

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

6:00 p.m.  
Council Chambers  
10801 Town Square Drive

**CALL TO ORDER**

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Pro Tem Jeppson at 6:00 p.m. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this hybrid meeting was held both virtually and in person.

**ROLL CALL**

**PRESENT:** Mayor Pro Tem Julie Jeppson, Councilmembers Andy Garvais, Wes Hovland, Richard Paul (arrived at 6:29 p.m.), Jess Robertson, and Dick Swanson.

**ABSENT:** Mayor Tom Ryan.

Quorum Present.

**ALSO PRESENT:** City Manager Michelle Wolfe; Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Water Resources Manager Rebecca Haug; Deputy Police Chief Dan Szykulski; Finance Director Joe Huss; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Planner Lori Johnson; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

**3.1 Review of SBM Fire Joint Powers Agreement.**

City Manager Wolfe stated in the last quarter of 2019, staff began discussions with the City's Fire Service partners, Mounds View and Spring Lake Park regarding potential amendments to the cities' Joint Powers Agreement (JPA) for fire services. While there were some addenda to the JPA that had been adopted over the years - mostly to approve debt issuances - the JPA itself had not changed since 1990. Blaine's overriding concern was to amend the manner in which costs are allocated - from a formula that varies year-to-year based on each city's respective share of taxable property value and calls for services to a fixed formula that would remain in place for a set number of years.

Ms. Wolfe reported the three cities have worked in the spirit of partnership and cooperation to arrive at a recommended formula that recognizes the economies of scale that is achieved with the joint powers and would be favorable to all three cities. She explained these percentages align fairly well with the current formula that has Blaine paying 76.039%; Mounds View paying 15.998% and Spring Lake Park at 7.963%. It should also be noted that, calculated under the current method in the JPA, the distribution for 2021 would be roughly Blaine at 77.14%, Mounds View at 14.84%, and Spring Lake Park at 8.02%. There are other provisions being considered for amendment under the JPA, most notably a provision that allows the cities to issue debt without an addendum or amendment to the JPA. The JPA is under review by Eckberg Lammers as well.

Councilmember Swanson asked if the number of daytime firefighters in Blaine was taken into consideration within the formula. Ms. Wolfe stated this was a factor that had not driven Blaine's number higher. She

reported Mounds View was working to recruit employees who could serve as daytime responders. She commented further on how the member cities divide the maintenance costs. Finance Director Huss explained SBM pays a stipend to Blaine daytime responders. He stated the proposed formula would be the most equitable going forward.

Councilmember Garvais thanked staff for their efforts on the JPA. He stated he appreciated the reduction and the proposed equitability.

Mayor Pro Tem Jeppson agreed stating she appreciated the fact the JPA would have a steady number versus a moving target.

### 3.2 TH65 PEL Study Update.

Public Works Director Haukaas stated the TH65 Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) study is nearly in final draft form. Staff from MnDOT and the consultant HDR will be presenting the Alternatives Analysis results to the Public Advisory Committee and elected officials during virtual meetings on August 5. He described how the corridor had been broken into three sections and the nuisances within each segment. Staff commented further on the TH65 PEL Study and noted the final report would be written this winter. He reported walkability and pedestrian safety would be addressed within this report, along with a frontage road network. Staff discussed the funding sources for this project and asked for questions or comments.

Councilmember Swanson recommended Lincoln Street be addressed within the plan.

Councilmember Robertson requested staff reiterate why the City was not able to address 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue. Mr. Haukaas explained 109<sup>th</sup> Avenue was a County road and therefore its jurisdiction fell to Anoka County.

Councilmember Garvais questioned why the unique intersections were being proposed. Mr. Haukaas reported these concepts, along with the tight diamond, were being considered due to the impact on private properties while also taking into consideration the amount of right-of-way that was available.

Councilmember Robertson stated she was looking forward to the public comment portion of this process. Mr. Haukaas explained the City would be seeking public feedback and noted the grants being pursued for this project were within the 2024 bonding cycle.

