

UNAPPROVED

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Thursday, June 8, 2017

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, Julie Jeppson, Jason King, and Dick Swanson.

ABSENT: None.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Clark Arneson; Planning and Community Development Director Bryan Schafer; Finance Director Joe Huss; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Chris Olson; Fire Chief Charlie Smith; Economic Development Coordinator Erik Thorvig; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; City Engineer Jean Keely; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Senior Engineering Technician Jason Sundeen; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 SBM Fire Department Strategic Plan.

Fire Chief Smith reviewed SBM's strategic plan and commented on the department's mission, vision and values. He discussed the number of service calls from 2016 and noted the fire department currently had 80 volunteers. He reported on the department's internal and external challenges such as aging equipment, change management, financial constraints, service area growth, staffing concerns, and changing district demographics. He provided further comment on the department's goals going forward regarding training, communication and resource investment. He thanked the Council for their continued support.

Councilmember King asked if there was a way to link the Blaine website to the SBM Fire Department. Fire Chief Smith stated there was a link in place.

Councilmember Garvais questioned if SBM could tie into the alert system on the website. Fire Chief Smith reported fire staff would be able to participate in the Civic Ready alert system.

Councilmember Garvais recommended the strategic plan be reviewed in 12 months as opposed to 24 months. He suggested the plan be revisited on a yearly basis in order for the department to make any necessary changes.

Mayor Ryan thanked Fire Chief Smith for providing the City Council with a summary on the SBM Strategic Plan.

3.3 Blaine Wetland Sanctuary (BWS) Neighborhood Committee Recommendation.

Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Therres reported in January of this year, as part of recreating the native wetlands in the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary (BWS), the City entered into a contract to remove the non-native plants and trees from the wetland area. This resulted in trees being cut down in the BWS including trees that bordered residential property on the west side of the BWS. While the City has publicly discussed the BWS project and held public meetings, we failed to have neighborhood meetings and keep the immediate neighbors updated on the project. As a result, the neighbors were surprised and angered when the trees started to be removed from behind their properties.

Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Therres commented that after some public meetings the City Council created a neighborhood committee made up of residents and several Councilmembers to work with the residents to discuss how to make this project work with the neighboring property owners. The BWS Neighborhood Committee has met several times and has developed the following recommendations for the City Council's consideration and discussion. The recommendations are as follows:

- Set a budget of \$100,000 for landscaping buffer areas.
- Set the next meeting after Council discussion to "fine tune" the landscaping plans to fit the allotted budget
- Develop a policy statement of no new trails within 100 feet of residential property in the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary north of the north end of Austin Court
- Send issue of developing park rules and usage of the BWS to the Park Commission for discussion and recommendations

Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Therres stated for reference, the landscaping plan is estimated to cost between \$90,000 to \$95,000. This plan shows a 40' buffer, and includes landscaping the proposed maintenance access with a gate. Staff requested the Council discuss and give direction to the BWS neighborhood committee on their recommendations.

Councilmember Swanson questioned how the Council would fund this project. Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Therres explained the landscaping plan could be funded through the Project Budget.

Councilmember King questioned if the entire committee supported the proposed landscaping plan. Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Therres stated the plans were not final but noted the group was seeking guidance from the Council on the budget amount for the project.

Councilmember Clark provided further comment on the discussions that have been held by the committee members.

Councilmember Jeppson clarified that the maintenance entrance was not to be seen as an opening but rather would be landscaped and fenced.

Councilmember Garvais stated he supported the project moving forward with a \$100,000 budget.

Councilmember Hovland asked if there were other concept trails in the plan.

Councilmember Clark commented on how the plan has shifted and been amended from the original plan.

Councilmember Garvais believed it would benefit the Council to have a more clear picture of the plans as well. Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Therres commented on the proposed trails and stated the neighborhood would like to see a 100' buffer between the trails and the adjacent neighborhood.

Councilmember Swanson stated he would like to see how the 100' buffer would impact the plans for the project.

Councilmember Jeppson questioned if the adjacent homes were in place when the City first began planning for this project. Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Therres indicated he would investigate this further and would report back to the City Council.

Mayor Ryan commented his fear with this project was that the Council would be setting a precedent by allowing neighbors to rework the City's original plan for this area.

Councilmember Jeppson anticipated that the proposed landscaping plan would benefit the adjacent homeowners in addition to the wetland sanctuary.

Councilmember Swanson agreed and stated he supported the proposed expenditure for the landscaping plan. He said he did not believe the Council was setting a precedent due to the fact this was a very large City project.

Council consensus was to support a budget of \$100,000 for the landscaping plan. The Council requested staff provide the Council with further information on the impact of the 100' trail buffer with the possibility of the buffer being between 75 and 100 feet depending on location.

3.2 2018 General Fund Budget Development Workshop.

Finance Director Huss stated the 2018 Budget preparation process began with discussions at both the May 4 and May 18 Workshops. The discussion at those Workshops focused on reviewing the City's tax base growth and establishing the 2018 levy. Council direction was to begin budget development under the assumption that the total of all city and EDA levies would be set at an amount such that the combined tax rate for all city and EDA levies would not exceed the 2016-17 overall combined tax rate of 35.901%. As reported at the two Workshops, current estimates indicate the capacity to increase overall levies by \$1.8 million and still maintain the targeted tax rate of 35.901%. There was general Council consensus to allocate the additional \$1.8 million in tax levy as follows:

- Maintain 2018 levies for the PMP and EDA at 2017 amounts with no adjustments - \$250,000 for the PMP and \$650,000 for the EDA
- Increase Debt Service levy by \$98,250 to fund scheduled debt service payments
- Remainder (\$1,711,000) would be preliminarily allocated to the General Fund

Finance Director Huss reviewed the 2018 appropriation requests by department within the City. It was noted on July 21, staff will present for Council review and discussion an overview of the 2018 General Fund Budget that incorporates initial departmental requests and City Manager priorities. Staff provided further comment on the remainder of the year's budget calendar and requested feedback from the Council.

Councilmember Hovland requested further information on the PMP. Finance Director Huss explained the City originally planned to levy \$500,000 for this item. He indicated this program was developed at the same

time property values were declining and for this reason the full \$500,000 was not levied. He explained the amount was closer to \$250,000 and noted this program was designed to support overlays and sealcoating within the City.

Councilmember Hovland understood the Traffic Commission may have other recommendations for the Council to consider; but believed this program was very important and needed to support the City's infrastructure. He supported the City getting the yearly budgeted amount back to \$500,000. Finance Director Huss stated this would have to be a determination made by the City Council.

Councilmember Swanson stated he would like to see what \$250,000 would provide for the City and what the tax rate would have to be increased to in order to reach a \$500,000 funding level for the PMP.

Councilmember Garvais supported some sort of staggered increase over the coming years for this budget item as well.

Councilmember King questioned when the Council would review the capital side of the budget. Finance Director Huss anticipated this information would come before the Council in August.

Councilmember Clark asked when the two new traffic officers would be put in place. Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Olson indicated these two officers would be ready for service in July or early-August. He provided further comment on the staffing concerns within the Police Department.

OTHER BUSINESS

Mayor Ryan stated he would be attending a water tower tour with the Metropolitan Council next Wednesday.

Councilmember Hovland requested the Council address consensus making decisions at the July workshop meeting.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:43 p.m.

Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

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