

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Monday, October 12, 2020

6:00 p.m.
Council Chambers
10801 Town Square Drive

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ryan at 6:00 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this hybrid meeting was held both virtually and in person.

ROLL CALL

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

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Planner Lori Johnson; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Family Promise Shelter, Christ Lutheran Church.

City Planner Johnson stated Family Promise in Anoka County (FPAC) is an organization that offers shelter and services to families experiencing homelessness in Anoka County. Family Promise partners with faith communities in the county to provide meals, hospitality and overnight shelter. Christ Lutheran Church has been, and currently is, a partner with FPAC and the Pastor and members of the Christ Lutheran Church council on 89th Avenue have approached city staff with a proposal to construct a new building for a family homeless shelter on the church property. The new building would be 8,000 to 12,000 square feet in size and there are two alternative locations being proposed by the Church. Within the City of Blaine there are currently no freestanding shelters of this kind other than the Alexandra House. Before the Alexandra House was constructed, the property was vacant and the property had a single family land use and zoning. The approvals for the Alexandra House included a rezoning to DF (Development Flex) to accommodate the unique use on the site. A conditional use permit was also approved to set up the standards for the development of the shelter. Staff provided further comment on how the shelter would function and requested feedback from the Council on how to proceed.

David Fry, Family Promise in Anoka County, discussed the services provided by Family Promise and its volunteers. He reported all services were provided at no cost to the families. He explained having a static site for the shelter would provide greater stability for the families in need. He reported having a site in Blaine would provide greater access to mass transportation and jobs. He thanked the Council for considering his request and noted he was available for comments or questions.

Richard Johnson, member of Christ Lutheran Church, introduced himself to the Council and explained he was co-chair for this project. He reported 70% of his congregation voted in support of this project. He explained his church has been involved with Family Promise since its inception 10 years ago. He stated he sees this shelter as a mission for his church.

Richard Haluptzok, member of Christ Lutheran Church, introduced himself to the Council and noted he was the other co-chair for this project. He described his role in the project, which was to assist with programming the site. He explained he would be looking at specific areas of the Christ Lutheran Church property and where the new building should be located. He indicated the Family Promise shelter was a very noble cause that he supported.

Councilmember Hovland asked how many families or people would be housed in the shelter. Mr. Haluptzok explained the building would house eight or nine families. He stated a family unit was a variable number of people, typically four. He reported the building would have sleeping rooms, similar to a hotel room that would include a bathroom for the family. He indicated meals would be provided to the families in the program. He estimated the building would have a 5,000 square feet foot print and would be two stories high. He commented part of his role would be to design a building that meets the security needs of Family Promise program, while also addressing the church's needs.

Councilmember Hovland questioned if the shelter would accommodate an individual or was this program strictly geared towards families. Mr. Fry reported Family Promise worked with families who had minor children.

Councilmember Hovland commented there was a huge increase in the number of people panhandling in the City and indicated some claimed to be homeless and in need of assistance. He inquired what other services were available to assist these individuals. Mr. Fry explained Family Promise would refer these individuals to another program within the County, such as Stepping Stone or the Carlson Center. He explained he has not had problems with his families panhandling in the past.

Mayor Ryan discussed the homeless services offered by St. Timothy's Church and noted there was a need for families in crisis situations. He questioned how long families could remain at Family Promise. Mr. Fry stated families could remain at the shelter for up to 90 days.

Mayor Ryan explained there was a growing need for emergency food and shelter providers in the community due to the pandemic.

Councilmember Swanson reported the Christ Lutheran Church property had adequate space for a shelter. He commented his only concern with this project was how the neighborhood would respond to the request.

Councilmember Jeppson stated she fully supported this project. She explained she has worked with David Fry for years addressing homelessness in Anoka County. She discussed how homelessness was on the rise in Anoka County, especially for families, and commended Family Promise for pursuing strong partnerships in the community. She indicated the proposed location was ideal.

