



City of Blaine Anoka County, Minnesota Minutes - Final City Council Workshop

Blaine City Hall
10801 Town Sq Dr NE
Blaine, MN 55449

Thursday, December 1, 2016

6:30 PM

Cloverleaf Farm Room A

NOTICE OF WORKSHOP MEETING

1 Call to Order

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Ryan at 6:30 p.m.

2 Roll Call

Quorum Present.

ALSO PRESENT: City Manager Clark Arneson; Planning and Community Development Director Bryan Schafer; Finance Director Joe Huss; Police Chief/Safety Services Manager Chris Olson; SBM Fire Chief Charlie Smith; Communications Technician Roark Haver; Senior Engineering Technician Al Thorp; City Clerk Catherine Sorensen.

Present: 6 - Mayor Ryan, Councilmember Hovland, Councilmember Swanson, Councilmember Clark, Councilmember Herbst, and Councilmember King

Absent: 1 - Councilmember Bourke

3 New Business

3-1 [WS 16-73](#)

UNITY/MERCY HOSPITALS MERGER

City Manager Arneson reported there were two representatives from Mercy & Unity Hospital, Sara Criger and Craig Malm, to address the City Council.

Sara Criger, Mercy Hospital President, provided the Council with a presentation on Allina Health's goal of advancing health care in the North Metro. She commented on the awards and recognitions Unity and Mercy had recently received, noting Mercy Hospital was the only Five Star hospital in the metro area. She discussed hospitals historical role, along with how the vision would be changing in the future. She explained the central focus was now to reward patients for health and wellness while also building primary care relationships. She reported that status quo was no longer an option and specialty programs were now required. It was noted surgical cases were down 15% over the last five years.

Ms. Criger described the new path the hospital would be charting stating the

most frequently used services on both campuses will remain. In addition, the hospitals will work to improve access to high quality specialty services while making strategic investments that allow both campuses to remain vibrant long-term. She understood there was a need to better address mental health and addiction services. She commented on the great success of the mother baby center expansion and discussed how Allina Health would continue to care for its community.

Ms. Criger reported Mercy and Unity would be applying for a single license and would operate as one hospital as of January 1, 2017. She commented on the positive benefits of both campuses operating under a single license. She then reviewed the construction projects planned for the coming years for both campuses, stating it was Allina's hope to be open and available as a resource to the City and the community as an engaged partner in health, well-being and vibrancy.

Councilmember Hovland addressed the mental health concerns and asked how the State was addressing this issue. Ms. Criger stated there were no State beds available to assist with mental health. She indicated the State was not helping regional hospitals in any way. She believed this was a national issue that should be addressed by the State.

Councilmember Swanson asked if more beds would be added at Unity and Mercy. Ms. Criger said she hoped to add more beds in the future. She discussed how the hospitals were working to integrate mental health care into its overall care. She reported Mercy did have a mental health suite.

Mayor Ryan agreed that mental health and addiction services were a growing concern for the community.

Councilmember Hovland questioned how the police department went about identifying individuals in need of mental health care. Police Chief Olson described how officers made a determination. He provided further comment on the growing concern of mental health and how local jails were overcrowded with individuals in need of mental health services.

Further discussion ensued regarding mental health issues.

Councilmember Clark requested the hospital presentation be placed on the City's website for the public to view.

Discussed, direction to staff.

3-2 [WS 16-74](#)

ASPEN GARDENS LAND USE DISCUSSION (LEXINGTON AVENUE)

Planning and Community Development Director Schafer reviewed the history of

the Aspen Gardens project on Lexington Avenue stating the approved project consisted of a 41-unit assisted-level senior housing in a one-story building. The group that had presented those plans has had ownership and investor changes and it will not be feasible to move forward as they had proposed. Staff reported a new buyer has come forward and has looked at the approved plans and has determined that they also do not want to move forward on the 41-units. As an alternative, they have proposed a product and density change that includes the following:

- 16-18 units of for sale townhomes-market rate at \$275,000
- 3 buildings of 5-6 units each on the 3.41-acre site
- Two-story fronts with architecture and materials similar to the pictures
- Unit entrances facing Lexington Ave and garages in the rear
- Similar engineering features in terms of grading, storm water and site access

Community Development Director Schafer reported this is significant product change and the townhomes would look much different along Lexington Avenue given the two-story height and closer proximity to the roadway. The project generally fits with the adopted MDR (Medium Density Residential) land use designation although on the very low end of the density scale at 4.7 units per acre. The site is currently zoned DF (Development Flex) and therefore any project change such as this would require a new CUP approval through Planning Commission and City Council.

