

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Wednesday, January 20, 2021

6:30PM

Virtual meeting due to COVID-19 pandemic

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 6:30PM. Due to the COVID-19 pandemic this meeting was held virtually.

ROLL CALL

PRESENT: Mayor Tim Sanders, Councilmembers Wes Hovland, Julie Jeppson, Chris Massoglia, Richard Paul, Jess Robertson, and Jason Smith.

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 Engineer Dan Schluender; City Planner Lori Johnson; City Attorney Chris Nelson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Discuss 10251 Xylite Street Zoning and EDA Interest (PID 22-31-23-33-0015).

Community Development Director Thorvig stated the property at 10251 Xylite Street is currently owned by Premier Banks. The property was previously owned by Gary Larson and Premier Banks obtained the property via foreclosure in 2019. Mr. Larson was a landowner partner for The Sanctuary residential neighborhood to the north when it was developed in early 2000s. Even though the properties were under the same original ownership, the subject property was not planned to be part of The Sanctuary residential development and therefore was not rezoned. The property is 18.50 acres with approximately 12 acres of upland. A majority of the wetland is located along the north and northeast portion of the property.

Mr. Thorvig reported a development proposal was submitted in 2017 by Park Construction. Park Construction intended to develop the property for offices, interior equipment storage and an outdoor contractor yard. The proposal essentially maximized the site by filling 2.5 acres of wetland on the north and west portions of the site. The project required a conditional use permit (CUP) approval by the City Council. The CUP was denied by the City Council and the project did not move forward. During the process concerns were brought forward by the adjacent residential property owners which generally focused on negative residential property value impacts, noise/odor, and visual impacts due to extensive outdoor storage. Screening efforts were made by the developer to attempt to mitigate these concerns. Discussion also occurred about the compatibility of I-2 zoning adjacent to residential property. It was noted staff does not recommend the EDA purchase this property. Staff commented further on the history of the property and requested feedback on how to proceed.

Councilmember Hovland asked who currently owned the property. Mr. Thorvig reported the property was currently owned by Premier Bank. The property was foreclosed on in 2019.

Councilmember Smith explained he lived quite close to this property. He supported the rezoning of the property to I-1 and recommended a buffer be put in place.

Councilmember Jeppson indicated she would like to see the City working with the long-standing Blaine business in order to keep them in the community. She stated she would like to see a buffer in place and recommended the site be rezoned to I-1.

Councilmember Robertson agreed with Councilmember Jeppson's comments. She explained she did not typically support rezoning a property unless a clear plan was in place. She indicated she would like to understand more about the project in order to know what type of buffer would be required. She did not support the EDA purchasing the property. Mr. Thorvig explained the only type of assistance he was proposing at this time would be for the EDA or City to assist with the land buffer.

Councilmember Hovland stated the proposed buffer would assist with both visual and noise concerns. He questioned if changing the zoning would impact the surrounding properties. Mr. Thorvig commented this was discussed with the Park Construction proposal, which was proposing an intensive I-2 use. He anticipated if the parcel was rezoned to I-1 the adjacent property values impacts would be minimal.

Councilmember Hovland supported the property being rezoned to I-1. He indicated this would give the City more control over the type of businesses that would be on the property.

Councilmember Smith discussed how lots within The Sanctuary were rezoned. He was of the opinion one of the outlots should have been zoned I-2.

Councilmember Paul supported the property being rezoned to I-1 with a buffer. He agreed the Council needed more information about the proposed project. He requested further information from staff on how this project would proceed. Mr. Thorvig discussed with the Council the process this item would follow.

Further discussion ensued regarding the noise that would be generated from an I-1 use.

Councilmember Jeppson commented the Park Construction use would not have been a good fit for the neighborhood and supported rezoning this property to I-1.

Councilmember Massoglia stated he was open to the rezoning. He explained he did not know how much the buffer would cost the City and would like to know more about this.

Councilmember Hovland encouraged the Council to keep in mind the amount of buffering would depend on the type of use that located on the property.

Council consensus was to support rezoning the property to I-1 and consider creation of a buffer if needed after further discussion.

3.2 TH65 Update.

Public Works Director Haukaas stated improvements to TH 65 have been identified as a primary independent priority in the City of Blaine Strategic Plan. Since 2017, staff has been working with MnDOT to

update the TH65 Corridor study from 2005 that led to the 121st Avenue, Main Street, and 129th Avenue bridges over TH65. The current work and project will look to address congestion and safety issues along TH65 from CR10 on the south in Spring Lake Park to Bunker Lake Boulevard in Ham Lake. Any transportation project impacting large areas is required to complete a NEPA review (the National Environmental Policy Act). This process is typically not started until all funding for a conceptual project is identified and agreement was made to be part of a pilot project for MnDOT to create a Planning and Environmental Linkages (PEL) Study. The PEL is a newer process meant to perform a large amount of the upfront work and 'jumpstart' the NEPA process. The PEL was used to get to a final three viable alternatives that are both economically feasible and constructible.

Mr. Haukaas reported the City is focusing on 99th Avenue as the intersection to a City street that can have the most impact on improving the corridor. The City is also supporting Anoka County in its future work at 109th Avenue. The 99th Avenue intersection and associated frontage road access improvements have been estimated to have a cost in the range of \$29M plus potential right of way acquisition. Staff provided the Council with a general update on current issues and concerns within the corridor while also addressing potential funding options and grant opportunities.

Mayor Sanders thanked Mr. Haukaas for his tremendous efforts on TH65 project then commented on the recent meeting held with the MNDOT Commissioner of Traffic and how it was an honor to be a part of the excellent team of Blaine staff and Councilmembers. He explained this project was a very high priority for him as it was for all members of the community.

Councilmember Hovland asked if it would benefit the City to have a team lobby for federal dollars for this project then asked if the PEL study had an expiration date. Mr. Haukaas explained staff would begin working locally with federal representatives and taking advice from its lobbyists. He reported staff was also monitoring all grant opportunities that could be used to assist with funding the TH65 project. He discussed the base assumptions within the PEL study and stated this study did have a shelf life. He reported staff was investigating the future needs for the corridor and if additional lanes would be necessary.

Councilmember Robertson thanked Mr. Haukaas for his efforts on the TH65 project. She appreciated the fact that staff was seeking its own funding for this project. She stated it was exciting to see momentum finally beginning to take place for this corridor. Mr. Haukaas thanked the Council for their kind words and explained he appreciated the clear direction that had been provided by the Council.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:25PM.

Tim Sanders, Mayor

ATTEST:

Catherine Sorensen, CMC, City Clerk

Submitted by Minute Maker Secretarial