Councilmember Paul thanked Family Promise and Christ Lutheran Church for bringing this project forward. He was pleased to see the church working together with Family Promise to meet a need in the community. He explained he used to attend Zion Lutheran Church in Anoka noting this church reached out to immigrants in the community. He discussed the referral process and vouchers that were available to immigrants. He

stated he was pleased to see this church and shelter helping people and he fully supported this project moving forward.

Councilmember Garvais indicated he supported this project and noted this subpopulation was a difficult population to serve. He recommended the code amendment have strong language in place that will allow the City to remain in control. He commented he would also like to be assured the shelter would remain family focused.

Mayor Ryan stated this was a good point and noted he was thankful the churches in the community were willing and able to offer support to families in crisis.

Councilmember Robertson commended Family Promise and Christ Lutheran Church for coming together and working on this project. She indicated she would like to see the community engaged regarding this project in order to inform them of the shelter's mission.

Councilmember Hovland questioned when this project would begin. Mr. Fry explained he was seeking community support at this time. He reported if the project had support, he would move onto fund raising and building design. He estimated the building would not be completed for another two or three years.

Councilmember Hovland thanked Family Promise and Christ Lutheran Church for being leaders in the community.

Council consensus was to support the Family Promise shelter.

3.2 2021 Government Relations Contract with Lockridge Grindal Nauen.

City Manager Wolfe stated the City has retained the law firm of Lockridge Grindal Nauen P.L.L.P. (LGN) and its government relations team since 2016. The firm assisted with the legislative bonding request for 105th Avenue in 2016 and 2017. For the years 2018 and 2019 the firm assisted with the planning efforts and strategy for a state bonding request for a public safety training facility and assisted in advocacy of the TH65 infrastructure improvements. The total project fee for 2020 was \$36,000. She reported input is desired if the City shall proceed with a contract for 2021 and what the areas of focus should be.

Councilmember Swanson stated he supported the City continuing its contract with Lockridge Grindal Nauen (LGN). He believed this would be beneficial for both Highway 65 and the National Sports Center.

Councilmember Garvais commented he was a little conflicted because nothing was accomplished this year. He stated he was skeptical as to what the 2021 legislative session would look like, especially with a large State deficit. He wondered if the City should open this contract up for bid as he did not believe the City received its value in 2020.

Councilmember Robertson agreed with Councilmember Garvais. She understood that 2020 was a difficult year and that it would be difficult to benchmark success during a global pandemic but shared comments about how the State had not been successful in accomplishing work due to differences in opinions and supported the City reaching out to other lobbyist groups for proposals.

Councilmember Jeppson agreed it was not a typical year where things got done and supported moving forward with the same lobbyist in 2021. She encouraged LGN to include City Council in their processes and

conversations in order to allow the Council to advocate on behalf of the City of Blaine and indicated her disappointment that this did not occur in 2020.

Councilmember Garvais stated he understood 2020 was an unusual year. He explained he would have appreciated LGN coming back to the City with a credit and to have them express their desire to continue working with the City.

Councilmember Robertson commented how LGN lobbies for a long list of cities and wanted to ensure the lobbyists were working on behalf of the City and solely committed to Blaine's issues.

Councilmember Swanson explained in order to accomplish anything at the legislature the City had to have someone lobbying at all times. He reported he spent 20 years lobbying at MnDOT for I-35W and spoke further to the value of having someone lobbying at all times.

Mayor Ryan agreed this would greatly benefit the City.

Councilmember Paul stated he saw the value of Blaine having lobbyists working on behalf of the community. He encouraged the Council to address its strategies and a strong agenda for Highway 65. He suggested the City invite its lobbyists to discuss these strategies in order to ensure the lobbyists are properly representing the City's interests. He commented on the work being done by the League of Minnesota Cities lobbyists.

Mayor Ryan indicated he could support having LGN come before the Council for further discussion.

Councilmember Garvais stated he has not seen the value of LGN and would like LGN to acknowledge this prior to the City approving another contract. He indicated he would like to see the City receiving a partial credit as well.

Councilmember Robertson explained it would help to have a discussion with LGN in order to discuss Highway 65 and recommended a hybrid approach to lobbying be considered for 2021 having the City Council more closely engaged.

