

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Monday, July 11, 2022

6:00PM
Council Chambers
10801 Town Square Drive

CALL TO ORDER

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

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Wes Hovland, Julie Jeppson, Tom Newland, Richard Paul, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Chris Massoglia.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Finance Director Joe Huss; Deputy Police Chief Dan Pelkey; City Engineer Dan Schluender; Stormwater Coordinator Megan Hedstrom; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Deputy Finance Director Alison Bong; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Council Directed Items for Discussion.

Finance Director Huss stated one item was brought forward which was the City flag redesign. He asked if the council would like to bring this item forward to a future meeting.

Councilmember Hovland discussed the process that was followed approximately 18 years ago to design a City flag. He noted at that point, this was where the project ended. He reported when the Historical Society was started, this task was taken up again and the City's logo was brought onto the flag. He commented further on process that was followed to create a City flag and noted it tells a story about the City of Blaine. He expressed concern with the changes that were being proposed as because he was concerned the City's history would be lost and encouraged staff to contact the Historical Society to better understand how the flag came to be.

Councilmember Jeppson stated she commended and respected Councilmember Hovland's passion on this topic because there was a lot of meaning behind this flag and for this reason

recommended that he meet with staff and provide them with further history on this topic as opposed to scheduling the topic for a workshop.

Councilmember Robertson supported this recommendation and did not believe this should be a full workshop item.

Councilmember Newland asked if new flags had been ordered and recommended the flag not be updated every five years but minor modifications could be made over time. Mr. Huss noted the previous flag was adopted by Council resolution and that staff could bring this item forward again for formal approval.

City Clerk Sorensen clarified that flags had been ordered then noted staff had attempted to contact the Historical Society on different occasions but was unsuccessful.

Councilmember Hovland expressed frustration with the fact the resolution that was approved in 2008 meant nothing and the flag has been changed without Council input or approval. He believed the Council should have been given the opportunity to vote on this change.

Councilmember Robertson suggested a resolution be brought to the Council at a future meeting to consider and approve the new flag design. Mr. Huss stated this could be done.

Mayor Sanders explained he did not disagree with Councilmember Hovland's comments. He summarized comments of the Council noting there was not strong support to bring this item back to a future workshop meeting but recommended a resolution for the City flag be brought to the Council for consideration at an upcoming meeting.

Mayor Sanders asked if there was a willingness to look at moving funding from the skate park towards additional ice rinks in The Lakes area as currently there were no ice rinks in Blaine that served the Spring Lake Park school district.

Councilmember Newland suggested the Park Advisory Board discuss this matter prior to the City Council.

Councilmember Hovland discussed how graffiti was a concern within the City's parks.

Councilmember Robertson and Councilmember Paul supported the City further discussion this topic at a future meeting.

3.2 Stormwater Adopt-A-Pond Pilot Program.

Stormwater Coordinator Hedstrom stated staff has begun development on an Adopt-A-Pond Pilot Program. This would be a new volunteer program for the City, though other cities across

the metro and Midwest are initiating similar programs. In addition to a new offering for volunteers, this program would also help meet the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer (MS4) Permit requirements for education and outreach. Staff commented further on the program, discussed the potential impacts on Blaine residents and requested feedback from the Council.

Councilmember Hovland asked if the City currently had an adopt a park program in place, and if so, how was this working. Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Krieger reported this type of program was already in place. He stated the City did have volunteers that assisted with cleaning parks on a yearly basis.

Councilmember Hovland recommended the stormwater adopt a pond program be similar to the adopt a park program. He questioned if the volunteers would be qualified or able to complete the inspection forms being proposed by Ms. Hedstrom. Public Works Director Haukaas commented on the differences between the two programs noting the adopt a pond program had to be more formal for regulatory purposes. Ms. Hedstrom discussed the high level questions the volunteers would have to answer through the adopt a pond program. It was noted this program would be funded through the general fund.

Councilmember Newland stated he supported the adopt a pond program going forward as well as drain stenciling concept.

Councilmember Jeppson concurred and explained it was her hope the program would be sustainable and that residents would be interested in volunteering. She commented on an email she received regarding the pond conditions in Club West. She asked if the adopt a pond program would address water quality. Ms. Hedstrom reported this program would address both pond conditions and water quality.

Councilmember Hovland stated he supported the proposed program. He questioned how much staff time would be saved given the fact water quality and elevations would still have to be taken at the ponds.

Council consensus was to direct staff to move forward with the adopt a pond pilot program.

3.3 116th Avenue and Radisson Road Intersection Improvements Project Update, I/P 23-05.

City Engineer Schluender stated the City Council has worked with the neighborhoods east of Radisson Road and 116th Avenue on traffic concerns since 2013. Several Council workshops were held to discuss neighborhood concerns, two neighborhood surveys were sent out, and a special Council meeting was held. The City also worked with Anoka County Highway Department (ACHD) on design alternatives for this intersection. Staff reviewed the areas of

concern with the Council in further detail, discussed potential options for this intersection, and requested feedback on how to proceed.

