

CITY OF BLAINE  
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
Monday, April 19, 2021

6:00PM  
Council Chambers  
10801 Town Square Drive

## **CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 6:02PM. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this hybrid meeting was held both virtually and in person.

## **ROLL CALL**

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

**ABSENT:** None.

Quorum Present.

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

### 3.1 Legislative Update.

City Manager Wolfe stated there were representatives from Lockridge Grindal Nauen in attendance to provide the council with a legislative update.

Angie Huss, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, thanked the council for their time. She explained since her last report in March, the senate transportation committee heard the TH65 bill. In addition, there has been two hearings in the house on the TH65 bill and the regional training center. She reported coming out of the Easter Passover recess, staff has been working on financing bills. She was pleased to report the senate and house were now marking up omnibus bills and this work would continue in the coming weeks.

Ann Lenczewski, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, discussed the capital investment piece from the house, noting no local projects had been included. She stated the house bill was proposing to

fund various affordable housing projects along with rebuilding Minneapolis and St. Paul after the civil unrest. She reported Governor Walz's bill also had no local projects. She commented the senate bill continues to be a mystery. She discussed the transportation bill and was thankful that Senator Newton's bill had been included. She then described how the state was approaching how to spend American Rescue Fund (ARF) dollars. She was of the opinion the TH65 project was well positioned at this time.

Cullen Sheehan, Lockridge Grindal Nauen, further discussed the bonding bills being proposed by the house and senate. He commented on how police reform has been another issue being discussed by the house and senate. He stated these were very unique times. He indicated the federal dollars were greatly impacting how the state would move forward. He anticipated the house and senate would not wrap up on time, but rather would wrap things up by June 30.

Mayor Sanders asked if there was anything the city can do to help support the legislative efforts. Mr. Sheehan encouraged Mayor Sanders to reach out to senate leadership and Chair Rosen on a regular basis because relationships and contact matters. Ms. Lenczewski indicated she may have councilmembers speak at an upcoming transportation hearing. Ms. Huss reported the local legislators have been great about staying on point and were strongly advocating for TH65.

Councilmember Robertson thanked the lobbyists for the update and for keeping the council engaged in the process.

Mayor Sanders thanked the lobbyists and encouraged them to call on the city council at any time.

### 3.2 Food Truck Regulations in the City of Blaine.

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the topic of food truck regulations in the city has been discussed by staff as an increase in requests are being made by vendors. Blaine city code defines food trucks as a transient merchant. A transient merchant means a person who temporarily sets up business out of a vehicle, trailer, boxcar, tent, other portable shelter, or empty store front for the purpose of exposing or displaying for sale, selling or attempting to sell, and delivering goods, wares, products, merchandise, or other personal property and who does not remain in any one location for more than 14 consecutive days. Current city regulations only permit transient merchants in I-2A, Heavy Industrial zoning districts. This was intentional when the regulations were established to limit transient merchants in the city. Food trucks are also permitted when a special event license is granted through the city.

Mr. Thorvig explained food trucks have become more popular since the transient merchant regulations were established. There have been frustrations with current regulations in Blaine by both food truck vendors and groups wanting to host a food truck. For example, a special

event license requires submission to the city 45 days prior to the event among other cumbersome criteria. This may be unrealistic for a business to meet who simply wants to host a food truck for an employee lunch. Alternatively, there has also been concerns expressed by brick and mortar restaurants about allowing an expansion of food trucks in Blaine as it could impact their business. Staff commented further on the current regulations that were in place and requested direction on whether to prepare amendments to the city code related to food trucks.

Councilmember Hovland questioned if the large Blaine garage sale would be considered a special event. City Clerk Sorensen reported this event was a special event due to the magnitude of the event and noted food trucks would be allowed as part of the event.

Councilmember Hovland stated he supported food trucks being allowed at special because they offered a unique service for visitors to these events.

Councilmember Robertson commented she believed there was room for improvement with respect to food trucks. She requested further information on how staff defined industrial zoned properties and asked if food trucks would require a permit at Home Depot on the weekends. Ms. Sorensen stated this would require a permit. She discussed the different types of special events that were held in the city that would allow for food trucks and noted having a food truck in the Home Depot parking lot currently would require a special event license.

Councilmember Robertson indicated the council may have to further consider the regulations within special event licenses then asked if any local restaurants have raised concerns with the number of food trucks in Blaine.

