

CITY OF BLAINE
ANOKA COUNTY, MINNESOTA
CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP
Monday, September 20, 2021

6:00PM
Council Chambers
10801 Town Square Drive

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Sanders at 6:00PM.

ROLL CALL

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

ABSENT: Councilmember Julie Jeppson.

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: Community Development Director Erik Thorvig; Public Works Director Jon Haukaas; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Brian Podany; Finance Director Joe Huss; Utility Billing Manager Kyle Howard; City Engineer Dan Schluender; Community Standards Director Bob Fiske; City Attorney Chris Nelson; Communications Manager Ben Hayle; and City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

3.1 Organic Waste Program Discussion.

Finance Director Huss stated representatives from Anoka County have approached the city to see if there is interest in establishing an organic waste collection program. The program would be of no cost to the city or Blaine residents as SCORE (Select Committee on Recycling and the Environment) funds are available through Anoka County to fund the program start-up as well as ongoing costs. Before proceeding, staff is checking council's interest in establishing such a program. Staff commented further on the specifics of the program and explained the program would be publicized through the city's website, newsletter, and utility bills, and residents who would like to participate could sign up for a free starter kit that includes a Biodegradable Products Institute (BPI) certified compostable bag. Organics would be collected in the bag and dropped off at City Hall in the container designated for organics recycling. It was noted this was an issue that was gaining interest from the public. Staff requested direction from the council on how to proceed.

Jill Kern, Anoka County representative, explained she supervised the waste and recycling collection in the county. She reported SCORE dollars are available to assist with increasing recycling rates. She noted the state has mandated a 75% recycling rate by 2030 and explained Anoka County was currently at 52%. She explained the county had eight years to reach this goal. She noted organics tend to make up 25% to 40% of waste, which meant the diversion of organics would greatly assist the county in reaching its goal.

Councilmember Hovland stated if curbside pickup was considered for organics, he anticipated there would be difficulty with odors and animals and questioned how the city could protect against that. He was concerned that if the city relied on drop off sites, that not many residents would participate. Mr. Huss explained odors and animals were already a concern for garbage containers and this program would separate the organic materials from garbage bins. He stated staff was trying to see if there was interest in beginning an organics program at a drop off site noting curbside pickup would be considered in the future. Ms. Kern discussed how other municipalities were addressing organics recycling. She reported it would be important for the city to get residents educated and engaged. She stated starting with several drop off sites would be key and the city could then learn from there.

Councilmember Hovland asked how residents would know what could be placed in organics recycling and what happened to the organic matter after it was dropped off. Mike Moroz, Walters Recycling, reported organics matter is brought to a different disposal facility. He believed the right way to start this program was through a public drop off site. He discussed the organics programs in place in Coon Rapids and Lino Lakes. Ms. Kern reported there were seven cities in the county that already had drop off sites for organics. She explained through education residents would learn what can and cannot be put in with organics.

Councilmember Robertson stated she supported the city pursuing an organics waste program. She indicated the city would have to do a great deal of education with residents. She questioned what the cost would be to maintain this program long term. Mr. Huss indicated there would be no initial costs to the city. He reported the cost for a drop off site would be covered through SCORE funds. He explained if this program were to expand to curbside, he was uncertain if the residents would have to cover the cost for the organics bags. He stated staff would learn more over time as this program develops.

Councilmember Paul thanked staff for bringing this matter forward. He was of the opinion this was a good program and was pleased there were grant funds available to assist with the start up of this program. He commented his only concern would be how the city would manage traffic and the dumping of inappropriate items at drop off sites. Mr. Huss stated staff would have to consider how the flow of traffic would be managed at the drop off sites. He explained staff has looked at a special key that could be used to enter the organics drop off area and noted the areas would be monitored by city staff, which would discourage dumping of other items. He noted Blaine was not the first city in the county to initiate a program which

meant staff could look to the county and other communities for assistance. Ms. Kern commented on her experience with organics recycling in Ramsey County noting traffic flow was not a concern.

Councilmember Hovland agreed this was a program that has benefits. He indicated the city had to start somewhere with this program and stated he supported an organics program moving forward.

Councilmember Massoglia asked if the SCORE grant could be used to cover staff time. Mr. Huss explained some staff time could be covered by the grant funding.