Councilmember Jeppson questioned when the contract with LGN had to be signed. Ms. Wolfe reported the contract would have to be signed at the end of the year and would schedule a workshop discussion with LGN.

3.3 Community Connections Update.

Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Podany stated historically the Blaine Police Department has had a Crime Prevention/Community Outreach Unit that goes back decades. In the past, the Crime Prevention model focused on traditional approaches to connect with others in our community to make Blaine a safer place. The Blaine Police Department recently did a reduction in force of our Crime Prevention/Community Outreach Unit with the goal of re-inventing what police community relations looks like in the City in light of our changing society. The new effort is designed to assess the best ways our police department can connect with the community based on resident, business, and other stakeholder feedback. Staff provided a progress update of the steps being taken as part of the reinvention process then commented on community members that have been identified as well as how input will be sought from those community members.

Councilmember Hovland recommended Unity Hospital be included as a community member as he believed it would be valuable to have a member from the hospital to address mental health and chemical dependency issues. Police Chief Podany stated he would reach out to mental health professionals within the community. He reported he was working with the Coon Rapids Police Department to have an imbedded social worker within the department.

Mayor Ryan discussed how difficult policing has become and thanked Police Chief Podany for his tremendous efforts on behalf of the City and for including the faith-based community.

Councilmember Robertson stated she believed the Blaine Police Department was top notch and suggested larger local businesses be included as a community resource.

Councilmember Garvais thanked Police Chief Podany for his efforts and recommended the Police Department create a video on what this redesign will mean to the community while also addressing the importance of community policing. Police Chief Podany supported this recommendation and stated this type of video would help the community understand the proposed changes.

3.4 Bee Ordinance.

Ms. Johnson stated at the July 6, 2020 City Council meeting, residents spoke during the open forum requesting that the city allow for the keeping of honey bees in residential areas within the City. The Council requested staff prepare a report for an upcoming workshop. Staff presented research and options for allowing bees to be kept within the City of Blaine to the Council on August 9. Council directed staff to provide an ordinance for review regarding this issue. The City Council requested that the ordinance have strict requirements for the keeping of bees which could include an acreage minimum, notification requirements, an annual renewal process, the requirement for training at the University of Minnesota and a water source for the bees. Proposed performance standards within the bee ordinance were reviewed with the Council and staff requested feedback on how to proceed.

Councilmember Swanson commented the 200 feet from the property line was not far enough. He reported bees will forage anywhere from one-half to three miles from its hive location. He explained the closer you are to the hive the denser the population of bees. He recommended the 200 feet setback be changed to 1000 feet. He indicated his only other concern was that fees were not being charged to those residents keeping bees on Farm Residential properties. He suggested a fee be charged to all residents keeping bees.

Mayor Ryan discussed the hives currently within the City and stated he did have concerns with the proposed setbacks. Ms. Johnson reported bees would not be allowed on single-family residential lots but could be allowed on older Farm Residential lots that were more than one-half acre in size.

Councilmember Robertson explained the proposed restrictions within the ordinance would make it difficult for novice beekeepers from bringing bees into residential neighborhoods. She stated she supported the recommendations from Councilmember Swanson given the fact he was a former beekeeper.

Councilmember Hovland agreed it would be key to restrict where bees can be kept in the City. He supported beekeepers having a one-half acre sized lot. He questioned how staff came up with the \$75 fee. Ms. Johnson explained this fee would cover the staff time and notices that would have to be sent. She noted the proposed fee was similar to the fee being charged by other communities.

Councilmember Robertson commented on the numerous ways Blaine residents could encourage bee and pollinator health and questioned what Councilmember Swanson's biggest concerns were with the proposed ordinance.

Councilmember Swanson stated his biggest concern was for the people with allergies or unknown allergies to bees. He understood bees were good for the environment but did not believe bee colonies should be located within residential neighborhoods.

Councilmember Garvais suggested the setback be set at 1000 feet as recommended by Councilmember Swanson. He commented he did not like the automatic consent. He indicated he would like to see beekeepers gaining consent from their neighbors in a similar manner as native lawns.

