

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Monday, June 21, 2021

6:00PM
Council Chambers
10801 Town Square Drive

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 6:25PM. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this hybrid meeting was held both virtually and in person.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Julie Jeppson, Chris Massoglia, Richard Paul, Jess Robertson, and Jason Smith.

Adjunct Member Drew Brown.

ABSENT: Councilmember Wes Hovland.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Lori Johnson; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Interim Senior Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Attorney Chris Nelson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; Supervisor/Accounting Bonnie Friedrich; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 2020 Financial Report – Audit Review.

Finance Director Huss reported a representative from Redpath and Company, Ltd. was in attendance to discuss the city's 2020 financial report.

Andy Hering, Redpath and Company, Ltd., discussed the 2020 audit with the council. He commented further on the five reports that were completed within the 2020 audit and was pleased to report there were no findings. He explained the city received a clean or unmodified opinion on the 2020 audit which was the highest opinion the city could receive. The balance of the general fund and the city's enterprise funds was reviewed with the council. He commended the city on its strong financial position and asked for comments or questions.

Councilmember Jeppson recommended staff set aside additional funds for the extra audits that will have to be completed on the ARP funds for the next three years. Mr. Huss stated staff would make this adjustment to the budget.

Mayor Sanders thanked the finance department and Mr. Hering for their excellent work.

3.2 Aquatore Band Shell Discussion.

Senior Recreation Manager Krieger stated as part of the Parks Master Plan a band shell or performance stage was identified as a possible addition to the Aquatore Park. On July 13, 2020 the Blaine City Council accepted a donation of \$150,000 from the Blaine Festival Committee to be used for the construction of a band shell at Aquatore Park. Additionally, as part of the City's 2021 general levy, the council approved setting aside \$75,000 to assist in funding the Aquatore Band Shell. A total of \$800,000 (\$400,000 for the Band Shell and \$400,000 for the restroom replacement) is included in the 2021-25 Parks Capital Improvement Plan for improvements to Aquatore Park in 2023. The Festival Committee is willing to contribute an additional \$250,000 for a total of \$400,000 towards the band shell if the project can be completed by 2023.

Mr. Krieger explained staff is reviewing the Parks CIP and is drafting a project schedule and timeline and assessing the steps needed to complete the project within the proposed timeframe, including design of the buildings and cost estimates. Also to be considered are potential wetland impacts the project could bring to Aquatore Park. At this time, the Blaine Festival Committee would like to present some possible ideas for a Band Shell at Aquatore Park. With the additional \$250,000 contribution from the Festival Committee, funds would be available for the construction of the Band Shell and the restroom replacement at Aquatore Park for construction in 2023. Staff is researching the amount to be budgeted annually in the City's General Fund to maintain the improvements.

John Marinan, Blaine Festival Committee, discussed the plans for the Aquatore Band Shell with the council. He reported this would be a multi-purpose band shell that could accommodate concerts, weddings, with meeting space, storage space and restrooms. He indicated this would be a valued amenity by the entire community.

Steve Kanhoff, Blaine Festival Committee, described the amount of equipment the Blaine Festival Committee had and explained this organization would benefit greatly from the proposed storage within the band shell. He indicated the band shell would be a great gathering space for music or movies in the park. He reviewed the preliminary band shell design in further detail with the council and asked for questions or comments.

Councilmember Robertson asked if the existing restrooms at Aquatore would be replaced with the restrooms within the band shell. Mr. Kanhoff reported this was the case.

Councilmember Robertson thanked Mr. Kanhoff for his tremendous work on the band shell plan. She appreciated the proposed vaulted ceiling and believed this would be a great amenity for the community.

Councilmember Jeppson agreed this was a great amenity. She indicated she appreciated the tuck under storage along with the vaulted ceiling. She recommended the band shell keep in the same style as Mary Ann Young Center (MAYC). She suggested a family restroom be considered for the facility.

Mayor Sanders thanked Mr. Kanhoff and the Blaine Festival Committee for their work on the band shell. He asked if outdoor summer concerts could be held at this pavilion. Mr. Kanhoff stated he believed this would be possible through the proposed design. He hoped that summer concerts in the park would be held at the proposed band shell.

Mayor Sanders questioned how many people could enjoy the band shell under the proposed design. Mr. Krieger estimated 1,000 people could attend or more. He commented further on the proposed timeline for the band shell noting staff would like to get the project out for RFP by the end of 2021, to have a consultant hired in early 2022, with the project bid/constructed in 2022 and completed by the spring of 2023. He discussed how the space would be multi-purpose and could be used for concerts, meetings and weddings.

