council meeting, council accepted a quote for $110,500 from WSB & Associates and HCM Architects to design the Wetland Sanctuary Pavilion and Restroom project. Staff has been working with WSB & Associates and HCM Architects on a preliminary design concept of the pavilion and restroom. Along with the design of the pavilion and restrooms, WSB is reviewing the parking lot design in an effort to add 19 parking spaces on the site. He noted a representative from both HCM Architects and WSB & Associates would present a preliminary design of the pavilion, discuss additional parking options, and answer utility questions. It was noted the Open Space budget has $1,000,000 allocated for the project. Staff reviewed the cost estimates for each segment of the project, noting the total was over $1.4 million. Staff has communicated with the architect and consultant to look at other cost saving options. The council is asked to provide input and direction on the proposed concept of the pavilion and project.

Luke McCann, HCM Architects, discussed the preliminary design plans for the BWS pavilion and restrooms with the council. He stated the existing paths and parking lot would be reused as much as possible. He noted the open air structure was designed to reflect the organic surroundings. The plans for the restroom facilities were further discussed.

Bob Slipka, Landscape Architect with WSB & Associates, reported the parking lot currently holds 30 stalls and this has been increased to 50 stalls. He explained the restrooms would have two flushing toilets and running sinks. He commented on the expense to extend water and sewer to the BWS pavilion.

Councilmember Jeppson questioned if the expense for the utilities could be covered by ARPA funds. Staff stated they would look into this further.

Councilmember Jeppson inquired if the two restrooms would be enough to service 100 to 150 people at the facility. Mr. Slipka reported two was sufficient and noted any larger events planned for the pavilion could bring in portables.

Councilmember Hovland asked if this project would be covered by wetland credit funds. Mr. Krieger stated this was the case. Councilmember Hovland commented one option to keep this project moving forward would be to install the pavilion at this time with portables and to have the restrooms installed in the future.

Mr. Krieger questioned if the council supported the project moving forward at $1.4 million or should the project be amended down to $1 million, what elements of the project does the council support, or what should be changed.

Mayor Sanders reported the utilities had become a large ticket item for this project. He asked what other projects would go away if the council were to support the $1.4 million expense. Mr. Krieger commented the budget of the open space fund was quite healthy right now. Finance Director Huss discussed the CIP that was presented to the council and commented on how the wetland funds could be used for projects such as this.

Councilmember Jeppson understood there were adequate reserves to cover the expense of the project. However, she also understood that this meant other projects would be impacted by this decision. Ms. Wolfe reported the city has adequate reserves for this project, along with dollars from wetland credits. She commented on how this project could be sent out with alternates in order to address the expense of the project.

Councilmember Massoglia expressed frustration with the lack of connectivity to the Lexington Athletic Complex (LAC) from this project. He discussed how expensive it would be to run utilities to the pavilion and asked what the cost would be to install an underground tunnel or extra crosswalk from the LAC to the BWS. He stated it would be very beneficial to have these two parks connected. Mr. Krieger explained an underground tunnel may be difficult due to the water and infiltration ponds that flow underneath Lexington Avenue.

Councilmember Massoglia suggested portables be considered for the pavilion with some nice siding around them.

Councilmember Smith stated he was fine with the pavilion as it was. He anticipated it would be even more costly to connect the LAC to the BWS.

Councilmember Paul agreed it would be beneficial to connect the two parks. He stated he appreciated the proposed plans but suggested the pavilion be enclosed. He expressed concern with the fact the pavilion would not have walls. Mr. McCann noted the pavilion would have an overhang which would protect people from the rain. He stated if walls were included, the price of the pavilion would continue to increase.

Councilmember Paul anticipated this project would go over budget and he hoped staff could sit down and narrow this project down in order to have it completed for the community.

Mr. Huss went back to discuss the opportunity costs of pursuing this project now versus in the future. He reviewed the CIP and how funds would be impacted by this project.

Mayor Sanders stated it would be helpful to see this information detailed further for the council. Mr. Krieger explained he could also work with Luke to find other cost saving measures, such as reducing the footprint, and throwing out the restrooms as a bid alternative.

Mayor Sanders asked what the main driver was in the price increase. Mr. Krieger reported the utility installation was three times what staff had estimated.

Councilmember Hovland reiterated that the project could move forward without the restrooms at this time, and the restrooms could be added in the future. He asked if it would be better to tap into the water treatment plant for utilities. Public Works Director Haukaas stated this facility was 2/3 of a mile away and would still be costly.

Mayor Sanders requested staff meet with the consultants to find cost saving measures and report back to the council at a future workshop meeting.

15 Minute Discussion

3-5 Facility Use Policy for City Hall

Attachments: 1.02 Facility Use Policy - PROPOSED CHANGES FOR 2022
City Hall Facility Rental PowerPoint

Ms. Sorensen stated staff met to review City Hall room usage once construction is complete and upon discussion drafted the proposed changes to the current policy. Staff highlighted some of the key points staff believed were important to consider in the updated policy that would allow public use of meeting space at City Hall while remaining consistent with use and rental of meeting space at the Mary Ann Young Center

(MAYC) and requested comments from the council.

Ms. Wolfe discussed how staff was not comfortable having City Hall open all hours to the general public and noted building supervisors or CSOs may be needed to assist with overseeing meetings in the building during the evening hours.

Mayor Sanders stated he supported adding a part-time CSO to provide security and oversee the activities at City Hall. Police Chief Podany stated he could explore this concept further and anticipated the majority of the wages would be covered by rental fees.

Councilmember Jeppson supported City Hall having a rental structure similar to MAYC.

Councilmember Smith indicated he supported the facility use policy for city hall as presented.

Councilmember Hovland supported someone being in city hall, such as a CSO officer for safety purposes.

Council consensus was to support the facility use policy as presented by staff with staff investigating the potential of hiring a part-time CSO for city hall.

30 Minute Discussion

3-6 Council Salary Review

Attachments: Council Pay Study 2022

Ms. Sorensen stated council salaries were last increased in January 2015; prior to that the last increase occurred in 2007. During the 1990s, council salaries had been increased annually at the same percentage rate as city employees, but between 1998 and 2005 no adjustments were made to council salaries. Council approved a five percent increase in 2014. Per Statute any salary change cannot take effect until after the next election, therefore should council conclude upon any type of increase it would not take effect until January 2023. Staff asked the council to provide input on the possibility of any salary increase effective 2023.

Councilmember Smith stated it was uncomfortable to discuss this as a councilmember. He suggested this topic be disconnected from the council and be tied to city code having the rates increased with inflation over time.

Mayor Sanders questioned if the charter commission should be addressing this issue.

Councilmember Hovland commented this has not been an issue in the past. He understood it was awkward for the council to vote on their own increase, and stated a standard 2% increase every two years could be written into city code.

Councilmember Jeppson believed it was nice to know where the city was at compared to neighboring communities.

Council consensus was to direct staff to bring this topic to the charter commission for further consideration.

10 Minute Discussion

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 9:14PM.