Community Development Director Thorvig reported this ordinance was brought up after a non-Blaine resident approached the City Council and explained an ordinance was in place that worked. He commented a new ordinance could be considered but this would open up a whole new set of issues. He indicated staff would recommend leaving the ordinance as is until there were requests from Blaine residents for an ordinance change.

Councilmember Jeppson stated this was a good point. She reported she did not want to see the City setting policy that was not being requested by Blaine residents. She commented further on the high level of commitment that was involved with keeping bees. She explained at this time she would not be supporting a change to the ordinance at this time.

Councilmember Paul requested further information on where beehives could be located. Ms. Johnson reported the ordinance has stipulations for where hives can be located, with strict setbacks. She noted lots would have to be over one-half acre in size.

Councilmember Hovland reported he spoke with a gentleman from the University of Minnesota and understood the population of honeybees was on the decline. He discussed how important cross pollination was for farmers.

Mayor Ryan stated he understood that bees were important but he supported the ordinance remain as is.

Council consensus was to direct staff to keep the current ordinance in place at this time.

3.5 Recommended 2021 Facilities Management Fund Budget.

Finance Director Huss stated in 2019, as part of the City's efforts to stabilize its General levy and provide a mechanism for ensuring long-term funding of facilities improvements, the City Council authorized the creation of an internal service fund to account for Facilities. Internal service funds are used to account for the financing of goods and services provided by one department or activity to other departments or activities of the government on a cost reimbursement basis. The facilities managed under this fund include City Hall and attached garages, Public Works and the Public Works cold storage facility, the Police training facility and the Mary Ann Young Center. As activity in this fund was previously accounted for in the General Fund, in 2019 Council authorized a transfer from the General Fund to the Facilities Fund to provide the new fund with a start-up balance of \$250,000. This funding provided a contingency reserve for emergency or unforeseen repairs that might be needed before the fund has had sufficient time to build reserves. For 2020, Council approved an expenditures budget totaling \$1,071,370, including \$155,750 of capital improvements. A first draft of the Proposed 2021 Facilities Fund Budget was reviewed and discussed at the September 21

Council Workshop. Budget revisions have been made and the 2021 proposal is now brought forward for further Council review before final adoption (anticipated for mid-November). Staff reviewed the Facilities Management Fund Budget in further detail with the Council and requested feedback.

Mayor Ryan requested the clock tower be addressed and suggested the City logo be placed over the clock if it could not be repaired. He recommended a camera be added to Memorial Park to improve security at the park. He discussed the importance of the City having a well thought out Facilities Management Fund Budget.

Councilmember Jeppson recommended the clock tower be removed and the City logo be put in its place. She suggested all of the painting and touch up work at City Hall be completed once construction was completed. Mr. Huss stated this was a valuable recommendation.

Councilmember Garvais stated he agreed with the clock tower recommendation. He explained he was excited about the facilities RFP and audit. He commented he wanted to know more about the City's facilities, how they would function going forward and to budget accordingly.

Councilmember Hovland indicated he could support the change to the clock tower. He requested staff investigate the cost of removing the clock and replacing it with the City logo and that staff report back to the Council with this information. Mr. Huss explained he would report back to the Council with this information.

3.6 2021 Proposed Special Revenue Funds Budget Discussion.

Mr. Huss stated the City's communications fund accounts for revenue received from cable franchise fees paid by cable television customers. The current cable service provider is Comcast. Cable fees are passed through to the North Metro Telecommunications Commission, which is the regulatory body that oversees the cable franchise in our area. The commission is made up of elected officials from each of its seven member cities. The commission adopts an annual budget. Staff anticipates that net franchise fee revenue distributed to Blaine in 2020 will total \$223,000, which represents a \$1,600 increase from 2019's projected final proceeds. The proposed 2021 operating budget is \$265,620. The production and mailing of six issues of the CityConnect, and two issues of the BizConnect newsletters are budgeted at \$83,500. Expenses for the operation/maintenance of the Legistar system are budgeted for \$29,700. Services including media monitoring and analytics, a survey platform, Zoom remote meeting, and other services account for \$34,800 in budgeted expenses. The administrative service charge has been increased by \$22,100 to \$115,500, and allocated facility charges total \$620.