Mayor Sanders asked why a roundabout was not an option at this intersection. Mr. Schluender reported the Council did not have enough right-of-way to construct a roundabout at this intersection because this was a four-lane roadway that would be coming into a two-lane roundabout.

Councilmember Jeppson stated this has been a huge issue for over the past six years and believed something had to be done at this intersection. She explained she was interested in hearing from the neighbors that lived along 116th Avenue, Yancy and Aspen Lake who were immediately impacted by this being a through-way. She supported something being done, and something that worked in order to address driver behavior. She stated she liked this idea and anticipated more people wanted this intersection addressed than did not want it addressed. She recommended 116th Avenue at Aspen Lake be closed off for a short time to assist with addressing the driving concerns in this area of Blaine.

Further discussion ensued regarding how traffic would flow through this area after improvements are made.

Mayor Sanders stated he would much prefer a roundabout noting the proposed changes would take residents some time to get used to.

Councilmember Robertson commented anyone who lives in this area was concerned with the traffic. She reported she did not want to correct only part of the problem while leaving another portion unattended to. She explained the human element was not included in these plans and should be considered. She discussed how Google maps forces traffic down 116th Avenue when trying to get into The Lakes. She suggested a temporary closure be put in place to address the larger issue in the area. She indicated she would like to hear from Anoka County that a roundabout will not work at this intersection. She anticipated the residents in the area would be willing to give up some of their land in order to have a roundabout at the intersection. Mr. Schluender discussed how future neighborhoods would be able to request a roundabout when they believe they have too many cars driving through their neighborhood if this intersection were to receive a roundabout.

Councilmember Jeppson stated the number of cars was secondary to her but the number of crashes at this intersection was far more concerning to her. She discussed how even more cars would be using Radisson Road when work begins on TH65 which would exacerbate the crash concerns.

Mayor Sanders commented on how traffic would be impacted if 116th Avenue were closed.

Councilmember Hovland was concerned that putting a road closure in place would create a traffic problem elsewhere. He anticipated there would be an increase in traffic going the other direction, along with the fact some people would perceive this distance was longer which would lead to increased speeding in the area. He agreed that a roundabout was the best solution for this intersection as it has worked to slow traffic.

Mayor Sanders stated these would improve the roadway but were not as good as a roundabout would be. Mr. Schluender reported he could have the consultant draw a roundabout on the plans and could forward this onto the Council to show the right-of-way impacts. He anticipated the homes on Radisson Road would be extremely close to the roundabout. Mr. Haukaas noted the proposed roadway improvements could be put in place this fall, which would improve roadway safety. He explained a roundabout would take three or four years to complete.

Councilmember Paul recommended advanced warning lights be installed at this intersection along with streetlights for improved safety.

Councilmember Newland thanked Public Works Director Haukaas for clarifying the timeline for this project. He supported something being done now in order to address driver safety.

Councilmember Robertson asked how much it would cost to put in the three-quarter improvements and questioned if this could be torn out if a roundabout were pursued in the future. She believed the City had an obligation to move cars safely through the community while also protecting pedestrians and residents enjoying their property. She questioned what would happen in five to seven years when traffic counts on this roadway continue to increase. She feared that the proposed three-quarter plan would not mitigate all the traffic concerns at this intersection.

Councilmember Jeppson stated she would support doing something now because something had to be done now. She reported she supported spending the money now with the understanding a greater conversation had to be held about Radisson Road and Tournaments Parkway. She indicated she also supported 116th Avenue being closed in order to see how this impacts traffic flow and vehicle safety.

Mr. Schluender asked if staff should make the three-quarter improvements to Radisson Road, noting staff could then take baseline counts again to see if there are any changes to the traffic patterns.

Councilmember Jeppson stated this would be a reasonable compromise.

Councilmember Hovland agreed the three-quarter intersection improvements should be made. He discussed how it would be difficult for trucks with trailers and motorhomes to make

a u-turn on this roadway. He indicated he did not support the closure of 116th Avenue because this would create bigger problems with speed. He supported the City putting these improvements in place and plans proceed with the roundabout.

Councilmember Jeppson recommended the neighbors be contacted regarding the proposed improvements.

Council consensus was to direct staff to proceed with the three-quarter intersection improvements and for staff to report back with traffic count numbers.

3.4 Blaine Wetland Sanctuary Pavilion, Restroom, and Park Lot Expansion Project Update & Discussion.

Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Krieger reviewed a timeline for the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary (BWS) pavilion/restroom project and reported the current budget for structures and associated improvements (including a parking lot) at the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary, adopted on January 19, 2022, is \$1,000,000. Of that \$1,000,000 for the project, \$110,500 is for consulting and architectural design. WSB and Associates was chosen for this work, and, to date, the City has spent \$39,715 as part of the contract for planning, scope, and design. Staff is seeking direction from the Council on following the NRCB recommendation to pause the construction of the pavilion and restrooms at the BWS. During the pause, staff would turn its attention to trails and boardwalk development within BWS and continue to seek Council guidance regarding the Council's preference on structural elements and improvements within BWS.