Councilmember Robertson asked how parking would be addressed at Aquatore Park. Mr. Krieger stated this would have to be further considered by staff.

Councilmember Massoglia thanked the Blaine Festival Committee for their work on this project. He stated he would like the ceiling to be rounded instead of vaulted for acoustic purposes.

Council consensus was to direct staff to move forward with the band shell project.

3.3 Austin Park Pickleball and Basketball Court Replacements.

Mr. Krieger stated the basketball and tennis courts at Austin Park were originally constructed in 1987 as part of a park expansion. In 2015 both courts were resurfaced. Since 2015 the courts have cracked severely from tree roots pushing up the asphalt. The plans for the conversion to pickleball courts would move the new courts farther to the west to get away from the existing tree roots. It was noted WSB and Associates, the consultant on the project, has submitted plans and specifications for the council to review and discuss. Staff commented further on WSB's plan, discussed the cost for the court replacements and requested direction from the council on how to proceed.

Mayor Sanders encouraged staff to consider where more tennis courts can be converted to pickleball given its growing popularity. Mr. Krieger discussed the locations of pickleball and tennis courts in Blaine.

Council consensus was to direct staff to move forward with this project.

3.4 105th Avenue/Radisson Road Redevelopment Plan Request for Proposals.

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the 105th Avenue/Radisson Road industrial area has been identified in the 2040 Comprehensive Plan as a priority redevelopment area. It has also been identified as one of the four priority areas by the city council through the visioning process that occurred in early 2021 and is also identified in the "Growth Management" portion of the city's strategic plan. Based on direction from the city council, the city will embark on a visioning/design process for this area to assist in future marketing and development efforts.

Mr. Thorvig reported general discussions by the city council identified this area as a potential "city core" where the city should encourage walkable, entertainment type of uses that take advantage of the NSC and be an amenity to Blaine residents and visitors. Staff is suggesting a planning/design process that includes key stakeholders (city staff, boards/commissions, city council, property owners, NSC and MAC) to establish the vision for this area both visually and descriptively. An important aspect is an architect assisting in creating the visual plan for the area. The general process would be staff led, however the purpose of the request for proposals (RFP) is to select an architect to assist in creating the visual plan. The plan will also include the vacant land on Town Square Drive in front of city hall. Staff does not have an estimated budget. The estimated budget for the Northtown RFP was approximately \$100,000. Given this project scope is reduced, the cost will be less. The study would be funded from the EDA and would be staff led.

Councilmember Massoglia inquired if it made sense to wait on the RFP until the city knew more about the future of this area. Mr. Thorvig said he understood the baseball group presented to the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission last week, which means they are moving forward.

Councilmember Robertson discussed how the NSC has had numerous ideas for this property over the past few years. She supported the city being the leader on this project versus waiting on the NSC.

Councilmember Jeppson clarified the city does not have extra funding for this type of study. She indicated she was excited about the fact the NSC was working on plans for this property. She supported the city moving forward with the proposed RFP for this site.

Councilmember Paul stated there were a lot of activities in this area and he hoped the city could speak with the NSC to extend the activities further. He believed this would be the right area for a hotel.

Mayor Sanders anticipated whether baseball, rugby or cricket were to move into this space, people would be drawn to this area. He hoped the city could work with developers that supported the city's vision and would be a great partner with the city.

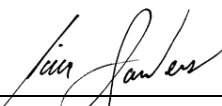
Councilmember Robertson supported the city completing the proposed RFP. She stated she was very excited about the potential for this space and anticipated the new use would help the NSC.

Mr. Thorvig reported staff wanted to incorporate some design services for the lot in front of city hall with the proposed RFP.

Mayor Sanders agreed he was very interested to see what the NSC would do with their property. He encouraged staff to keep the NSC in the loop on the city's plans for this core area. He recommended staff reach out to architects outside the state that may have been involved in cutting edge projects across the country. Mr. Thorvig discussed the process that was used to advertise the Northtown RFP noting architects were pursued both locally and nationally. He explained staff received 10 responses to the Northtown RFP and these RFPs came in on budget.

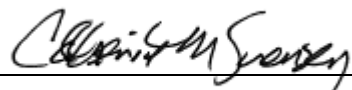
Council consensus was to direct staff to move forward with the RFP for the 105th Avenue/Radisson Road redevelopment plan.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:20PM.



Tim Sanders, Mayor

ATTEST:



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