Councilmember Swanson commented after the presidential election there may be dollars available for large infrastructure projects. He indicated it would benefit the City and the County to have this project ready for consideration.

Councilmember Hovland anticipated it would take the City and County 10 to 15 years to complete this corridor. He questioned if this timeframe could be reduced if the project were to receive federal funding. Mr. Haukaas stated the standard grant solicitations were for \$10 million and noted this project would require federal level funding in order to complete a corridor length project.

Councilmember Swanson explained local support for this project and lobbying efforts would be beneficial in moving this project forward at a federal level.

Councilmember Robertson commented on the importance of having Anoka County on board with this project, as well as Congressman Emmer.

Councilmember Paul discussed how long it would take to complete this project and asked if there were any conversations between the City's lobbyists at the State level. Mr. Haukaas reported the City does have a lobbyist working at the State level.

Councilmember Paul thanked staff for their efforts then recommended local and federal representatives for Blaine be invited to be a part of this project.

### 3.3 BWS Branch 3 and Site 7 Trail Permitting.

Mr. Haukaas stated the City of Blaine Economic Development Agency (EDA) completed the wetland banking permitting process for Branch 3 in 2012, which did not include any trails through the wetland bank. In 2014, the city completed the Blaine Wetland Sanctuary (BWS) Master Plan that included a trail system throughout the entire site. In order for the extension of the trails in the BWS the wetland permits for both Branch 3 and Site 7 will need to be amended to include the impacts from the additional proposed trails. The BWS subcommittee reviewed the trail options and are in favor of the Alignment 1 (Central) option. The subcommittee is also in favor of Alignment 2 (West) option as an alternative. However, the regulatory agencies will determine which option is best for the site.

Mr. Haukaas reported this trail extension will create a loss of credits for the EDA in Branch 3. Staff has had internal discussions with EDA staff and are supportive of the trail extension through the Branch 3 site. Staff discussed a swap of credits from Site 7 to Branch 3 to make up for the loss of credits created by the additional proposed trail. The rationale for selecting Critical Connections Ecological Services (CCES) to complete this work is because they completed the original permit and have been intimately involved in the work for both Branch 3 and Site 7 so staff requested a quote to amend the original permits to allow trails to connect the trails from north to south throughout both wetland banks and provide connection to the southern portion of the BWS. The estimated cost is not to exceed \$25,000. Staff commented further on the proposed trail alignment and explained staff and the NRCB prefer Alignment 1.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if it made sense to move forward with this now when the City doesn't have a plan for the surrounding trail connections. She stated she was having a hard time envisioning how this trail system should move forward and asked what the process would be for establishing a trail network. Mr. Haukaas explained the City was seeking approval for one of the trail alignments so one segment of the trail would be set. He reported the City had to work now in order to preserve the trail option.

Councilmember Garvais asked how firm the decision of the regulatory agencies would be. Mr. Haukaas explained the City had made its recommendation for the trail alignment and staff would make a plea for the segment the Council supports. He anticipated the regulatory agencies would support the City's recommendation unless there was an unforeseen impact and the trail had to go another way.

Councilmember Garvais questioned when this matter would go before the regulatory agencies. Mr. Haukaas explained this would be done this fall.

Councilmember Garvais indicated he prefers Alignment 2 because it was longer and had nicer segments of upland.

Councilmember Swanson stated the Council has been seeking public input since the BWS began. He explained Alignment 1 would leave the most amount of wetland untouched.

Mayor Pro Tem Jeppson commented Alignment 1 would not be the most cost effective option when considering the next phase of trail connections to the south. She explained she supported Alignment 2.

Councilmember Garvais stated his number one priority for the trails was to have shaded upland portions along with the best user experience possible. For this reason, he recommended Alignment 2 move forward.

Councilmember Robertson commented it would be helpful for her to have a map with property lines when discussing the BWS and trail alignments and said while she appreciated the recommendation of the NRCB, she stated she supported Alignment 2 at this time.

Mr. Haukaas thanked the Council for their input and stated it may benefit the City to hold a joint meeting with the NRCB to discuss trails then discussed the action the Council would be considering on August 17.