Councilmember Massoglia questioned if the SCORE funds could be used for more recycling stations at parks. Ms. Kern reported this would be an eligible expense.

Council consensus was to move forward with a pilot organic waste program with drop off sites.

3.2 Housing & Rental Licensing Update.

Community Standards Director Fiske stated the last housing/rental license update was provided in 2018. He provided the council with a picture of the current rental situation within the city, discussed current housing/licensing policies pertaining to short term rental and started a discussion regarding the increasing number of state licensed residential care facilities located within the city and some of the recent concerns and issues that related to these facilities. Staff reported the city conducts 2,500 rental inspections annually. The number of rental units in the community was discussed and it was noted this number would continue to increase. Staff commented further on the regulations in place for licensed residential care facilities.

Mayor Sanders indicated he supported the council having a larger discussion regarding the renting of individuals rooms in homes and short term rentals. He stated he wanted to support the events in the city but was concerned with some of the activities that was occurring at short term rentals.

Councilmember Hovland commented he was concerned the city was overreaching given the fact residential care facilities were licensed and inspected by the state. He encouraged the city consider where this program began and why. He explained the city used to have problems with code enforcement, home rentals and rental safety. He indicated the city had no idea how many homes were being rented which was why the rental licensing program was started. He believed this program has made a big difference in the community, but stated he did not want to see the city overstepping. He encouraged the city to be careful and return to the basics with this program. Safety Services Manager/Police Chief Podany explained this

program has not been reviewed by the council since 2018. He noted this item was also brought to the council because there were several problems that need to be addressed regarding VRBO's becoming party houses and a residential care facility in Ward 3. He understood the city did not want to duplicate services with the state, but commented there were several rental properties and licensed residential facilities that were concerns in the city. Mr. Fiske commented further on the city's rental inspection process.

Councilmember Massoglia agreed the city did not want to unnecessarily duplicate services. He stated he appreciated the fact staff and the police chief had looked into this matter. He explained if there were areas where owners can be called into account, he would like to see this done.

Mayor Sanders reported he supported housing safety and protection of the police department or city staff in order to bring properties into compliance with city code.

Councilmember Hovland commented it may benefit the city to put a registration process in place for short term rentals, with triggers that would require licensing if the property has too many police calls. He stated this may be one way to address the properties that have repeat police calls. Mr. Huss clarified it may be difficult to license only properties that receive complaints.

Councilmember Robertson indicated it would be difficult for her to create a policy to address the few properties that were concerning knowing full well the majority of landlords were doing a great job. She did not want to send a message to the community that all were being punished because a few property owners.

Mayor Sanders stated he wanted to ensure the police department and staff had the proper tools to address problem properties. City Attorney Nelson commented the trend in a lot of cities was to create a licensure process for short term rentals. He noted the advantage of this would be that this would allow staff to create an ordinance that addresses the city's concerns with short term rentals.

Councilmember Paul asked what properties the most problems were coming from. Mr. Fiske stated the most complaints come from residential care facilities, but noted most of the complaints were not violations. However, he noted there has been a rise in police calls for short term rentals. Police Chief Podany commented further on the calls the department receives from the public on short term rentals and residential care facilities.

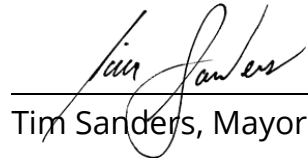
Councilmember Massoglia stated he would be in favor of moving forward with city licensing for residential care facilities, especially if they are not doing their due diligence. He noted he would also be in favor of looking at a short term rental ordinance.

Council consensus was to begin discussions on how to address short-term rentals and some of the activity that can occur as a result, either at an upcoming workshop or council retreat, and to explore if the city can license residential care facilities in addition to the state to better address concerns.

OTHER BUSINESS

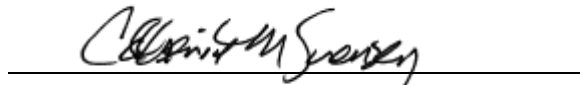
Councilmember Robertson provided the council with an update regarding a marketing video project she was working on that will focus on development/redevelopment opportunities in the city.

The Workshop was adjourned at 7:14PM.



Tim Sanders, Mayor

ATTEST:



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