

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Monday, February 3, 2020

6:00 p.m.
Cloverleaf Farm Room
10801 Town Square Drive

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ryan at 6:05 p.m.

ROLL CALL

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

ABSENT: Councilmembers Andy Garvais and Julie Jeppson.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Deputy Police Chief Dan Szykulski; Finance Director Joe Huss; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; Community Standards Director Robert Fiske; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Planner Lori Johnson; Communications Technician Roark Haver; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Sober Living Home Application.

Community Standards Director Fiske stated Meraki Recovery Housing submitted a Sober Living Home application on December 13, 2019 for a single family residential home located at 913 121st Avenue NE, Blaine, MN to be operated as a Sober Living Home as defined by Blaine Code of Ordinances (BCO) Section 18-511(b). The property owner is Grant Johnson, 732 129th Avenue NE Blaine. The home is a typical one story rambler with a full basement, 1043 square feet and built in 1970. This item has been scheduled for a public hearing and formal consideration on February 19 but since this is the first request of its type under the new Reasonable Accommodation Ordinance staff thought it best to bring forward to a workshop to allow for more discussion prior to the public hearing.

Mr. Fiske reported specifically, the request for reasonable accommodations pertains to the number of non-related persons who may live in the home. The applicant is requesting approval to allow up to nine unrelated persons to live in the single family home. Blaine Code of Ordinance requires an application be submitted for any sober living home requesting occupancy of more than four unrelated persons. He explained the garage was being used for storage and could not hold vehicles at this time and discussed how parking was a concern for the City. He commented further on City Code and how State Statute addressed this matter and recommended if this matter were to move forward that only six unrelated persons be allowed. He added that during this inspection three violations were cited; a Zoning Code violation regarding a temporary structure in the rear yard, a Housing Code violation regarding electrical extension cords and the third violation of the Rental Licensing Code in regards to the number of residents currently living in the home. He said the current rental license for this address allows for up to four unrelated persons to live in the home. However, it

was discovered by our inspector that there are currently seven persons living in the home, six residents and one house manager.

Mayor Ryan stated he could support six unrelated persons in the home. He explained that having nine people in the home would create parking problems for the home and neighborhood.

Councilmember Swanson indicated he was worried about the number of vehicles that would be on the property if nine residents were allowed.

Property owner Krista Johnson explained most of the people living in this type of environment were rebuilding their lives so not all of the residents had a car. She reported a six month stay was a minimum for the residents in order to complete out patient treatment, become stable and get set up for success long term.

Councilmember Paul asked if onsite management would be changing. Mr. Fiske indicated the current management would remain the same.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if the rental property was currently being used as a sober living home. Mr. Fiske stated he did not conduct the inspection but reported it was his understanding the rental home was currently being used as a sober living home for seven individuals which was more than the allowed four non-related individuals.

Ms. Johnson reported she has owned the home for 15 years and has been operating as a rental for the past 12 years. She indicated she had the same tenants for 10 years and this family had three adults, two teenagers and four youth in the home. She commented she changed the home to a sober living home 16 months ago and explained she approached the City when making this change, adding she has since learned the sober living home was not therapeutic with only four residents.

Councilmember Robertson asked how many tenants lived in Ms. Johnson's other locations. Ms. Johnson explained the Ramsey home had 13 women, the Isanti home had seven men and the home in Coon Rapids had 10 men.

Councilmember Paul inquired if the sober living home residents were involved in the community. Ms. Johnson described how these individuals were involved in the community. She reported the recovering individuals were from Anoka County and wanted to recover in this area. She noted her residents were greatly involved with local churches and youth organizations. She discussed the high level of success her residents were having because of this interaction and the accountability they have in the sober living home and noted all of the residents in the sober living home were there voluntarily.

Mayor Ryan questioned what the individuals in the sober living home did for recreation. Ms. Johnson stated 80% to 90% are attending out-patient treatment four hours a day five days a week and were required to attend three recovery meetings a week and work part-time. She noted she had a large network available to assist with providing positive activities for individuals living in the sober living home.

Mayor Ryan stated he understood the neighborhood was used to having a rental property at this location, however was concerned with the high level of traffic that would be generated by the proposed number of residents allowed to live onsite.

Councilmember Robertson stated she appreciated all that Ms. Johnson was doing and understood the great job done screening the individuals in her homes. She explained she was struggling with the fact this home

was currently violating the City's rental ordinance and hoped the City Council could find a way to reach a compromise on this issue. Mr. Fiske commented further on how State Statute addresses the number of individuals that can occupy a group home, which was six unrelated individuals.

