

UNAPPROVED

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Thursday, January 11, 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 Andy Garvais, Julie Jeppson, Jason King, and Dick Swanson.

ABSENT: Councilmembers Dave Clark, and Wes Hovland.

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 Jean Keely; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; Sergeant Joe Sadler; and Administration Technician Lisa Derr.

3.3 2040 Comprehensive Plan – Transportation Plan Update.

City Engineer Keely stated the City has been working with WSB to prepare the City's 2040 Comprehensive Plan. A component of this process is to update the City's Transportation Plan. She reported Scott Mareck from WSB was in attendance to review this item with the Council.

Scott Mareck, WSB, presented a summary of the information included in the Transportation Plan within the 2040 Comprehensive Plan. He reviewed a flow chart explaining the overall transportation planning process and commented on how transportation lends itself to new development. He indicated this was an idea document that would evolve and be implemented by the City over time. It was noted this plan would assist the City in receiving funds in the future from the Met Council, State or federal agencies. He described the high-level goals that were drafted into the plan for the City of Blaine. The projects planned for TH65 were discussed and it was noted the top priority for this roadway was the intersection of TH65 and 109th Avenue. Lastly, the multi-modal components within the plan were reviewed.

Councilmember Garvais requested further information on the projects being planned by Anoka County and if they had plans for 125th Avenue and Legacy Creek Parkway. City Engineer Keely discussed the projects being planned by Anoka County and noted these were all within their draft five-year plan and noted this project had been pushed back. She stated she would share the County's five-year capital plan with the Council once she received it from Anoka County.

Mayor Ryan stated this intersection should be a priority for the County. He noted the County has also pushed back the rebuilding of TH65 from 2020 to 2022. He reported the City would have to continue to pressure the County regarding TH65.

Councilmember King asked why the City received a low rating for BRT (Bus Rapid Transit) on TH65. Mr. Mareck explained he would research this further and would report back to the Council.

Mayor Ryan anticipated the airport would be requesting a runway expansion in the near future.

Councilmember Jeppson questioned if the traffic numbers were in alignment with neighboring cities. Mr. Mareck stated this was hard to compare as each community and its highways were unique. He noted Blaine was on the urban fringe and had several major thoroughfares going through the community. He commented on the large amount of growth occurring in Blaine and discussed how this impacted traffic counts. He explained Anoka County had reviewed the traffic count numbers and found them to be accurate.

Councilmember Jeppson inquired if a roadway classification assisted a City in receiving assistance or future funding. Mr. Mareck reported the functional classification did not have an impact on funding but rather identified the purpose and traffic for the roadway.

Councilmember King asked if the City was proposing to drop the airport classification to intermediate. City Manager Arneson reported the results of the study to support this new classification.

Mayor Ryan thanked Mr. Mareck for this thorough report.

3.2 Traffic Unit Update.

Sergeant Joe Sadler provided the Council with an update from the Traffic Unit. He stated he supervised the City's Traffic Unit. He reported the Traffic Unit was staffed by Officer Zach Johnson and Officer Matt Langreck and overseen by himself. The initial challenges for his unit were reviewed with the Council. He reported the City had a significant amount of traffic to manage in 2017. He described how his unit was working to follow up with complainants in order to improve communication between residents and the Traffic Unit. He discussed the importance of educating the public on traffic concerns.

Sergeant Sadler commented on the traffic numbers from 2017 in great detail and described the unit's goals for 2018. He explained the Traffic Unit was also working to improve safety in school zones. He stated he believes the Traffic Unit has made a positive impact on the community through their enforcement efforts. He reported the Traffic Unit was now properly equipped to address traffic concerns in the community and would work to educate new drivers on the importance of safe driving habits. In addition, traffic safety messages would be posted in the City throughout the year. He provided further comment on the traffic enforcements measures that would be pursued by his unit in the coming year and thanked the City Council for their continued support.

Mayor Ryan thanked Sergeant Sadler for his efforts to improve traffic safety in the community. He expressed concern with the lack of speed limit signage along 109th Avenue. He noted there were several different speed zones along this corridor. Sergeant Sadler reported the County was aware of this concern and was working to improve signage.

