

UNAPPROVED

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Thursday, December 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 Dave Clark (arrived at 6:40 p.m.), Andy Garvais, Julie Jeppson, Jason King, and Dick Swanson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Wes Hovland.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Clark Arneson; Planning and Community Development Director Bryan Schafer; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Budget/Fiscal Analyst Ward Brown; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Communications Coordinator Ben Hayle; 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; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Live Entertainment Request – Invictus Brewing Company.

City Clerk Sorensen reported Invictus Brewing Company, 2025 105th Avenue NE, has requested that Council consider allowing live music in their taproom. Since opening in May they have noticed the taproom starts to clear out after 7:30 - 8:00 PM and by closing time they have approximately 20 people or less onsite. They are looking for ways to attract people to the taproom during the less busy hours, typically Fridays and Saturdays but occasionally during the week as well, and believe they have the capacity during those times to accommodate more people. Staff reviewed their proposal for using the space for live entertainment and requested feedback from the Council on how to proceed.

Previn Solberg, Invictus Brewing representative, explained he would like to have live music in the taproom after 8:00 p.m. He stated the musicians could be one person or a small group of musicians. He indicated he did not have a lot of space but was hoping live music would assist in drawing people to the brewery.

Mayor Ryan stated he did not oppose the request. Planning and Community Development Director Schafer commented on the ordinance amendment that would have to occur in order to allow for live entertainment at Invictus.

Council consensus was to support amending City Code to allow for live entertainment as proposed.

3.2 2019 Proposed Budgets – Water Utility Fund; and Sanitary Sewer Utility Fund.

Finance Director Huss stated as part of the City's comprehensive budgeting process, staff would be presenting preliminary budgets for two enterprise utility funds. The funds to be presented are the Water Utility Fund and the Sanitary Sewer Utility Fund. The presentation provided Council with the opportunity to review and comment on the proposed budgets prior to the budgets being formally adopted. It was noted the City of Blaine had very low water rates when compared to neighboring communities.

Discussion ensued regarding the work that was being completed on the City's lift stations.

Council consensus was to direct staff to bring the proposed 2019 budgets back to the Council for approval on December 20th.

3.3 Communications Plan.

Communications Coordinator Hayle stated at the end of September, he was hired as the Communications Coordinator. The communications team has completed a review of current communications practices and met with peer cities to learn how other cities are operating. The communications team is ready to begin working on the creation of a strategic communications plan. This plan will give direction to all communication efforts and methods used by the City now and in the future. He described the members of the Communication Team and discussed the work being completed by each staff member. He commented on the importance of the City's newsletter. He reported he would be exploring several new community engagement opportunities with the public.

Mayor Ryan stated he appreciated the great work being done by Mr. Hayle.

Councilmember Jeppson explained she appreciated the tone and message that was coming from the City.

Councilmember Garvais encouraged Mr. Hayle to not get bogged down with newsletters. He stated crisis communications should remain with the Police Department, with Mr. Hayle overseeing. He commented on the importance of properly branding and marketing the City of Blaine to the community.

Councilmember Clark stated he was not pleased that we shared the recent stolen Salvation Army red kettle story and explained he did wish to see only crime stories pushed to the media and would like the focus to be on the positive and not the negative. He encouraged staff to devise a master plan on how to approach public communications.

Council consensus was to direct staff to continue to address crisis communication with Police, creating a "face of Blaine" through branding and marketing, while continuing to push positive stories and closing the loop on stories such as the event with the Salvation Army red kettle.

Councilmember Jeppson stated she supported such stories being pushed to the public because it can assist in solving this crime.

Mayor Ryan recessed the workshop meeting at 7:32 p.m. to convene the Regular Council meeting.

Mayor Ryan reconvened the workshop meeting at 8:35 p.m.

3.5 City Manager Recruitment Discussion.

City Manager Arneson reviewed a proposed recruitment process a consultant would follow for recruiting a new City Manager, along with the potential timeline with the Council. He explained there were both local and national recruiting firms and asked if the Council wanted to interview consulting firms.

Councilmember Garvais stated he would like the definition of search committee to be expanded to include one or two representatives from the City's boards or commissions.

Councilmember Swanson shared concerns that the more people were involved in this process the more difficult it would be to keep this interview information private.

Councilmember Garvais anticipated that the board and commission members could act in a professional manner to assist with the interview process.

Councilmember Clark commented on the importance of keeping the recruitment process confidential. He stated that the more people that were involved in this process the slower it may go.

Councilmember Jeppson stated she believed the Council was jumping ahead in this process and encouraged the Council to direct these questions to the consulting firm hired to assist with recruiting the new City Manager.

Councilmember Swanson agreed this was a premature discussion. He supported the Council waiting to discuss this matter further with the consulting firm. He commented further on the importance of hiring a new City Manager that would be right for the times.

Councilmember Garvais suggested the Council earmark a small amount of time at each of its workshop meetings to address this topic. Mr. Arneson reported staff would make this happen.

Councilmember Swanson commented on the proposed hiring timeline and encouraged the Council to consider having a candidate in place by the 3M Championship.

Council consensus was to direct staff to proceed with the recruitment and to work to shorten the timeline in order to have someone hired prior to the 3M Championship.

3.4 Council Meeting Days/Times.

Ms. Sorensen stated with new Councilmembers starting in January staff thought it may be appropriate for Council to review the current meeting day and times in the event any changes are desired. As meeting day and time are outlined by ordinance a code amendment would be required and should Council wish to make any changes staff wanted to ensure sufficient time for the code amendment and to communicate any changes with the public prior to the first business meeting of the year.

Councilmember Garvais stated he did not have a meeting day preference but explained he would lean towards the meeting day being changed to Tuesday or Wednesday. Ms. Sorensen stated it would be difficult to hold Council meetings on Tuesdays given the fact the City's standing commissions meet on Tuesday nights.

Councilmember Swanson indicated another concern with changing meeting nights would be to see if staff and cable staff were available as well as other outside commissions and agencies who base their meeting schedules on the City's.

Mr. Arneson commented staff would also like direction from the Council on meeting time. He reported Blaine was one of the only cities that met at 7:30 p.m. and suggested the Council consider changing the meeting start time to 7:00 p.m. to better serve the public.

Councilmember Garvais stated he would support moving the start time to 7:00 p.m. He explained he would not be able to get to a workshop meeting until 5:30 p.m.

Councilmember Jeppson indicated she could support a 5:30 p.m. workshop start time. She reported she could support a change in the meeting day to Monday or Tuesday.

Councilmember Clark encouraged staff to review their process to see which night of the week worked best to conduct City Council business.

Council consensus was to move workshop meetings to begin at 5:30 p.m. with regular Council meetings beginning at 7:00 p.m. The Council was open to considering a possible day of the week change after further review of impacts.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mr. Arneson stated traditionally City Council has given staff the afternoon off on Christmas Eve day. Council consensus was to close City offices for the full day on Monday, December 24th in recognition of staff's great efforts.

The Workshop was adjourned at 9:02 p.m.

Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

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