Councilmember Jeppson and Councilmember Robertson supported the NRCB's recommendation to put the pavilion project on pause.

Mayor Sander agreed stating he supported the pause then asked if the NRCB would be coming back with a request for a \$3-4 million building. Mr. Krieger did not believe this would be the case, noting the site could not hold a large facility.

Mayor Sanders recommended the NRCB investigate grant opportunities for the pavilion given the fact the project was now on hold.

Councilmember Hovland stated the idea of having a pavilion or learning center like the Springbrook Nature Center was something that would occur at the end of the line after the trails were all installed. He supported the City planning for this structure and supported the building being put on pause. He discussed how everybody's vision for this structure was different, noting he believed a building that could house 20 to 30 children would be adequate.

Mr. Huss noted this topic would be placed on pause and a recommendation be revisited in the spring of 2023.

Councilmember Robertson asked if a learning center could be constructed at Pioneer Park versus the BWS given the fact there was more space and better access.

Council consensus was to support the BWS pavilion being put on hold for the time being.

Other Business

Mr. Krieger discussed the plans for the Aquatore Park bandshell noted he received new plans from the Festival Committee. He reviewed the new plans in detail with the Council noting the plans were scaled down. He commented further on the proposed plans, noting the cost would be \$2.2 million and requested feedback from the Council.

Councilmember Hovland questioned how people would circulate through the bandshell. Mr. Krieger discussed how people would circulate through the bandshell and surrounding area.

Councilmember Jeppson asked if the flex space would be rentable. Mr. Krieger stated this was the case.

Councilmember Robertson did not support this facility being used for weddings or large family gatherings. She believed there were other spaces and parks in the community that could be used for these types of events.

Mr. Huss commented the Council's initial concept was to have a bandshell that provided storage for the festival committee. He reported the bandshell would be an open area that would be available above the storage area. He explained the last request of the architect would be to determine the cost for the underground storage in order to determine if the festival committee would like to contribute to the cost of the underground storage.

Mr. Krieger stated he spoke with John Merinen of the Festival Committee and asked if they would be willing to donate additional funds to the bandshell and said they indicated the Committee would be willing to put in an additional \$300,000 this year and \$300,000 next year, which would provide a total of \$750,000 for the bandshell.

Councilmember Robertson questioned what the timeline would be for this project and asked if the bandshell could be completed by next spring. Mr. Krieger stated he would have to talk to ISG and noted the final plans could be drawn up if the Council supported the final design.

Councilmember Robertson indicated she could support the project moving forward with the most recent design and a price tag of \$2.2 million with \$750,000 in donations from the

Festival Committee. While she was having a hard time with the price tag, she really appreciated all the efforts and contributions from the festival committee. She looked forward to having this amenity in place for next year's festival.

Mayor Sanders agreed noting he did not want to postpone this project further then recommended the front of the stage not have pillars for better sight lines.

Councilmember Hovland questioned the distance between the two outside pillars. Mr. Krieger reviewed the distance between the pillars and noted as they were currently proposed they would obstruct the view for spectators.

Council consensus was to support the final plans for the bandshell moving this project forward for completion, with staff speaking to the festival committee regarding the pillars at the front of the bandshell.

Mayor Sanders requested an update from staff regarding the sod replacement program.

Mr. Huss explained on July 18 staff would be bringing a purchasing policy amendment to the Council due to the fact the sod would be costing over \$175,000. He noted this project would require the City to go through the full bid process.

Mr. Haukaas discussed how staff was working to put together an RFP for contractors to bid this project. He stated staff was concerned with the fact contractors may not have the capacity to finish this project in 2022. He indicated staff was working through the numbers in order to better understand the scope of the project in order to have it completed yet this fall.

Mayor Sanders commented the City could complete the project in phases, if the cost goes over \$175,000 for this fall and a second phase could be completed in the spring of 2023.

Councilmember Robertson suggested staff speak with the NSC and see if the sod on the fields that are being replaced with turf could be used for this program. Mr. Haukaas stated he would see if this is an option.

Community Development Director Thorvig discussed the senior housing development that was included within the Hy-Vee development. He discussed how the infrastructure was to be built within this development and noted staff was recommended nothing be done until further sites develop. The Council supported this recommendation.

Councilmember Jeppson asked if Hy-Vee would be selling their parcel of land. She noted she would like to see Hy-Vee responsible for the expense of the roadway. Mr. Thorvig discussed the language within the development agreement noting whoever develops this parcel would be responsible for the expense of the roadway. He anticipated this expense would be taken

out of the sale price of the land. He reported the developer's agreement would be revised to ensure this roadway was the responsibility of the next developer.

Deputy Police Chief Pelkey provided the Council with an update on the activity at the beach.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:55PM.

Tim Sanders, Mayor

ATTEST:

Catherine Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk
Submitted by Minute Maker Secretarial