

City of Blair Regular Council Meeting
September 8, 2026

The Mayor and City Council met in regular session in the City Council Chambers on September 8, 2026, at 7:00 p.m. The following were present: Gary Banner, Brent Clark, James Letcher, Kent Long, Rick Paulsen, Kevin Willis, and Frank Wolff. Absent: Kirk Highfill. Also present were Deputy City Administrator Barrow, Deputy City Administrator Heaton, Deputy City Administrator Scott, City Attorney Talbot, Library Director Lukert, IT Director White, Public Safety & Communications Coordinator Dunn, and Police Chief Kinsey.

The Mayor publicly stated to all in attendance that a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act was available for review and indicated the location of such copy posted in the room where the meeting was being held. Notice of the meeting was given in advance thereof by publication in the Washington County Enterprise as shown by the affidavit of publication filed in the City Clerk's office. Notice of the meeting was simultaneously given to the Mayor and all members of the City Council, and a copy of their acknowledgement of receipt of notice and the agenda is filed in the City Clerk's office. Availability of the agenda was communicated in the advance notice and in the notice to the Mayor and Council of this meeting. All proceedings hereafter shown were taken while the convened meeting was open to the attendance of the public.

Agenda Item #1, #2 and #3 – Mayor Rump called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m. followed by Roll Call and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item #4 – Consent Agenda approved the following: 4a) Approval of Minutes of the August 25, 2026, meeting, 4b) Clerk report of Mayoral Action of August 25, 2026, meeting, 4c) City Department reports for August 2026, 4d. Claims as recommended by the Finance Committee, and 4e) Consider approval of an addition to the Licensed Area in reference to a liquor license for the American Legion Hain-Flynn, 103 S. 12th St., Blair, NE to add a 20 x 32 Beer Garden to the existing building. Motion by Rick Paulsen, second by Kevin Willis to approve the Consent Agenda. Council members voted as follows: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #5 – Michaela Valentin, 1919 Aksarben Dr, Omaha with OPPD appeared before the Mayor and City Council to provide an update on the Integrated System Plan (ISP) that OPPD is working on and seeking public official and public feedback. The ISP is a mandatory five-year planning document required by the Western Area Power Association (WAPA), covering transmission, generation, distribution, and all generating facility resources across OPPD territory. Valentine noted the current national power crisis as context for the plan's urgency. Modeling engineers are currently building forecasts, with a finalized plan expected by end of 2026. Council members and the public were invited to provide feedback. Public officials were asked to submit feedback directly to OPPD's Government Affairs team. The public was directed to OPPD's website where an "Integrated System Plan" links to a survey. A virtual public workshop is scheduled for September 22nd at 5:00 PM, open to both officials and the public, with registration available on the same website. Valentine confirmed she would follow up with council members via email with all relevant links and information.

Agenda Item #6 – Deputy City Administrator Scott presented Ordinance 2627, the Annual Appropriation Bill for fiscal year 2026-2027, appropriating \$228,818.20 in total annual expenditures as

required by state submission. Council member Willis introduced Ordinance No. 2627 to adopt the Budget Statement for FY 2026-2027 and to be termed the "Annual Appropriation Bill" appropriating such sums of money necessary to defray all necessary expenses and liabilities of the City of Blair, Nebraska for FY 2026-2027.

AN ORDINANCE TO ADOPT THE BUDGET STATEMENT AND TO BE TERMED THE "ANNUAL APPROPRIATION BILL"; TO APPROPRIATE SUMS FOR NECESSARY EXPENSES AND LIABILITIES OF THE CITY OF BLAIR, NEBRASKA, FOR THE FISCAL YEAR COMMENCING ON THE FIRST DAY OF OCTOBER, 2026 AND SPECIFYING THE OBJECT AND PURPOSE OF EACH APPROPRIATION AND THE AMOUNT FOR EACH OBJECT AND PURPOSE; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH; PROVIDING WHEN THIS ORDINANCE SHALL BE IN FULL FORCE AND EFFECT AND PROVIDING FOR PUBLICATION OF THIS ORDINANCE IN PAMPHLET FORM.

Council member Kevin Willis moved that the statutory rule requiring reading on three different days be suspended. Council member Gary Banner seconded the motion to suspend the rules and upon roll call vote the following Council members voted: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. The motion to suspend the rules was adopted by three-fourths of the Council and the statutory rule was declared suspended for consideration of said Ordinance.