Mr. Huss explained the City's charitable gambling fund was established in 1993 to account for the proceeds of a 10 percent contribution that charitable gambling organizations operating within Blaine are required to submit to the city (Code Section 22-384). The organizations participating in charitable gambling in 2019 are the Blaine Festival Committee, Blaine Youth Hockey, Centennial HS Football Boosters, VFW - Sgt. John Rice, and Spring Lake Lions Club. These organizations are required to submit 10 percent of their net profits to the city within 15 days of the end of a calendar quarter. Charitable gambling proceeds have significantly declined in 2020, due to the onset of the COVID-19 pandemic and the resulting shutdown of the venues hosting gambling activity. The full impact is not yet known, and it is reasonable to expect that proceeds will rebound as hosting venues are allowed to reopen. Finance is tentatively projecting a decline in proceeds from the budgeted \$150,000 to just under \$97,000. More will be known toward the end of October, when all third quarter proceeds will have been received. Staff commented on the funding that would be allocated to local non-profits through CARES Act funding.

Mayor Ryan requested \$2,500 be put in this budget for 2021 for Beyond the Yellow Ribbon. Mr. Huss explained the fund would have enough in reserve to cover this expense.

Councilmember Garvais commented on the conversations the Council has had regarding the CARES Act funding. He recommended a one-time doubling of assistance be paid out to local non-profits from CARES Act funding given how tough 2020 has been. He wanted to ensure all of the local shelters and food shelves received assistance. Mr. Huss reported CARES Act dollars can only be spent on organizations that have a physical presence in Blaine. He noted Alexandra House was the only shelter in the City. He indicated the City would provide grants to the local food shelves if they apply for grants. Mr. Thorvig reported the food shelf on 109th Avenue has applied for a grant, along with the Alexandra House. He noted one other food shelf would be applying for a grant through Round 3 of the small business assistance program.

Mr. Huss explained he would adjust the Charitable Gambling Budget as directed by the Council.

Councilmember Swanson requested further information regarding the City's franchise fees and communication efforts. Mr. Huss discussed the City's franchise fees and how they were used to fund capital equipment. The expansions to the City's communication efforts were further detailed.

3.7 CARES Funding/COVID Impacts/Other.

Mr. Thorvig provided the Council with an update on the small business grant program. He reported he has had six or seven inquiries for Round 3. He stated he would be reviewing these grant applications with Baker Tilly after Round 3 closed next week.

Councilmember Jeppson requested further information on the award Police Chief Podany would be receiving on Tuesday morning from Anoka County. Police Chief Podany reported the department would be receiving an award for their efforts towards homeless outreach.

Councilmember Jeppson thanked Police Chief Podany and the Blaine Police Department for their efforts in this area.

Mayor Ryan stated on Friday, October 16 the Purple Heart monument would be put in place which would be unveiled on October 17.

Councilmember Paul asked how residents in need of rental assistance could receive help.

Councilmember Jeppson stated she understood there was a huge need for families right now and reported there were programs in place to assist with rental assistance and other bills. She indicated she did not believe it was the City's responsibility to create a brand new program when existing programs were in place to help these families as it could be a drain on City resources.

Councilmember Garvais agreed and encouraged residents in need of assistance to call 211 or to visit 211UnitedWay.org. He commented on the amount of funding set aside for rental assistance and reported the United Way was responsible for administering these funds.

Councilmember Jeppson indicated \$100,000,000 had been allocated for rental assistance in the State of Minnesota. She explained she would put links to additional resources on her Facebook page for the public.

Councilmember Robertson understood there were residents that needed assistance at this time. However, she believed the CARES Act dollars were to be utilized to kickstart the economy and this was being done by offering businesses assistance. She reiterated the fact that there were other programs in place to assist with rental assistance.

4.0 Council Calendar Review

Ms. Wolfe reviewed the Council Calendar.

OTHER BUSINESS

None.

The Workshop was adjourned at 8:28 p.m.

Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

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