

CITY OF BLAINE  
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
Monday, December 12, 2022

5:30PM  
Cloverleaf Farm Room A  
10801 Town Square Drive

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 5:30PM.

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Wes Hovland, Julie Jeppson, Chris Massoglia (attending remotely from 2475 West Queen Creek Road #1, Chandler, AZ 85248), Tom Newland, and Jess Robertson.

**ABSENT:** Councilmember Richard Paul.

Quorum Present.

**ALSO PRESENT:** City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Safety Services Director/Police Chief Brian Podany; Deputy Finance Director Ali Bong; City Engineer Dan Schluender; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Park & Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Engineering Storm Water Coordinator Megan Hedstrom; and Director of Administration Cassandra Tabor

3.1 Closed Session Pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05, Subd. 3(b) for Annual City Manager Performance Evaluation.

The Council voted unanimously to meet in closed session pursuant to Minnesota Statute 13D.05, Subd. 3(b) to conduct the annual City manager performance evaluation.

3.2 Review of 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue Development Agreement.

Community Development Director Thorvig stated in November, a master developer was selected for the 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue Redevelopment Area through an RFP process. The first step in the process is to execute a development agreement between the Blaine Economic Development Authority (EDA) and the developer. A draft agreement was prepared by the EDA's legal counsel and provided to the developer. The developer provided comments and changes to the agreement. In general, most of the proposed changes can be negotiated

between the two parties, however, there are several outstanding items that need feedback and direction from the EDA. A revised document will be provided to the City Council/EDA after this meeting occurs and prior to the workshop on December 12. The goal is to have a final agreement approved at the EDA regular meeting on December 19. It was noted a TIF review would be considered by the Council at some point in the future, along with how the land entitlements will be determined. The proposed benchmarks and phases for the 105<sup>th</sup> Avenue Development was further discussed.

Corey Burstad, Elevage, introduced himself to the Council and noted he has been working with City staff and Councilmembers over the past six weeks. He explained he was in a development pre-phase period at this time. He reported he would be focusing on the land acquisition portion of this project over the next 60 days and from there would move into designing the infrastructure.

Mayor Sanders thanked Mr. Burstad for his efforts on this project then asked if staff had any other information on land acquisition for the Council.

Mr. Thorvig stated before additional dollars can be spent on environmental and engineering, the developer needs to understand what they have control over and any roadblocks in place when it comes to land acquisition. He noted the proposed agreement was preliminary in nature and if too many challenges come up the developer could walk away. He commented further on the risk the developer would be taking with this project and who would be covering costs.

Mr. Burstad discussed how once the land was fully acquired how the details of the project would be more easily determined.

Mayor Sanders stated he did not want to see this project be delayed but rather see the Council act quickly to keep this project moving forward. He believed the residents and visitors of Blaine deserved this new development.

Councilmember Hovland recommended one or two Councilmembers serve as liaisons to work with Mr. Thorvig on this redevelopment project. Mr. Burstad explained this was discussed with the City Manager and noted a subcommittee of the Council was proposed to work with his team and staff on this project.

Councilmember Jeppson stated many conversations were being held around this project then discussed the importance of bringing new Councilmembers up to speed. She explained she understood reimbursement costs would have to be provided to the developer, but noted the City was also investing a great deal of taxpayer dollars in this project. She requested that very strict guidelines be in place in the event the developer were to walk away.

Councilmember Newland stated he spoke with the developer about the project timeline and questioned if this would be a 5-10-year project. Mr. Burstad explained the first phase was critical and the land acquisition would set the stage for the remainder of the project. He stated until he had control of all the pieces it would be hard for him to determine the timeline. He discussed how market conditions and other factors would also impact this project.

Councilmember Jeppson commented 30 to 90 days was extremely fast to complete the land acquisition, noting this would only accommodate two to six Council meetings.

Mr. Burstad commented on how he would be working behind the scenes for the next 30 to 90 days and would then present information to the Council.

Councilmember Hovland inquired if Phase 1 would include the properties the City already owned or would all the property be assembled first. Mr. Burstad recommended that all the property be acquired before any construction begins.

