

UNAPPROVED

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Thursday, March 15, 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, Wes Hovland, Julie Jeppson, Jason King, and Dick Swanson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Andy Garvais.

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; City Attorney Andy Pratt; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Senior Engineering Technician Al Thorp; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Advanced Metering Infrastructure Update and Proposed Amendments to Chapter 86 - Utilities.

Public Works Director Haukaas provided the Council with a brief overview of the Advanced Metering Infrastructure (AMI) currently in use by the City and noted the faults with the system. He reviewed the number of meters in the system and commented on their age. He discussed how a new Flex Net fully automated AMI system would benefit the City. He provided further comment on how staff would systematically replace the meters throughout the City over time. He described potential changes that were needed to City Code regarding Utilities. He reported the definition of a meter needed to be changed, along with the notification process.

Councilmember Jeppson asked if it was necessary to revise the notification process when utility bills could be certified to homeowner's property taxes through the County. Mr. Haukaas reported this was an external process that was pursued after the City completes its own internal process. He explained the City would also like to draft a public safety process.

Councilmember Hovland believed that the public safety language would be opening a huge can of worms because these issues should have been addressed when the home was built and inspected. Mr. Haukaas stated he was proposing to have a hearing process to address public safety concerns in order to create a timeline to address and correct the concerns.

Councilmember Clark questioned how the City would learn that a homeowner was using the wrong pipe. Mr. Haukaas stated this would be difficult and may only happen in an emergency situation or fire.

Councilmember Hovland inquired how many Blaine residents were not paying their water bill. Finance Director Huss stated 2% to 3% of Blaine residents were having their water bills certified to their property taxes by the County on an annual basis.

Councilmember Clark feared this type of system was becoming too “Big Brother” and could be construed to be an invasion of privacy.

Councilmember Hovland stated he had some of the same fears but understood the new tools available were supposed to help homeowners. Mr. Haukaas commented on how the system could be used to monitor the City’s water usage and would not have to complete hourly readings.

Councilmember Clark supported the Council drafting a consumer privacy protection policy.

Councilmember Hovland questioned if the new system would allow the City to determine if there were minor leaks in its system. Mr. Haukaas stated this was the case. Further discussion ensued regarding how the City could monitor water leaks.

Councilmember Clark commented he did not want to see the City monitoring water leaks inside homes. He questioned if the staff had budgeted for the water meter replacements in 2018. Mr. Haukaas stated staff had budgeted for this expense.

Councilmember Hovland inquired where the water meters were manufactured. Mr. Haukaas commented the water meters were manufactured in Mexico.

Council consensus was to direct staff to draft a consumer privacy protection policy.

3.2 Senior Center Census Discussion.

Mr. Huss stated the direction of the Council at their last workshop meeting was to conduct a survey or census of the community to gather their opinion on a shared Senior facility space. He noted the Council discussed the process that would be used for the census along with what questions would be asked. However, the Council then discussed creating a shared Senior space and it appeared there was more support for the project moving forward.

Councilmember King stated he could support the use of CIF funds so long as the Senior space was shared, with the understanding the space would be programmed for seniors first and other groups next.

Councilmember Swanson questioned who would be responsible for programming the additional space.

Councilmember King anticipated this could be managed by the Parks Department.

City Manager Arneson reported he spoke with Councilmember Garvais and understood he supported the shared Senior space going forward so long as the kitchen space would also be used.

Mayor Ryan stated he objected to allowing the general public full use of the kitchen area given the large investment that would be made for the space.

Councilmember King recommended staff draft a policy that would address the use of the kitchen space to ensure the City's investment would be protected.

Councilmember Swanson commented another staff person may be needed to keep the senior space maintained through the weekend and evening hours.

Councilmember Hovland stated he supported the use of the shared Senior space with the community but not the kitchen space. He feared the City could be faced with food safety and injury issues.

Councilmember Swanson did not want to see the Senior space competing with neighboring banquet facilities.

Councilmember Clark indicated the Council had the funds and the ability to move this forward. However, he cautioned the Council on how the public may react to a new Community/Senior Center when this was recently voted down by the public.

Mayor Ryan stated he would like to bring the Council's direction back to the Senior Board in order to make them aware of the direction Council was proceeding.

Councilmember Clark suggested a small kitchenette be considered for the Senior space that could be available to the community and noted this may eliminate the concerns the seniors had with protecting the commercial kitchen. Mr. Huss commented on the timeline the Council had to following the order to use the CIF funds.

Mayor Ryan recommended external bathrooms be considered for the Senior space that could be used by park visitors.

Council consensus was to forgo the census/community opinion process and proceed directly to approving use of Capital Improvement Funds on hand for the construction of a shared Senior facility. It was noted approval will require Council consensus regarding facility use for other users than programmed senior events. The Council directed staff to draft a policy that would guide the use of the new facility, including allowing use of the commercial kitchen. The Council was not interested in competing with private banquet facilities and suggested providing a small kitchen space for use by outside groups along with additional restrooms for park users.

3.3 Consideration of Sale of EDA Owned Land at 8600 Central Avenue for Abra Auto Body and Glass.

Councilmember King stated there were property owners elsewhere in Blaine that had a purchase agreement with Abra for the property at 8600 Central Avenue. He indicated the purchase agreement somehow went away and the EDA ended up owning the property. He explained he received a letter suggesting there were improprieties going on. Planning and Community Development Director Schafer explained the realtor that sent the email had a piece of property she wanted to sell and the use fit the zoning. He reported an agreement was not in place for the property at 8600 Central Avenue and noted the realtor was not interested in having an auto body use on her property.

Paul Tucci, Oppidan Development, stated he never had a purchase agreement with the realtor, but did have a letter of intent. He explained he could not fit on the other property given the need to relocate a stormwater pond.

Councilmember King thanked Mr. Tucci for providing the Council with clarification.

Council consensus was to bring this item forward for consideration to sell and confirmed the previous letter of intent did not conflict with private market.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:25 p.m.

Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

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