Said Ordinance was then read by title and thereafter Council member Rick Paulsen moved for final passage of the Ordinance, which motion was seconded by Council member James Letcher. The Mayor then stated the question was "Shall Ordinance No. 2627 be passed and adopted?" Upon roll call vote, the following Council members voted: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. The passage of said Ordinance having been concurred in by a majority of all members of the Council, the Council President declared the Ordinance adopted. A true, correct, and complete copy of said Ordinance can be found in the Ordinance Record Book.

Agenda Item #7 – Deputy City Administrator Scott presented Resolution 2026-099 setting property tax levies for the City of Blair and Blair Airport Authority for FY2026-2027. Key figures included: General Fund levy of \$2,464,691.96, Street Fund levy of \$278,870, and Debt Service of \$811,765 (up significantly from approximately \$509,000 the prior year) for a total of \$3,564,326.96. The total assessed value of the city increased 9.07% to approximately \$1,210,938,586. The proposed total tax rate is 0.294344 per \$100 of assessed value, broken down as: General Fund 0.203536, Street Fund 0.023772, and Debt Service 0.067036. The General Fund rate decreased by approximately 3.98%. Overall, the proposed budget requires a 25.8% increase in property tax from the previous year, driven primarily by the debt service increase. The Airport Authority tax rate was set at 0.028624 per \$100, approximately the same as the prior year as airport debt did not change. Council member Letcher introduced Resolution 2026-099 setting the levy for the City of Blair and Blair Airport Authority for FY 2026-2027. Motion by James Letcher, second by Rick Paulsen to adopt Resolution No. 2026-099 as presented. Council members voted as follows: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #8 – Deputy City Administrator Heaton presented the one-year street improvement plan for FY2026-2027, noting all details had been covered at a prior meeting. Work on budgeted street projects is expected to begin the following week, with a goal of completion before the end of September. Discussion touched on the 66 Heights overlay project, which has been well-received and is holding up well over a year later. The Transportation Committee confirmed the plan must include all potential projects even if not all will be executed, as omitting items would require a state plan amendment. Council member Letcher introduced Resolution 2026-100 approving the one-year plan for street improvements for FY 2026-2027. Motion by James Letcher, second by Brent Clark to adopt Resolution No. 2026-100 as presented. Council members voted as follows: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried.

Agenda Item #9 – Deputy City Administrator Scott presented Ordinance 2628, amending Section 8109 of the Blair Municipal Code regarding placement of political signs on city right-of-way. The amendment aligns city code with state statutes, as the existing ordinance was more restrictive and potentially vulnerable to legal challenges on free-speech grounds. Key changes included: removing the restriction that signs shall not exceed 10 square feet in area; adding language that signs shall not be placed within 200 feet of a polling place, ballot drop box, or designated voting building on property not under common ownership; and removing the restriction that signs cannot be installed more than four weeks before an election or must be removed within seven days after election day. The definition of political signs was also removed. Council member Paulson raised concerns about the number of changes, particularly the lack of size limits and year-round display allowance and questioned how political signs might blur into advertising. Police Chief Kinsey clarified there are other sections of city code and state transportation statutes address size, sight-line obstruction, and placement near intersections. It was noted that these changes had informally been in effect since council member Brad Anderson's tenure, with the code book physically marked up but never formally amended. The Mayor expressed personal preference for the prior time restrictions but acknowledged the legal necessity of aligning with state law. Council member Letcher introduced Ordinance 2628 amending Section 8-109 of the Municipal Code of the City of Blair, Nebraska in reference to placement of political signs on city right of way.

AN ORDINANCE AMENDING SECTION 8-109 OF THE MUNICIPAL CODE OF THE CITY OF BLAIR, NEBRASKA IN REFERENCE TO PLACEMENT OF POLITICAL SIGNS ON CITY RIGHT OF WAY; REPEALING ALL ORDINANCES IN CONFLICT HEREWITH AND PROVIDING WHEN THIS ORDINANCE SHALL BE IN FORCE AND EFFECT AND PROVIDING FOR PUBLICATION OF THIS ORDINANCE IN PAMPHLET FORM.