Councilmember Massoglia asked what had been agreed upon up to this point. Mayor Sanders stated nothing had been agreed upon, but noted staff was working on a master development agreement with Elevage and was hopeful the agreement would be on the next Council agenda.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned if the EDA would be acquiring the additional property. Mayor Sanders explained the Council has agreed to look collaboratively at each parcel that was left to determine who would be best able to acquire these parcels.

Councilmember Robertson reported this project would be a very big task and a legacy piece for those serving on the City Council. She discussed how the Council had to be accountable for the tax dollars being spent on this project then explained the partnership the Council had with Elevage would be extremely important throughout this entire development. She anticipated some very difficult conversations would be held when it comes to the land acquisition and encouraged the entire Council to be supportive otherwise this would be a very difficult process to get through.

Councilmember Hovland requested staff look into the Council's previous use of eminent domain.

### 3.3 Traffic Commission Purpose and Objectives.

City Engineer Schluender stated staff has been seeking input from both the City Council and Traffic Commission on potential modifications to the purpose, objectives, and schedule of the Traffic Commission. Specifically, staff is looking for direction from the City Council and Traffic Commission on what the schedule for Traffic Commission meetings should be and what, if

any, expanded role(s) Traffic Commission should have beyond the current role of reviewing neighborhood traffic concerns on local streets, define issues, review alternatives, look at costs, hold public hearings and make recommendations to the City Council. Staff commented further on the role and purpose of the Traffic Commission and recommended this group move to quarterly meetings, with the possibility of having ad hoc meetings should the need arise.

Councilmember Hovland suggested this group begin looking at traffic calming ideas throughout the City. He noted the speed of traffic was one of the biggest complaints in the City.

Mayor Sanders stated based on recent projects at 99<sup>th</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup>, and along University Avenue to the south were areas that could be considered for traffic calming measures. Mr. Schluender noted a small group of residents from this neighborhood were meeting with staff and that a traffic study would be completed to consider what mitigation measures should be brought forward.

Councilmember Jeppson commented she did not agree with the quarterly meetings or the layout and supported the commission either go away or become far more robust. She indicated the City had a lot of traffic issues and believed this commission should be better utilized. She was of the opinion this commission could have a strong impact on the community, but not if directed to only hold quarterly meetings. She reported TH65 was another matter this group could be discussing.

Councilmember Newland agreed with the comments about this group moving from monthly to quarterly meetings and how momentum would be lost. He indicated he has been bothered by how many meetings have been canceled and was surprised that there were no traffic issues this group could discuss.

Mayor Sanders stated he did not disagree with this but noted staff may need assistance with getting ideas for agenda topics. He reported the Council and staff had to work preemptively to find areas for the Traffic Commission to address. Mr. Schluender stated there were issues that come to the City and staff handles about 95% of them, but there was a remaining 5% of issues that required assistance. He explained if this group moved to quarterly meetings, the group could switch back to monthly meetings if issues were to arise.

Councilmember Robertson suggested the commission move to quarterly meetings and that if this group continues to cancel its meetings that the group be disbanded. She asked how the Council should address traffic complaints going forward. Mr. Schluender encouraged the Council to direct all traffic complaints to engineering and the police department.

City Manager Wolfe explained no matter how complaints come to the City a traffic study must be completed before action is taken. She indicated there was a lot of value in having a group of residents looking at controversial matters, however, staff was resolving 95% of the traffic complaints. She said she understood there were some traffic matters the commission could review further, such as 99<sup>th</sup> and 101<sup>st</sup> Avenues or TH65.

Councilmember Hovland supported the Traffic Commission looking at further traffic calming measures throughout the community, even if this meant systematically going through the City neighborhood by neighborhood in an effort of being proactive.

Council consensus was to support the Traffic Commission moving to quarterly meetings.

Other Business:

Ms. Wolfe discussed how the City had hired contract inspectors for 2022 and 2023, noting staff was looking to hire full time inspectors in 2024 and 2025. She commented further on how a Blaine building inspector intern has been offered a full-time position in another community and that staff would like to retain this individual by making a full-time offer. The Council supported staff making a conditional offer to retain the building inspector.

Ms. Wolfe commented on an email she sent to the Council regarding a joint meeting in January with the Natural Resources Conservation Board and the Park Advisory.

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:55PM.

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Tim Sanders, Mayor

ATTEST:

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Catherine Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk

*Submitted by Minute Maker Secretarial*