Councilmember Paul questioned how long it would take the regulatory agencies to make a decision on the trail alignment. Water Resources Manager Haug explained the permitting process to amend an application took 18 months to complete.

### 3.4 CARES Funding Update.

Mr. Huss stated on March 27, 2020, the Coronavirus Aid, Relief and Economic Security (CARES) Act was passed into law. The Act provides over \$2.2 trillion in various economic relief and stimulus packages including \$340 billion to state and local governments. On June 25, Governor Walz announced a plan to distribute \$841 million of Minnesota's share to local governmental units; included in that amount is \$5,022,709 allocated to the City of Blaine. An application for these funds was sent to the Department of Revenue on July 9, and the funds were received on July 28. Staff explained the CARES Act requires that the payments from the Coronavirus Relief Fund only be used to cover expenses that are (1) necessary expenditures incurred due to the public health emergency with respect to the Coronavirus Disease 2019 (COVID-19); (2) were not accounted for in the budget most recently approved as of March 27, 2020 (the date of enactment of the CARES Act) for the State or government; and (3) were incurred during the period that begins on March 1, 2020, and ends on December 30, 2020. CARES funds are required to be spent by November 15, 2020 and any unused funds must be returned to the County.

Mr. Huss reported since the announcement of the local distribution, Blaine staff has been working diligently to understand the qualified use of CARES funds and has begun to compile a list of potential uses of the funds. One of these potential uses would be to establish a grant program for small businesses. A resolution to approve such a program will be brought forward for Council's consideration at the regular City Council meeting following this workshop. The city has retained the firm of Baker Tilly (BT) to assist in administering and providing guidance for the Small Business Grant Program.

Councilmember Hovland asked if local businesses would have to apply for the City's program. Mr. Huss explained an application would have to be completed by local business owners. Community Development Director Thorvig commented further on the competitive application process that would be followed for the Small Business Grant Program.

Councilmember Robertson questioned what percentage of CARES Act dollars that could be used for grants. She requested further information on what the expense would be to secure Baker Tilly to assist with the grant administration. Mr. Huss reported the City did not have a set amount for the business grant program and noted the expense for Baker Tilly could be reimbursed through CARES Act dollars. He commented further on City expenses that could be covered by CARES funding.

Councilmember Swanson inquired if the extra patrols at the beach would be covered by CARES Act dollars. Mr. Huss reported this would be covered, along with the extra hours recreation staff spent to maintain the beaches and parks.

Councilmember Garvais stated he would like to see the City spend down all of the CARES Act funds and encouraged the City to help its local businesses and non-profits. He recommended the businesses that have been hit the hardest be offered assistance, especially local non-profits.

### 3.5 COVID-19 Impacts.

Ms. Wolfe stated staff was tracking walk ins at City Hall. She reported 110 walk ins occurred during the week of July 27 through July 31 then discussed the types of visitors coming to City Hall. She also described how staff has been assisting the public online through a new software program and noted the Mary Ann Young Center (MAYC) would be providing foot care appointments as this has been deemed an essential service.

Mr. Haukaas discussed the discolored water situation in the City. He reported a failed filter would be rebuilt this week and the filter media would be operational later this week. He explained all of the filter media had been flushed out of the system. He commented on the amount of water the City filters each month and discussed the natural state of the City's water. It was noted all water in the City's system was treated and available for drinking purposes. He stated he looked forward to having all of the City's filtration systems operational in the near future.

Councilmember Paul asked if staff had begun working to address the broken private fire hydrants. Mr. Haukaas reported staff was working with SBM on this issue. He anticipated it would take staff a year or more to complete this task.

Councilmember Hovland questioned if the new wells had higher levels of manganese. Mr. Haukaas reported the levels were pretty much the same as the other wells in Blaine.

Councilmember Garvais thanked staff for the water update. He recommended staff provide the public with the information provided to the Council this evening as he believed this information would be valuable to the public.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:22 p.m.

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Julie Jeppson, Mayor Pro Tem

ATTEST:

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