

UNAPPROVED

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Thursday, December 20, 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, Andy Garvais, Wes Hovland, Jason King, and Dick Swanson.

ABSENT: Councilmember Julie Jeppson.

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; Fire Chief Charlie Smith; Budget/Fiscal Analyst Ward Brown; Communications Technician Roark Haver; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Proposed Median Landscaping Improvements.

Public Works Director Haukaas stated the City Council has expressed interest in improving the appearance of the medians along 109th Ave and Radisson Road. Staff has engaged the services of a Landscape Architect with WSB & Associates to provide some preliminary layouts and cost estimates for this type of work. This is the same team that designed the 105th Ave improvements. The goal is to create a 'template' landscaping layout that can be repeated or scaled to be installed at various locations. The plants will be selected on their hardiness as appropriate for the locations and also easy to maintain. Staff requested the Council provide feedback on how to proceed.

Mayor Ryan recommended the City consider planting less and having it look better, versus trying to plant too much and having the medians be an eyesore.

Councilmember Clark indicated the City did not have a good track record with median maintenance. He expressed concern with spending additional dollars on landscaping for medians if they would not be properly maintained. Mr. Haukaas stated a big part of this was plant selection while also learning from history as to what works and what does not. Finance Director Huss explained the Council had not appropriated any funds for this project. He reported the proposed landscaping improvements would require a funding source.

Councilmember Hovland recommended 89th Avenue also be included in the landscaping improvement project, or have this area covered with concrete.

Councilmember King commented it would cost the City a great deal more to concrete the median areas versus providing landscaping.

Councilmember Clark encouraged the Council to consider pursuing these improvements for the upcoming golf tournament and the large number of visitors the City would have for this event. He discussed how the enhanced medians would make a positive statement for the City. City Manager Arneson reported this was the reason staff brought this item to the Council for consideration.

Councilmember Garvais stated he supported the proposed median landscaping improvements. He understood concreting these areas would be more expensive up front and encouraged staff to create an overall City-wide plan for medians.

Councilmember Swanson indicated he could support the improvements for the golf tournament and noted these medians have been an embarrassment in the City.

Councilmember Clark stated he liked the fact that the medians had been narrowed in order to reduce maintenance expenses.

Mayor Ryan recommended 89th Avenue also be included in the median landscaping plan.

Council consensus was to support the proposed landscaping, with maintenance occurring on a consistent basis noting 89th Avenue medians were to be next. The Council requested staff bring forward a budget amendment and bids for this project.

3.2 Updated Vacation and Sick Leave Policy Review.

Mr. Huss stated at the November 8 Workshop, Council reviewed a draft of a revised Vacation and Sick Leave Policy. Per Council recommendation at the November Workshop, the revised draft now includes a capped lump sum of 80 vacation hours that can be awarded at start of employment for a new employee. The policy does not compel the City Manager to award any lump sum of hours of vacation when a new employee begins employment, but clarifies the maximum that could be awarded. Additionally, the Council felt that a higher beginning rate of vacation accrual would be competitively advantageous to the City in recruitment of employees in coming years. This draft increases that rate such that an employee will accrue 96 hours of vacation per year in year one through four rather than 80 hours per the previous draft. In conjunction with the higher accrual rate and also per Council suggestion, employees may now begin taking vacation as it is accrued rather than being required to wait three months before vacation is available for use. Other changes that remain from the previous draft reviewed with the Council on November 8 include:

- Increasing the maximum allowed hours of vacation to be accrued from 200 hours to 320 hours.
- For employees who reach the allowed maximum accrual of 960 hours of sick leave, a dollar amount equal to 50% of sick leave hours that would normally be accrued to the employee multiplied by the employee's regular rate of pay shall be deposited into the employee's Post-Employment Health Care Savings Plan. This provision is already in place for members of the three police unions.

Councilmember Hovland commented on the amount of vacation time that could be accrued per year and questioned if this level was too high.

Councilmember King encouraged department heads to encourage their staff to take vacation time.

Further discussion ensued regarding paid time off or comp time.

Councilmember Clark requested staff use consistent guidelines when awarding vacation time to new employees.

Mayor Ryan stated he did not believe the Council was ready to move this item forward and recommended staff bring this back to a future workshop meeting for further discussion.

Councilmember Hovland indicated he would like the policy written in such a manner that it encourages employees to use their vacation time as they go along.

Councilmember Clark requested the HR Department document any variances that may occur for new employees.

Council consensus was to schedule a workshop meeting to review guidelines for the City Manager to use when implementing policy and encourage staff to use their vacation when available.

3.3 Appointment of Liaisons to Various Boards and Commissions.

Mr. Arneson reviewed a list of Council liaison designations from 2018. Council will be making liaison appointments for 2019 at the first meeting in January and staff wanted to offer Council the opportunity for review prior to the annual business meeting. In addition, Council will soon be interviewing City Board and Commission applicants. Last year Council wanted to potentially review the process for interviews and appointments so staff is seeking direction prior to selecting a date(s) for interviews. Staff requested the Council discuss the appointments and direct staff on how to proceed.

Mayor Ryan stated he was not interested in holding extensive interviews if no one new would be brought on. He commented on the length of terms that some Commissioners have had. He questioned if the Council should consider a three-term limit for Commissioners. He supported the Council reviewing the Board/Commission policy in further detail.

Councilmember Clark suggested interviews only be held for the top candidates versus all candidates.

Council discussion was on the interview process for Boards/Commissions to include screening applications first and then holding interviews versus interviewing all candidates. The Council also discussed implementing term limits for Commissioners.

3.4 City Manager Recruitment.

This item was postponed to January 2019.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

ATTEST:

Tom Ryan, Mayor

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