Ms. Johnson stated she could not operate the sober living home with only six individuals. She reported this number did not offer the therapeutic value that she needed and indicated she needed a minimum of nine. She said if she were approved for six she would have to turn the home back to a rental property then commented further on how she would be exercising her fair housing act rights.

Councilmember Hovland believed it would not be best to have a higher number of people living in a high stress environment under the same roof. He said he feared issues would arise both for the tenants and neighbors but said he understood how a larger number of individuals would be more supportive. He stated he could support six tenants in the sober living home with seven including the manager then questioned why the tenants were not living one person to a room. Ms. Johnson commented this became a life safety issue for people early in their recovery and stated isolation led to depression for those working to overcome alcoholism.

Councilmember Swanson stated he could support six residents in the sober living home and encouraged the applicant provide accredited documentation on reasons why she needed to proceed with nine residents.

3.2 2020 Census Planning Update.

Communications Manager Hayle stated as planning for the 2020 census enters into the final stages there were several projects underway to ensure a complete count in Blaine. Blaine's complete count committee, made up of City staff, has met several times over the last year to plan outreach efforts for the 2020 census. Staff have attended trainings put on by the Census Bureau and the City was successful in obtaining a small grant to help with census outreach. On February 6 the City will be holding two informational open houses for the community to come and learn more about the 2020 census. In addition to the general public, 130 key community stakeholders have received a personal invitation to attend one of the open houses. Staff commented further on the outreach efforts the City would be pursuing for the 2020 census and requested feedback from the Council.

Mayor Ryan stated he appreciated the fact the census takers would be sending postcards to make the public aware of the upcoming census. He commented the City would have to work with the manufacture homes communities and apartment dwellers to ensure they participate in the census. He asked if Anoka County was still hiring census workers. Mr. Hayle reported the County was still seeking census workers and would be paying \$22 per hour for this work.

3.3 Hunting Overview.

Deputy Police Chief Dan Szykulski stated as the City has become more developed, lands that are permissible for hunting have continued to shrink on an annual basis. An overview of relevant City Code and hunting areas was provided to the Council, along with discussion of the future and a request for Council guidance on future actions and legislation. He commented on past bow hunts and requested direction for future hunting designations.

Mayor Ryan stated he supported closing the City to hunting.

Councilmember Hovland asked if a hunt should still be held at the airport. Deputy Chief Szykulski explained the Metropolitan Airports Commission was responsible for managing deer population on their property.

Council consensus was to direct staff to bring forward an Ordinance amendment to discontinue hunting in the City of Blaine.

3.4 Council Calendar Review.

City Clerk Sorensen discussed the Council's Calendar.

OTHER BUSINESS

Public Works Director Haukaas shared background information regarding the utility break at the 35W Service Drive and 93rd Avenue NE. He described the complicated scope of the repairs and reported public safety interests were being considered. He explained one resident and several businesses had been impacted by the break. The timeline for the project repairs was outlined in detail for the Council. It was noted this project would take three to four weeks to complete. He noted staff would have an emergency declaration for the Council to approve at its next meeting then indicated ongoing preventative maintenance plans would be put in place to assist in securing this utility line long-range.

Councilmember Robertson questioned why the break occurred. Mr. Haukaas discussed the City's preventative maintenance plan for sewer lines. He stated these efforts assist with cleaning lines to prevent blockages. He reported these efforts do not prevent against a line collapse. He reported the City does some televising but does not have full video of the entire sewer system. He anticipated this break occurred because the SO₂ gases have been disintegrating the concrete. Further discussion ensued regarding how the pipes would be angled to reduce the drop in the line.

Councilmember Robertson asked how much it would cost the City to fix this break. Mr. Haukaas estimated the project would cost well over \$600,000.

Councilmember Robertson recommended the Council consider prioritizing its water and sewer lines in order to avoid breaks in the future as water and sewer lines were a priority. Mr. Haukaas stated this type of emergency was unfortunate then explained the nature of this break required 24/7 pumping.

Councilmember Paul asked if a detour had been set up. Mr. Haukaas reported this was the case. City Engineer Schluender discussed how traffic was being rerouted through the City.

Mayor Ryan explained all of the equipment was already in place to complete the work on the utility lines.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

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