Council member James Letcher moved that the statutory rule requiring reading on three different days be suspended. Council member Rick Paulsen seconded the motion to suspend the rules and upon roll call vote the following Council members voted: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. The motion to suspend the rules was adopted by three-fourths of the Council and the statutory rule was declared suspended for consideration of said Ordinance.

Said Ordinance was then read by title and thereafter Council member James Letcher moved for final passage of the Ordinance, which motion was seconded by Council member Rick Paulsen. The Mayor then stated the question was "Shall Ordinance No. 2628 be passed and adopted?" Upon roll call vote, the following Council members voted: Gary Banner: Nay, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea:

6, Nay: 1, Absent: 1. The passage of said Ordinance having been concurred in by a majority of all members of the Council, the Council President declared the Ordinance adopted. A true, correct, and complete copy of said Ordinance can be found in the Ordinance Record Book.

Agenda Item #10 – Deputy City Administrator Barrow introduced David McFarland as the city's new Director of Planning and Zoning, starting September 21, 2026. McFarland is a certified planner, an alumnus of Indiana University of Pennsylvania, and completed graduate work at Iowa State University. The position attracted close to 80 applications, which were narrowed to a shortlist and Mr. McFarland rose quickly to the top. He is relocating from Blair County, Pennsylvania and he and his wife plan to move around September 18th. McFarland addressed the Mayor and Council expressing his eagerness to begin, noting he is spending time with outgoing staff to absorb institutional knowledge before his start date to avoid the two-year learning curve he experienced in a prior role.

Agenda Item #11 – Motion by Brent Clark to recess at 7:28 p.m. for an Executive Session stating the closed session is needed to discuss possible litigation involving the City of Blair and to preserve the attorney-client privilege. Motion was seconded by Council member James Letcher. Council members voted as follows: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried and stated the closed session will be limited to the following subjects: to discuss potential litigation and preserve the attorney-client privilege. Council member Brent Clark moved to come out of executive session and reconvened as a City Council at 7:49 p.m. which motion was seconded by Council member James Letcher. Council members voted as follows: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried and stated that the closed session was limited to the following subjects: discussion of potential litigation and preserving the attorney-client privilege.

Agenda Item #12 – Motion by Gary Banner, second by Rick Paulsen to adjourn the meeting 7:49 p.m. Council members voted as follows: Gary Banner: Yea, Brent Clark: Yea, Kirk Highfill: Absent, James Letcher: Yea, Kent Long: Yea, Rick Paulsen: Yea, Kevin Willis: Yea, Frank Wolff: Yea. All Council members voted: Yea: 7, Nay: 0, Absent: 1. Mayor Rump declared the motion carried.

The following claims were approved: AAA Garage Door, Svc, 3118; Abe's Trash Svc, Svc, 252.62; Access Technologies Inc, Svc, 197.77; Acker, Derek, Ref, 50.00; Adams & Sullivan Pc Llo, Svc, 2325.00; Aflac, Ins, 2310.00; Agr Roofing And Construction, Ref, 50.00; Aguilar, Kelesey, Ref, 50.00; Air Products & Chemicals, Inv, 4931.84; Amazon Sales Inc, Inv, 2050.58; American Fence Company Llc, Svc, 2290.00; American Underground Supply, Svc, 1738.33; Anderson, Desiree E, Ref, 50.00; Aoi Corporation, Svc, 484.38; Arp Land Llc, Ref, 500.00; Arps Red-E-Mix Inc, Inv, 12121.00; Assethr, Pyrl, 237.54; Automatic Systems Co, Svc, 6016.62; B & B Technologies Inc, Inv, 132.66; Baird Holm Llp, Svc, 19744.00; Bi-State Motor Parts, Inv, 287.77; Bk Painting Inc, Svc, 1200.00; Blair Ace Hardware, Inv, 1272.43; Blair Fire Department, Inv, 3337.02; Blue Cross & Blue Shield Of Ne, Ins, 137445.18; Bobcat Of Omaha, Inv, 1310.93; Boquet, Hannah, Ref, 50.00; Brandi Lee Bjork, Reimb, 15.23; Broucek, Willard, Ref, 50.00; Burns, Kim, Ref, 50.00; Calvin Poulsen, Svc, 3380.00; Cdw Government Inc, Inv, 5422.42; Central States Industrial Supply Inc, Inv, 3702.02; Chenevert, Sharon, Re, 50.00; Chris Olson, Svc, 1000.00; Cintas Corporation, Svc, 5194.99; City Of Blair, Inv, 148.52; Complete Tactical Consultants, Inv, 2000.00; Concrete Equipment Co, Ref, 50.00; Country Tire Inc, Svc, 1885.55; Crane Tech Usa Inc, Inv, 12025.95; Cummins Inc, Inv, 22887.57; Dakota Pump Inc, Inv, 24779.75; Deborah Wood, Svc, 400.00; Dick's Electric Co, Svc, 5504.58; Dr Anderson

