

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Tuesday, July 6, 2022

5:30PM
Council Chambers
10801 Town Square Drive

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 5:30PM.

ROLL CALL

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

ABSENT: Councilmember Wes Hovland.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; City Planner Sheila Sellman; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Deputy Police Chief Dan Pelkey; Finance Director Joe Huss; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Attorney Chris Nelson; Senior Parks and Recreation Manager Jerome Krieger; Deputy Finance Director Alison Bong (via Zoom); and Senior Management Analyst Lisa Derr.

Mayor Sanders requested Item 3.1 be discussed after Item 3.3.

3.2 National Sports Center/Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission ARP Funding Discussion.

Community Development Director Thorvig stated during recent American Rescue Plan (ARP) discussions, the City Council identified up to \$2 million to provide to the National Sports Center (NSC) for the installation of two lighted turf fields. Turf fields are becoming increasingly important to the NSC as it allows them to compete for larger tournaments as turf fields have more playability than grass fields that are stressed during high activity. Turf fields can be utilized earlier and later in the season and do not require "rest" like typical grass fields. Lighting of the fields also allows for use in the evening. The primary funding source for such capital improvements at the NSC is typically through the Minnesota State Legislature, which is problematic as the NSC is constantly competing with projects throughout the entire State of Minnesota.

Mr. Thorvig explained the viability of the NSC is extremely important to the local Blaine economy and assisting in the construction of infrastructure that assists the NSC to be more successful is important for the long-term viability of the facility and local Blaine economy. Providing ARP funds for the construction of turf fields would allow the Minnesota Amateur Sports Commission (MASC) to provide the City with rights to construct, operate and maintain the primary lake feature of the 105th Avenue redevelopment plan on MASC-owned property, and deed this property to the Blaine EDA as part of the redevelopment area. City and NSC staff have been working on a draft letter of intent outlining terms and expectations of the deal outlined above. The MASC board met on June 15, 2022 and are in general support of the parameters of the agreement. Further details of the agreement are being discussed and it is anticipated a draft letter of intent will be presented to the Blaine EDA sometime in July.

Neil Ladd, NSC representative, commented further on the costs for the turf fields. He estimated the turf would have a 10-to-12-year lifespan and described how turf/lights would allow the NSC to expand the soccer season. Further discussion ensued regarding the size of the fields.

Todd Johnson, NSC representative, discussed how the additional turf fields would assist with attracting scrimmages from MLS teams, along with their reserve and academy teams. He commented on how unique the NSC was and how it was able to draw people from all over the world for sporting events. He estimated the USA Cup brings \$35 million to Minnesota's economy, and the NSC brings in \$95 million per year. He thanked the City for their consideration and for their ongoing support and partnership.

Mr. Thorvig asked if the Council would support an additional level of funding for the turf fields and if the Council was willing to offer additional funding, where would this funding come from.

Mayor Sanders stated he looked forward to the conversation the Council would have regarding additional turf fields. He believed this was a great opportunity for the City given the fact the City was looking to further develop the 105th Avenue area.

Councilmember Robertson explained she supported offering the NSC \$3.24 million in order to get the fields branded and lit. She stated the long-term viability of the NSC was critical to the City and for this reason she would support the additional funding. She hoped that in the future the NSC would be able to pursue additional funding from the state of Minnesota.

Councilmember Jeppson commented she agreed with Councilmember Robertson, stating if the NSC does not succeed the City would not succeed. She indicated she was willing to support the City offering the NSC \$3.93 million. She reported she would like to sit down with the NSC to better understand their lobbying efforts with the State and to learn how the City can better support the NSC.

Councilmember Newland stated he supported investing \$3.24 million in the NSC.

Councilmember Paul requested further information regarding the different requests. Todd Johnson commented on the differences between the various funding requests. He stated putting down green turf was the best option for the NSC. He reported the NSC has painting machines to stripe the fields.

Councilmember Paul stated he supported the second funding option.

Councilmember Jeppson asked if the NSC could fundraise for the lights. Todd Johnson discussed the NSC's business model noting the NSC was full all but three weekends a year. He reported the only place the NSC makes money was on the fields. He commented on how putting lights on the fields would extend the soccer season and play times for games. He anticipated the Blaine Soccer Club would be able to assist with lighting or other expenses. He stated he was always pursuing other sponsors as well.

Councilmember Robertson reported an investment into the NSC would pay for itself over time. She asked if additional ARP funding could be provided to the NSC. Finance Director Huss explained this would be allowed.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he was supported of the vision for the area and providing additional funding to the NSC. He recommended three fields be considered with the assistance of ARP funding, along with the City's sanitary project. He suggested the City provide the NSC with \$2 million from ARP funds and \$1.2 million from the Strategic Priorities Fund. He indicated he would rather see the Minnesota United logo on the fields than the City of Blaine.

Councilmember Jeppson anticipated the NSC could find \$700,000. She proposed the City provide the NSC with \$3.93 million and that the NSC refund the City \$700,000 for the lights over the next five years.

Councilmember Robertson reported the City would be receiving property for the fields. She indicated she would be willing to support the \$3.93 million funding request for the NSC. Mr. Thorvig stated the amount may be less than \$3.75 million if the lines were removed from the estimate.

Todd Johnson stated he would be able to make \$3.75 million work for the new turf fields and lighting. He indicated he greatly appreciated the Council's discussion and willingness to support the NSC.

Councilmember Massoglia commented he could support \$3.24 million for the turf fields. He supported the NSC fundraising for the lights.

