

CITY OF BLAINE  
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
Monday, January 6, 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 6:00 p.m.

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Tom Ryan, Councilmembers Andy Garvais, Wes Hovland (arrived at 6:15 p.m.), Julie Jeppson, Richard Paul, Jess Robertson, and Dick Swanson.

**ABSENT:** None.

Quorum Present.

**ALSO PRESENT:** City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; City Planner Lori Johnson; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; Senior Engineering Technician Al Thorp; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Assistant City Engineer Stefan Higgins; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

**3.1 Third Street Sewer Backup – Assistance Request.**

Public Works Director Haukaas stated the City received a request for assistance to help pay for the damage to a home at 11841 Third Street NE from the sanitary sewer backing up into the finished basement. The request came from an attorney representing the property owner. Both the property owner and tenant have previously submitted a claim to our insurance carrier LMCIT and been denied. The attorney is requesting any assistance the City is willing to provide to help cover some of the costs incurred with the backup. Staff commented on the history of this sewer backup, noting the City was not found to be negligent. He requested feedback from the Council on how to proceed.

Councilmember Robertson requested further information regarding the debris found in the line that caused the backup. Mr. Haukaas discussed the debris found in the sewer line was sticks put in the manhole, possibly by youth, and explained the City was not at fault for the debris found in the line and manhole.

Councilmember Paul commented he would like to see the City assist the homeowners in some way given the fact they pay taxes. He then discussed a letter received from the neighbors outlining their request.

Councilmember Robertson asked if this type of damage was covered by homeowners insurance. Mr. Haukaas stated this type of event would only be covered if the homeowner had an additional waiver or rider within the policy.

Mayor Ryan explained this was an unfortunate incident and empathized with the tenants but agreed with staff's recommendation.

Council consensus was to support the staff recommendation to deny financial assistance for damages.

### 3.2 Zoning Ordinance Amendments (Chapters 23-29).

City Planner Johnson stated over the past two to three months, Planning and Community Standards staff have been participating in an in-depth review of all chapters of the City's Zoning Ordinance. The zoning ordinance for the city was created sometime in the 1980s, with reviews occurring periodically over the years, and in particular, when it was necessary due to changing trends or specific requests on a case by case basis. As the years have gone by, staff noticed there are several items that are outdated, that did not make good planning sense, or that are no longer relevant to this growing city; therefore, it was decided to bring the ordinance around to reflect current trends and current city development.

Ms. Johnson commented the council will be given the opportunity at several workshops over the winter months to review staff's proposed redlines to the overall zoning ordinance. Staff will present these redlines in sections so it is not overwhelming to take in such a large amount of information in a short period of time. It is staff's goal to bring the overall code amendments to the Planning Commission in March 2020, with the required council approval after that meeting.

Councilmember Hovland requested staff consider how the City wants to address the use of snowmobiles and ATVs in Blaine. He stated he did not support reducing the amount of garage and shed storage space. He feared a change to this portion of City Code would create a problem for residents. Ms. Johnson noted the amount of square footage was not changing. She explained it was not staff's intent to create a storage shortfall, but rather staff was working to clarify and clean up the language within City Code for code enforcement purposes.

Further discussion ensued regarding the fees that would be collected for shed permits.

Councilmember Garvais recommended that permit fees only be collected for permanent sheds and that the more temporary-type sheds be allowed without a permit fee.

Councilmember Swanson encouraged the Council not to approve a City Code that would be impossible to enforce.

The Council supported staff further reviewing the storage shed language.

### 3.3 Communications Report.

Communications Manager Hayle stated twice a year the council was provided a staff report from the communications division. This report includes a look at 2019 communication and engagement data from all of the City's communication platforms. As a part of the presentation staff shared ideas to increase resident engagement in 2020 that included several new initiatives such as town hall events held live on Facebook, community conversations held in each Council ward, and an educational campaign focusing on community development and planning. He described how the City's new social media software was assisting the City and the Police Department in monitoring public safety threats. Staff commented further on the communications efforts being pursued by the City and requested comments or questions from the Council.

Councilmember Robertson encouraged staff to review and address any links on the City's website and Facebook pages to ensure they are being properly directed.

Councilmember Hovland recommended staff analyze the costs for sending out the City's recreation pamphlets and newsletters to ensure there was a benefit. Mr. Hayle stated the City would need several years to track this information in order to fully understand the cost/benefit of the mailings and said the additional mailings of the *RecConnect* publication have already resulted in increased program registrations.

Councilmember Robertson supported the City hosting a community conversation/live event once per year.

### 3.4 Council Calendar Review

City Clerk Sorensen reviewed the Council Calendar with the Council. She reported the Board/Commission interviews would be held on January 27 and 28, 2020.

Councilmember Swanson commented on the importance of the Chair's role on the City's boards and commissions.

Councilmember Garvais recommended the Council discuss further the current and future board and commission Chairs.

City Manager Wolfe discussed the three proposed Council retreats and provided a high level outline of the items that would be considered at each event.

### **OTHER BUSINESS**

None.

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

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Tom Ryan, Mayor

ATTEST:

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