Mayor Ryan stated he was pleased to see traffic slowing down around the school zones. Sergeant Sadler stated he has received a number of positive comments from the public regarding this as well.

Mayor Ryan recommended the solar signs on 119th Avenue east of TH65 be hard wired because they were not working through the winter months. He understood this may be costly, but noted it would be in the City's best interest to get electricity to these signs.

City Manager Arneson asked how the City's Community Service Officers were also working to improve public safety. Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Podany described the work being conducted by the Community Service Officers and noted these officers were a great asset to the City.

Councilmember Garvais thanked the Traffic Unit for their efforts. He commented on the Arrive Alive initiative and encouraged the Traffic Unit officers to educate the City's younger drivers to not drive impaired.

Mayor Ryan stated it would be interesting to hear feedback on the Traffic Unit from the public at Night to Unite.

City Engineer Keely thanked Sergeant Sadler for attending the Traffic Commission meetings and for his assistance with other endeavors throughout the City.

Mayor Ryan thanked Sergeant Sadler for his report to the City Council.

3.1 Presentation on Anoka County Economic Development Initiative Report.

Economic Development Coordinator Thorvig reported earlier this year, the MetroNorth Chamber of Commerce, Connexus Energy and Anoka County together commissioned an economic development study to assess the county's strengths and identify its challenges and opportunities. Ady Advantage, a nationally-recognized economic development, site selection, and marketing consulting firm, was selected by a steering committee whose members include representatives from Anoka County, Connexus Energy, MetroNorth Chamber and city economic development staff (including Blaine). The consulting firm spent months compiling data, researching the region, visiting sites available for development, and interviewing stakeholders, such as CEOs, young professionals, and real estate brokers.

Economic Development Coordinator Thorvig explained preliminary results of the 205-page study were released in December and among the key findings: Anoka County has lower-priced land than other parts of the Twin Cities metro, a strong manufacturing core, good public schools, and affordable, reliable access to electric power. The study also noted however, that more than 120,000 residents leave the county to commute to work each day. The report includes a matrix of targeted industries, strengths and weaknesses and implementation steps to capitalize on economic development in our region. He noted the steering committee will meet again in January to discuss ways in which the economic development study can be used as the foundation of a multi-year strategic plan. Staff provided further comment on the study to make the Council aware of the activities occurring and to discuss where Blaine is positioned for economic development in respect to the rest of Anoka County.

Mayor Ryan commented on the importance of positive press for the City of Blaine along with having upscale restaurants and a movie theater. Economic Development Coordinator Thorvig stated the recent curling event received national media coverage and noted the 3M Golf tournament also receives national attention.

Councilmember Garvais anticipated that the new Communications Specialist would assist the City in drafting positive press releases.

Councilmember King reported the City of Blaine had a great niche on medical clinics and medical services at this time. Economic Development Coordinator Thorvig stated the perceptions of Blaine were changing and in a positive manner.

Councilmember Swanson asked what the County's reaction was to this report. Economic Development Coordinator Thorvig stated the County responded in a positive manner even with the critical findings within the report. He explained the County would be dedicating more resources and appointing an individual to economic development.

Mayor Ryan thanked Economic Development Coordinator Thorvig for all of his efforts on this report.

OTHER BUSINESS

City Manager Arneson reported City Clerk Sorensen was seeking potential dates to hold commission member interviews. He asked if January 29th and January 30th or February 5th and February 6th would work. He anticipated the interviews would begin at 6:00 p.m.

The Council agreed to hold the Commission interviews on February 5th and February 6th.

Councilmember King requested the Council end their retreat on Friday at 7:00 p.m. with dinner including spouses. City Manager Arneson encouraged the Council to invite their spouses to dinner.

Mayor Ryan stated he and several members from Beyond the Yellow Ribbon would be meeting with the Park Board to discuss a Veteran's Memorial.

The Workshop was adjourned at 8:06 p.m.

Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

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