Councilmember Newland questioned what the timeline was for this project. Mr. Johnson explained he would like to build the fields yet this fall in order to have them ready for next spring. He reported the NSC has their name in with the turf company in order to receive turf in 2023 versus having to wait until 2024.

Mayor Sanders asked for further comments regarding the funding level for the NSC in order to reach consensus.

Councilmember Paul stated he would support \$3.24+ million for the NSC.

Councilmember Newland requested staff revise the ARP funding requests in order to eliminate the items that were not being funded. He indicated he would like to see the numbers reworked in order to better understanding how much funding was available. Mr. Thorvig stated he could provide this information to the Council.

Mayor Sanders supported the City providing the NSC with \$3.93 million with \$2 million coming from ARP. He indicated the Council and EDA would have to further discuss where the \$1.9 million would come from.

Council consensus was to provide the NSC with \$3.93 million in funding.

3.3 Proposed Ordinance Amendments – Conduct in Public Parks/Street Racing.

Deputy Police Chief Pelkey stated staff recently shared a proposal for two ordinance amendments, one to address behaviors that create disturbances to the public, particularly at the beach, and another to address the increase of exhibition driving and street racing. To quickly address concerns that may occur at the beach an emergency ordinance has been included on the regular Council meeting agenda later this evening. The proposed amendment for street racing will be moved forward for consideration through the regular process, but staff is requesting feedback on both topics at this time to move the items forward. The City has a history of behaviors at the beach that are problematic and create disturbances to the public. In consultation with the City attorney and after review of existing ordinances, staff found a need for an ordinance amendment in key areas. Currently, if someone needs to be removed from a park due to behavior, we cannot trespass them as it is a City park and we currently do not have an existing ordinance allowing for that process. The only option would be to request a ban from the park from a judge as part of an ongoing criminal process, which would be a long, untimely process. Additionally, although City code allows for closure of a park, the code is lacking strength and clarity. Staff is recommending both items be addressed by adopting an emergency ordinance as allowed by City charter.

City Attorney Nelson explained there was no mechanism currently in place to expel people from City parks if they were being disruptive and was hopeful this ordinance would assist in restoring order to the City's parks and beach.

Councilmember Newland asked if the final language for this ordinance would be posted at the beach. Mr. Nelson reported the language would be posted at City Hall, on the City's website, the beach and one other location. After being posted for 24 hours the ordinance would go into effect. Deputy Police Chief Pelkey stated he wanted the public to understand the police department was taking this matter very serious.

Councilmember Paul commented on how teenagers were behaving at the beach and racing on the streets. He thanked staff for drafting these ordinances to address the concerning behavior but stated he believed other alternatives should also be considered.

Mayor Sanders explained he did not support any other alternatives. He indicated the City has been too nice and this has created a detrimental situation at the beach where teenagers are disrespecting the police and families. He reported even with an increased police presence and cameras at the beach, teenagers were still being disrespectful. He stated the beach should be a safe place for families.

Councilmember Robertson stated the proposed ordinance would send a message to the teenagers who are misbehaving.

Deputy Police Chief Pelkey reported the second amendment will help address exhibition driving/street racing, which has continued to increase throughout the metro area as well as Blaine. The problems that arise generally do not occur with car shows and gatherings with street rods but rather with groups who are reckless, damage property, and have been involved with violence. Currently, the tools available to address the concerns are limited and this ordinance would provide a measure to address the concerns more effectively.

Mayor Sanders asked if this ordinance amendment would impact the relationship the City has with the State Patrol or County Sheriff's Office. Deputy Police Chief Pelkey explained any officer working within Blaine would be able to enforce City ordinance.

Council consensus was to support the proposed ordinance amendments.

3.1 Federal Lobbyist Update.

David Hoover, Ferguson Group, introduced himself to the Council along with the members of his team. He provided the Council with an update on his federal lobbying efforts for TH65. He stated he would like to learn more about the City's priorities for the next year noting this would serve as his blueprint going forward. He discussed the meetings he would be lining up

with MNDOT. He stated on June 30 the House Appropriations Committee distributed their spending bills, which included the TH65 earmarks. He reviewed the amount of funding that was proposed along with how this funding was proposed to be allocated. He indicated the next step for this would be the Senate Appropriations Committee and this would be done next week. He believed the City was in really good shape for its earmarked requests given the fact this was a huge regional project with public safety issues.

Councilmember Newland asked where Blaine fit into Ferguson Groups portfolio. Mr. Hoover stated he represents cities the size of Santa Barbara, California to smaller rural areas. He indicated the size of Blaine was very typical for his clients then noted Blaine was their first Minnesota client.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned what the earmark request was for the TH65. Mr. Hoover reported the amount was \$4 million. He stated he hoped earmarks would continue going forward.

Mayor Sanders thanked Mr. Hoover for his update and stated he looked forward to meeting with him in the coming days.

4. Other Business

4.1 Council Update

City Manager Wolfe discussed how staff uses the Council update each month to communicate with the Council.

4.2 MPCA Update

Public Works Director Haukaas provided the Council with an update regarding the MPCA.

Mayor Sanders discussed how he would be handling comments from the public at the upcoming City Council meeting.

Councilmember Jeppson commented on the sod replacement program noting she would be proposing to have all areas replaced with sod and not seed. She recommended the sod replacement program be an opt in program. In addition, she would like to see residents reimbursed if they had already replaced their sod. She believed this was the right way for the City to partner with residents.

The Workshop was adjourned at 6:58PM.

Tim Sanders, Mayor

ATTEST:

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