

CITY OF BLAINE  
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA  
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP  
Monday, August 17, 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, 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; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Bob Therres; Recreation Manager Nate Monahan; City Engineer Dan Schluender; City Attorney Patrick Sweeney; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Discuss Donation Offer from Blaine Festival for Bandshell at Aquatore Park.

Public Services Manager/Assistant City Manager Therres stated at the July 13 workshop meeting, the Council discussed a donation offer of \$75,000 from the Blaine Festival for the construction of a band shell at Aquatore Park. A band shell is shown in the Parks Master Plan, however the Master Plan has not yet been adopted and the band shell is not in a current Capital Improvement Fund. Since that meeting, the Blaine Festival has worked with an architectural firm to show two examples of the type of band shell they are envisioning for Aquatore Park. They also have a revised cost estimate of \$800,000, up from the \$400,000 listed in the original Parks Master Plan.

Mr. Therres reported the Council had indicated a desire to accept this generous offer with the understanding that it will be several years before a band shell is constructed. The Blaine Festival indicated that they are comfortable making the donation for the band shell knowing the time line. They have also indicated that they could make future donations towards the band shell that could cover up to 50% of its cost. The Blaine Festival Committee does request that if after three years from the date of the donation no progress has been made towards the construction of a band shell, the Blaine Festival can direct that the donated funds given to other eligible organizations of their choosing. If the Council is interested in accepting these funds, they would be placed and tracked in a separate fund, in the event they are not spent for their intended purpose, so the Blaine Festival can direct them to be spent for other eligible purposes.

Councilmember Robertson discussed the cost for the bandshell and saw this project as a massive opportunity to engage the community. She hoped this project could be completed in a timely manner as the bandshell

would be a great asset to the City of Blaine. She indicated she would be open to exploring other options for financing this project other than the Capital Improvement Fund.

Councilmember Paul stated this project was a good opportunity for Blaine and indicated he supported the bandshell moving forward.

Mayor Pro Tem Jeppson questioned if an agreement would be put in place to address the timeline for this project. City Attorney Sweeney commented something should be put in writing. Mr. Therres explained if the Council wanted to move forward an action item would come back to the Council where all of the details would be outlined for this project.

Councilmember Hovland indicated he liked the idea of moving forward with the bandshell and stated soil corrections may have to be considered in order to support the proposed structure. Mr. Therres reported the Parks Master Plan has a proposed location for the bandshell but noted the Park Board and the City Council would have to approve the location and bandshell designs.

Councilmember Swanson supported this item moving forward so long as the Festival Committee supported a three-year timeline.

Mayor Pro Tem Jeppson thanked the Festival Committee for their generous donation to the City.

Council consensus was to move forward with the donation for the bandshell at Aquatore Park as presented at an upcoming Council meeting.

### 3.2 Park and Trail Amended Budget and Playground Replacement Program Discussion.

Recreation Manager Monahan stated on the City Council agenda later this evening are four items requesting Council's approval: one to amend the Parks & Trails Capital Improvement Plan (CIP) and three to approve playground replacement projects. Staff is bringing this forward for discussion to provide additional information prior to the items being considered at the City Council Meeting tonight. A panel including the City Manager, Finance Director, Public Works Director and Parks and Recreation staff have reviewed the Five-Year Park and Trail CIP for the City's Parks and Trails Fund and is recommending a few amendments to the 2020 component of the CIP. The Park Board has reviewed the amendments and is recommending approval of the budget to the City Council for formal adoption. He reported the Parks and Trails Capital Improvement Fund is used for ongoing improvements and replacement of existing capital assets related to the City's parks and trails. The primary funding source for this fund is a general tax levy (\$350,000 for 2020). Additional revenue comes from billboard property leases (\$150,000) which the City Council approved as a funding source in December 2019. A summary of the recommended amendments was reviewed with the Council in detail.

Councilmember Robertson stated she appreciated staff looking at needs and not wants for the City's parks and thanked staff for providing park amenities that were for all ages and abilities. She indicated she supported the proposed amendments.

Councilmember Hovland asked if staff had considered using rip rap instead of funneling the water through a tube for the bridge. Mr. Monahan explained he was following Watershed and staff recommendations for the bridge in order to alleviate the erosion.

Councilmember Hovland commented on the poor condition of backstops and tennis courts in some of the City's parks. He stated the condition of some of the City's parks was concerning. He inquired if the City had a maintenance plan in place to address this equipment. Mr. Monahan discussed the tennis court replacement that recently occurred and understood it was in rough shape. He reported the underlying issue was the soil conditions. He indicated the City does have an overall park maintenance plan in place. He encouraged Councilmember Hovland to let him know which parks were in need of maintenance.

Councilmember Garvais discussed the splash pad and stated he would like to discuss the installation of additional splash pads at other parks in the City at a future workshop meeting.

