

UNAPPROVED

**CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Wednesday, September 4, 2019**

6:00 p.m.
Cloverleaf Farm Room
10801 Town Square Drive

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ryan at 6:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Tom Ryan, Councilmembers Andy Garvais, Wes Hovland, Julie Jeppson, Richard Paul, and Jess Robertson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Dick Swanson.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: Acting City Manager Joe Huss; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Lori Johnson; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Community Standards Director Robert Fiske; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; City Engineer Dan Schluender; Senior Engineering Technician Al Thorp; Budget/Fiscal Analyst Ward Brown; Communications Technician Roark Haver; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Reasonable Accommodation Ordinance (Sober Living Homes).

Community Standards Director Fiske stated the Council has been reviewing a proposed reasonable accommodation ordinance that would create the process for a private provider to operate a single-family home as a multi-person sober living home consistent with the Fair Housing Amendment Act. The Act directs that individuals recovering from addiction are federally protected as a disability group and therefore should receive reasonable accommodations from cities for their lodging and addiction support. Blaine, like several other cities, defines "family" in City Code as not more than four (4) unrelated individuals; sober living home providers are requesting the ability to have more than four unrelated individuals in a home. As the Act requires cities to provide a process for these requests staff has drafted a proposed code amendment to the Rental Licensing program that would establish an application process with neighborhood notice and action by the City Council. Each license request would be evaluated based on outlined criteria and include written notice of a public hearing to all property owners within 350 feet of the property.

Mr. Fiske reported a question was raised at the last workshop regarding the ability to conduct background investigations on sober living home license applicants. While the Act does not allow for different requirements for sober living home license applicants than rental dwelling license applicants, the earlier addition that requires any provider to be a member of the Minnesota Association of Sober Homes may address this question as the organization promotes successful management of such residences through code of ethics criteria and standards of living verified through independent inspections. Staff is also recommending amendments to Section 18-509 relating to hearings for rental licensing actions to include

hearings conducted by an independent hearing officer on behalf of the Council, similar to other license proceedings and consistent with sober living home recommendations.

Acting City Manager Huss reported this item would be coming before the Council this evening for first reading.

Councilmember Robertson inquired if there were any updates on how other cities were addressing sober living homes. City Clerk Sorensen reported staff was not aware of any new updates from other cities on the status of their ordinances.

Councilmember Hovland asked what criteria could be used as a recommendation for denial. Mr. Huss reported the City would not be recommending denial of a request, but rather would be setting limits to the occupancy. Ms. Sorensen commented further on the criteria staff would be reviewing within each request. Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Podany explained the City was showing good faith by creating a reasonable accommodation ordinance, adding the City of Anoka had adopted a reasonable accommodation ordinance recently then denied a request for an accommodation, which is why they were being challenged in court.

Councilmember Hovland questioned if the City would be setting a limit on the number of sober houses that would be allowed in Blaine. Ms. Sorensen reported a specific number had not been set but a distance between sober homes had been included in the ordinance.

Mayor Ryan stated he would like to better understand how the sober houses would be managed as it was his hope the home would be monitored. Ms. Sorensen reported requiring sober living home applicants to be a member of the Minnesota Association of Sober Homes would allow for more oversight of these facilities as they had established criteria regarding standards of living regarding safety, health, inspections, and house management

3.2 Preliminary 2020 EDA Operating Budget.

Mr. Huss presented the Preliminary 2020 EDA operating budget for Council review. The preliminary budget reflects direction provided by the City Council in budget discussions up to this point. As with the general fund, the goal is to provide a balanced budget with a safe margin of revenues over expenditures for approval. The preliminary 2020 EDA budget and EDA tax levy will be approved at the September 16 Council meeting.

Councilmember Hovland requested further information regarding the sprinkler system fund. Mr. Huss explained this fund was in place to assist businesses with funding costly sprinkler system upgrades.

The Council thanked staff for the update on the preliminary 2020 EDA operating budget.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Ryan asked for an update on the Kingdom Baking building at 10130 Sunset Avenue as he believed this building was ready for condemnation. Ms. Johnson explained over the past three to four years, staff has been working with the property owner to achieve his goal of opening a bakery on this site. She noted an extension was granted for the variances and the variances have now expired. She indicated staff has struggled to receive plans from the property owner that meet City building and fire codes and reported an amendment was requested and approved for a lesser variance earlier this year but right now staff was waiting on revised plans from the architect.

Councilmember Robertson stated this property was in very poor condition and recommended that fire and police visit the property to ensure code compliance. Mr. Thorvig thanked the Council for this feedback and noted staff would be taking action on the property.

City Engineer Schluender discussed a mailing that would be sent to homeowners who lived along the southern portion of the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary informing them of the upcoming survey work and tree inventory that would occur. He stated an open house would be held for this project on Thursday, October 24 to further explain the project and property impacts.

Public Works Director Haukaas provided the Council with an update on the storm damage that occurred throughout the City on September 2 as well as an update on the Jefferson Street reconstruction project and other reconstruction projects occurring in the City.

Mayor Ryan provided the Council with a recap from the recent Fire Board meeting.

Mr. Thorvig provided the Council with an update on the grocery stores being constructed or considered for construction in the community.

Mr. Huss provided the Council with an update on the bonding tour that occurred in Blaine for the proposed regional training facility.

Mr. Thorvig commented on the demolition of the former Jimbo's restaurant at 8550 Van Buren Street NE.

Mr. Thorvig discussed the potential relocation of the transit hub at the Northtown Mall and the surrounding neighborhood issues.

Mayor Ryan commented on a solar panel proposal the Council may be considering at the National Sports Center.

Councilmember Garvais recommended the City address the landscaping along Radisson Road prior to the next 3M Open golf event. Mr. Haukaas explained staff would be addressing the maintenance of this corridor.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:17 p.m.

Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

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