

UNAPPROVED

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Thursday, September 6, 2018

6:30 p.m.
Cloverleaf Farm Room
10801 Town Square Drive

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ryan at 6:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Tom Ryan, Councilmembers Wes Hovland, and Dick Swanson.

ABSENT: Councilmembers Dave Clark, Andy Garvais, Julie Jeppson, and Jason King.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Clark Arneson; Planning and Community Development Director Bryan Schafer; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Economic Development Coordinator Erik Thorvig; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; Senior Engineering Technician Al Thorp; Communications Technician Roark Haver; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Funding City Hall Expansion Improvements.

Finance Director Huss stated at the July 19, 2018 Workshop, staff presented Council with preliminary findings from a space needs study conducted by the architectural firm 292 Design. The purpose of the study was twofold - to determine what improvements could be implemented fairly quickly to maximize efficiency in existing occupied space (a short-range plan), and to develop a plan for the design and occupation of the third floor (a long-range plan). Staff reviewed the items identified as short-term and long-range improvements. The total cost estimate of the improvements, including design and contingency is \$6.5 million. It was noted staff was working with 292 Design to get a breakdown of the costs for the components.

Councilmember Swanson commented the numbers were quite a bit higher than previously discussed. He stated he was receiving adverse comments regarding the proposed elimination of the closed walkway as many use that as access to City Hall and recommended this issue be further reviewed.

Mayor Ryan expressed frustration that this item was being presented with only three Councilmembers in attendance. Councilmember Swanson agreed this would make it difficult to discuss this item.

Councilmember Hovland asked if capital improvement funds were available to cover the proposed improvements. Mr. Huss stated the City's capital improvements funds were committed to the Senior Center.

Mayor Ryan stated he understood there was a need to expand the garage parking area. He anticipated that this project could not be completed without raising the City's tax levy. He stated this could lead to property tax shock for some residents. Mr. Huss commented the proposed improvements to City Hall were taking into account the expansion that was going to occur in Blaine over the next five to ten years.

Councilmember Swanson suggested the improvements be considered now while postponing the garage expansion.

Council consensus was that this item be brought back again to a future workshop for further review.

3.2 Update on the Trunk Highway 65 Corridor Study.

Public Works Director Haukaas stated MnDOT, in partnership with Anoka County and the cities of Ham Lake, Blaine and Spring Lake Park have initiated a study with the goal to examine a range of cost-effective roadway alternatives to address capacity, access, mobility, and safety issues along the corridor. The limits of the study have been identified as along TH 65 from approximately County State Aide Highway (CSAH) 116 (Bunker Lake Boulevard) to CSAH 10. This includes an analysis of potential west frontage road alignments between 99th Ave NE and 109th Ave NE. A focus on planning and environmental analysis will speed the start of any future projects in the study area. Staff reported the study began August 2018 and will be completed in February 2020. MnDOT has selected HDR as the project consultant. The project management team will conduct a significant amount of public outreach and involvement to gather input on the project and corridor needs. The list of project deliverables was reviewed in detail with the Council. It was noted City staff will maintain a high level of involvement with the project management team throughout the study period. The City Council will be able to comment and influence the recommendations of the report before it is finalized so that the City is not 'locked in' to any decisions the Council has not been a part of.

Mayor Ryan stated he was pleased to see the high level of support from the communities that live along this corridor.

Councilmember Hovland asked if the previous plan from MnDOT was still being considered. Mr. Haukaas commented the previous plan was a freeway conversion and he anticipated there were better options available. He stated there were portions of the plan that still may be considered.

Councilmember Swanson stated it would be very important for the City to have design plans in place in order to receive future federal funding.

3.3 Update on the City of Blaine Emerald Ash Borer Management Program.

Mr. Haukaas updated the Council on the City's Emerald Ash Borer (EAB) Management Program. He provided a brief history on this pest and explained all ash trees native to Minnesota are susceptible to infestation by EAB. Trees become infested when adult beetles lay eggs on the bark, which hatch into larvae that bore into the tree. The larvae tunnel in the vascular tissue of the tree and disrupt the movement of water and nutrients, eventually killing the tree. EAB prefers trees under stress, but is capable of killing perfectly healthy trees as well. In anticipation of the arrival of EAB, the City has been proactively removing ash trees since 2009. This management option is known as sanitation. Sanitation involves removing the ash trees and replacing them with different species of trees. Due to the extreme number of trees throughout our urban forest, this is the only economically feasible option for the city.

Mr. Haukaas commented to date, the City has removed hundreds of boulevard and park trees. We have been offering to remove a property owner's boulevard ash, grind the stump, and restore the grass. We also offer to replace their boulevard tree. This removal program is completely voluntary, and comes with no cost to the property owner. If a property owner chooses to keep their boulevard ash, we encourage them to have the tree chemically treated, as it will eventually become infested if left untreated. There are very effective chemical treatment options. Companies can inject ash trees with a chemical that will protect ash trees from getting EAB. The treatments are so effective that many companies guarantee protection from EAB. The costs of the treatments are approximately \$12-\$15 per inch of diameter measured at 4.5 feet above the ground. On average, a two-foot diameter tree will cost as much as \$360. The treatments must be applied every two or three years, for the life of the tree, to maintain protection.

Mr. Haukaas explained many cities have adopted different strategies for managing EAB. Some treat their ash trees, and some have used sanitation, while others have done a combination of both. Some cities have offered to pay a portion of a resident's cost to treat their trees as an incentive to get them treated. We could possibly secure a lower rate for treatments if we have companies bid on injecting trees exclusively for the City of Blaine. The City of Andover has successfully implemented a similar program. We would only recommend this strategy for trees deemed significant to the City, such as in Town Square Park. He commented he would also be recommending an additional staff person in the 2019 to assist with managing EAB.

Mayor Ryan stated this problem has been ongoing for the past 25 years and thanked staff for the update.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

Catherine Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk
Submitted by TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.