Mayor Pro Tem Jeppson requested further information regarding the splash pad repairs. Mr. Monahan discussed the repairs that would be completed and noted the new stainless steel parts would last longer than the existing wooden or plastic parts.

Councilmember Robertson questioned if innovative and adaptive park equipment was being considered for City parks. Mr. Monahan stated playground companies have continued to come up with new and innovative playground designs. He reported City staff then works with the Park Board to make recommendations to the City Council. He noted he has two kids and he visits parks often to gain their feedback.

Councilmember Paul requested staff look into fixing the cracked park benches and asked if the playground equipment typically came with a warranty. Mr. Monahan reported the playground equipment came with a 5- or 10-year warranty.

Mr. Monahan commented further on the City's playground replacement plan and the Request for Proposal (RFP) process that was followed for Blaine parks.

Councilmember Garvais thanked staff and the Park Board for considering unique equipment for each of Blaine's parks.

Mayor Pro Tem Jeppson agreed stating she appreciated the regular equipment and adaptive equipment would be side by side and not separated.

### 3.3 Preliminary 2021 EDA Operating Budget.

Finance Director Huss stated workshop budget discussions to this point have covered the EDA only with respect to the proposed 2021 total levy. Staff presented the Preliminary 2021 EDA Operating Budget noting this budget reflects direction provided by the City Council in general budget discussions thus far in 2020. As with the General Fund, the goal is to provide a balanced budget for approval as the Preliminary 2021 EDA Budget at the September 21 EDA meeting, where the EDA will also be adopting its 2021 Preliminary Levy. Staff reported the EDA operating budget is mainly supported through a tax levy. Other major sources of revenue include Tax Increment Financing (TIF) administrative fees and investment earnings on EDA reserves. The EDA is staffed with a full-time Economic Development Specialist and two Community Development staff members: a Planning and Economic Development Tech whose time is split between Community Development (70%) and the EDA (30%); and an Administrative Assistant whose time is also split between Community Development (85%) and the EDA (15%).

Mr. Huss explained for 2021, staff is proposing a reduction in the appropriation for the 3M Open PGA event from \$110,000 to \$60,000. The reduction is available as a result of the EDA making full payment in 2020 for a tournament that wound up being a much smaller event than anticipated due to the COVID-19 pandemic. A

portion of the 2020 payment will be used toward the tournament's 2021 sponsorship. Also being proposed is a reduction in the appropriation for targeted redevelopment programs from \$125,000 to \$60,000. This reduction is available as the EDA has not fully utilized previous years' appropriations for this program and there is now nearly \$1 million in EDA reserves that could be utilized for these programs. Full funding for the 3M Open is scheduled to return in 2022. With the aforementioned reductions, the proposed 2021 EDA operating budget of \$797,350, is a decrease of just over 18% from the 2020 Adopted Budget of \$977,000. Staff commented further on the preliminary EDA budget and requested comments or questions from the Council.

Councilmember Robertson requested further information regarding the increase in TIF revenues from 2020 to 2021. Mr. Huss explained this increase was due to additional TIF districts the Council approved in 2018 and 2019.

Councilmember Paul questioned if the EDA budget reduction would impact the overall levy. Mr. Huss stated this would depend on the total overall amount of the levy. He reported the proposed reduced EDA levy would support the EDA needs of the City in 2021.

Councilmember Paul asked how long the EDA had to have a reserve fund without putting it into use. Mr. Huss commented those funds are in place for EDA purposes.

Councilmember Swanson inquired if the monument sign expense was to update the City's signs after the census was complete. Community Development Director Thorvig indicated this was for monument signs inside the City. He stated the population signs on the freeway were under MnDOT control. He anticipated these signs would be updated with the 2020 census information.

Councilmember Robertson suggested the \$200,000 savings not be appropriated somewhere else but rather recommended the levy be reduced by \$200,000.

Further discussion ensued regarding how the reduction should be managed by the City.

Councilmember Garvais explained he appreciated the proposed reduction in the EDA levy. He stated he would like to see the tax levy for the EDA in 2022 that this levy be kept at \$650,000 and that the amount not just be bumped up. He thanked staff for seeking out greater efficiencies and cost saving measures.

Mr. Thorvig discussed the Economic Specialist position and noted he would not be filling this position in 2020 due to the hiring freeze. He hoped to fill this position in 2021.

### 3.4 COVID-19 Impacts.

City Manager Wolfe stated staff has been discussing the preliminary budget and new hires that could be completed in 2021. She explained residents would not be able to reserve the Lexington Complex for small group meetings. She reported MAYC would be hosting a flu shot clinic in conjunction with Walgreens on September 29. She noted foot clinics were being held at MAYC and one-on-one appointments were being taken. She stated concerts in the park would be held through the end of August and staff was looking into continuing this through September. In addition, parks staff was looking into a drive in movie theater event for August 21 and a safety plan was being drafted.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:15 p.m.

ATTEST:

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Julie Jeppson, Mayor Pro Tem

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