Mayor Sanders stated he reached out to a couple of restaurant owners and heard concerns about the investment restaurants have made in the community and how they wanted their investment protected. He commented how restaurant owners believed food trucks were not invested the same way in the community.

Councilmember Robertson anticipated there was not a one size fits all approach to this topic because there were also Blaine residents who may operate food trucks.

Councilmember Hovland explained that by allowing more food trucks in the community this may open up opportunities to local restaurants to pursue a food truck for special events such as catering events similar to Famous Dave's.

Councilmember Jeppson said she was of the opinion 45 days to receive a special event permit was excessive and requested staff provide the council with an alternative. She thanked Mayor Sanders for reaching out to several local restaurants and for voicing their concerns. She

indicated food trucks were a unique dining experience. She understood that brick and mortar restaurants were heavily invested in the community but would still support the city reducing restrictions when it comes to food trucks.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he would be in favor of more permissive regulations when it comes to food trucks. He supported no overnight storage of food trucks on city streets and that food trucks have certain setbacks from brick and mortar restaurants. He believed that it was good to have healthy competition between food trucks and restaurants, unless there was strong data to show the restaurants would suffer.

Councilmember Smith asked where the 45 days came from. Ms. Sorensen stated this was based mostly on the special events held at the National Sports Center (NSC) to allow staff to get information before the council for approval prior to the event being hosted. She noted many times licenses are approved prior to 45 days.

Mayor Sanders commented on the atmosphere that was created by a number of food trucks and how this set up benefited special events when restaurants were not in close proximity. He anticipated there were some specific spaces in Blaine that would benefit from food trucks such as the beach and NSC.

Councilmember Paul supported food trucks filling the gap at special events because they were very convenient. He recommended the city also see how existing businesses are impacted.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if a variety of food trucks could be brought to the beach this summer or if only one would be allowed. Ms. Wolfe stated she would like to report back to the council on this matter in light of the fact that the parks department would be offering concessions again this summer.

Council consensus was to bring forward amendments for consideration that will allow for more food trucks in the city.

### 3.3 COVID Updates/ARP Funds.

Finance Director Huss stated on March 11, the American Rescue Plan (ARP) Act of 2021, also called the COVID-19 Stimulus Package or American Rescue Plan, was signed into law. The act is a \$1.9 trillion economic stimulus bill that builds upon previously enacted aid measures in 2020. The package includes \$130.2 billion for local governments, including \$45.6 billion for metropolitan cities, of which Blaine's share of \$7.3 million is included. Indications are that the first payment, equaling one-half of the total of Blaine's allocation, is due within 60 days of the enactment of the bill. However, the city has received no funding as of yet and has received no official notification of when to expect funds. Additionally, some information regarding eligible

uses of ARP funds and deadlines to make expenditures has surfaced. Staff reviewed the eligible and ineligible expenses for the ARP funding then noted no official guidelines have been made public at this time. Until official guidelines are issued from the Treasury Department, staff recommends proceeding cautiously in developing a spending/use plan.

Mayor Sanders questioned how long the city would have to spend these dollars. Mr. Huss reported the early indicators were that the city would have until the end of 2024 to spend the dollars.

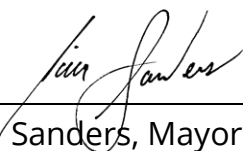
Councilmember Robertson asked if these dollars would be lost if not spent. Mr. Huss stated the funding was set up this way, but noted the city would have three years to spend the dollars.

Councilmember Robertson encouraged the city to spend the dollars in the areas and on the organizations that need it the most.

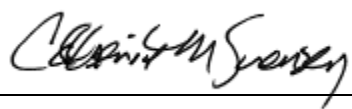
Councilmember Hovland recommended the council discuss holding fully open meetings at city hall. Mayor Sanders requested staff provide the council with an update on this matter.

Councilmember Paul requested an update on the services and programming being provided at the Mary Ann Young Center (MAYC). Ms. Wolfe discussed the programs that would begin in May. She indicated she had been in contact with the Volunteers of America (VOA) and was working towards serving limited meals onsite. She stated staff would continue to work towards having meals and programming at MAYC in May and indicated meeting rooms were not being reserved for the public at this time.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:08PM.

  
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Tim Sanders, Mayor

ATTEST:

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