Community Development Director Schafer stated Anoka County would also have to approve of the change as the County still owns the site. This was to be part of an ownership pass-thru between Anoka County, Blaine EDA and the developer. The 16-18 units would have similar traffic generation numbers as the 41 units of senior housing. Staff requested direction on whether the City Council feels that this is an appropriate product change for this site.

Councilmember Swanson said he liked the size and price of the proposed units but did not believe the new project fit properly along Lexington Avenue given the high level of traffic that would be generated from the townhomes. He said he was also concerned with the fact that a 16-unit townhome association would have a difficult time funding itself.

Councilmember Clark stated if the site did not have townhomes, how could it be used. Community Development Director Schafer stated the townhomes were being offered as an alternative to the 41-unit assisted living project.

Mayor Ryan commented further on the 41-unit assisted living project.

Brent Thompson discussed how tight the banking market was at this time. He said he understood there was a patient seller for this property and was hoping

to get a feel if this project was viable.

Councilmember Hovland said he had concerns with the small size of the townhome association.

Further discussion ensued regarding the traffic levels that would be generated by an assisted living facility versus the townhome project.

Councilmember King stated he supported the townhome project so long as the association concerns were addressed.

Discussed

The Workshop recessed at 7:30 p.m.

Recessed.

The Workshop reconvened at 8:03 p.m.

Reconvened.

3-3 [WS 16-75](#)

SANITATION FUND HARDSHIP POLICY

Finance Director Huss stated at the November 10 Workshop, Council directed staff to develop a fee schedule that allows those customers with premium service to have six (6) bulky items, as defined in the City's contract with Walters, picked up annually at no charge. Additionally, premium service customers will also be allowed to rent roll-off dumpsters at discounted rates to dispose of construction debris and carpeting. Premium service customers will also be provided a 15% discount on disposal fees if they haul material themselves to Walters transfer station. Council also directed staff to develop a policy that allows for discounted fees in the event a resident experiences a hardship that would result in a vacancy in the home or a hardship that would require the renovation or remodeling of a home. Staff requested comment from the Council on the policy.

Councilmember Swanson suggested a 50% fee reduction for those residents facing a hardship.

Councilmember King supported a 50% fee reduction as well. He asked who would be recouping the roll-off fees. Finance Director Huss explained the City would have to cover the entire cost of the roll-off and then would receive 50% of the fees in payment.

Further discussion ensued regarding how the City would make a determination on hardships.

Councilmember Clark stated he could support paying 50% of a 7-day roll-off

expenses for those deemed to have a hardship.

Councilmember Herbst said he wanted to ensure the City's low garbage rates would be maintained. He said he feared the current low rates would increase if services were expanded.

Councilmember Swanson stated he did not believe services were being expanded by offering a discount to those families facing a hardship.

Councilmember Herbst said a hardship program would be difficult for staff to administer. Finance Director Huss confirmed a hardship was to be considered the need for families to clean out a home after the loss of a loved one.

Councilmember Clark questioned the drop off and pickup fees for a roll-off dumpster. Finance Director Huss explained the drop off fee was \$127.50. He indicated there was also a fee per ton for the material within the dumpster.

Councilmember Clark suggested the City offer \$300 in assistance to those facing a hardship (death of a family member) to be put towards the expense of a roll-off dumpster.

The Council supported this recommendation.

Discussed, direction to staff.

Other Business

None.

ADJOURN

The Workshop was adjourned at 8:22 p.m.