Constructors Co, Ref, 500.00; Eakes Office Plus, Svc, 2291.24; Ecolab, Svc, 28879.50; Ehrhart Griffin & Associates, Inv, 4810.37; Elite Vehicle Outfitters Llc, Inv, 1790.68; Engineered Controls Inc, Inv, 232.50; Esri, Inv, 6175.00; Felsburg Holt & Ullevig, Svc, 16967.99; Firstnet At&T Mobility, Inv, 237.14; Force America Distributing, Inv, 243.00; Funk, Kenneth, Ref, 500.00; Getzschman Heating Llc, Inv, 432.00; Glen & Joyce Hudson, Ref, 50.00; Great Plains Communications, Inv, 4728.99; Hach Co, Inv, 1104.43; Harsin Built Construction, Ref, 300.00; Haston, Sean, Ref, 50.00; Hdr Engineering Inc, Svc, 9814.72; Henton Trenching Inc, Svc, 220.00; Henton Worx Llc, Svc, 424.26; Hoden, Arron, Ref, 50.00; Hotsy Equipment Co, Inv, 276.60; Houston Engineering Inc, Svc, 5587.25; Hsa Bank, Ins, 87.50; Ingram Industries Inc, Inv, 2878.37; Inter'l Assoc Of Chiefs Of Police, Inv, 750.00; Interstate Battery, Inv, 92.01; Jackson Services, Svc, 592.15; Jeff Beiermann, Reimb, 51.48; Jeffrey Young, Ref, 50.00; Jeredith Brands Llc, Svc, 3019.00; Kelly Ryan Equipment Co, Svc, 350.54; Ksm Promotions Inc, Inv, 1675.90; League Assoc Of Risk Management, Ins, 14.80; League Of Ne Municipalities, Ins, 4233.00; Lee, Christopher M, Ref, 50.00; Leonard, Joseph, Inv, 455.43; Library Ideas, Inv, 343.56; Lincoln, Mia, Ref, 50.00; Long's Ok Tire Stores, Svc, 345.90; Lutheran Family Services Of Ne Inc, Inv, 363198.18; Mccoy Roofing Llc, Ref, 200.00; Mckinnis Roofing & Sheet Metal Llc, Ref, 200.00; Mellen & Associates Inc, Svc, 28344.65; Memorial Community Hospital, Svc, 612.00; Mes Service Company Lcc, Inv, 155.54; Midwest Homes Llc, Ref, 50.00; Mike Royce Contracting, Inv, 29484.00; Millard Sprinkler Inc, Inv, 4639.35; Mississippi Lime Co Llc, Inv, 33298.30; Monroe Engineering Group Llc, Inv, 280.78; Morrell, Lisa, Ref, 50.00; Moser Roofing Solutions Llc, Ref, 50.00; National Sign Company Llc, Inv, 408.90; Ndwee - Licenses, Inv, 480.00; Nebraska Law Enforcement, Inv, 75.00; Nebraska Rural Water Assoc, Dues, 550.00; Nietfeld, Timothy J & Konda K, Ref, 50.00; Nippon Sanso Matheson Inc, Inv, 162.75; Olmstead, Michael, Ref, 50.00; Olsson Associates, Svc, 10105.28; One Call Concepts Inc, Svc, 133.69; One Source, Svc, 124.00; Oppd, Inv, 117784.66; Orchard Valley Inc, Ref, 500.00; O'reilly Automotive Stores Inc, Inv, 244.21; Orkin Llc, Svc, 197.25; Pioneer Cleaning Llc, Svc, 600.00; Point C, Ins, 7044.37; Police Officers Association Of Ne, Inv, 140.00; Pounds Printing Inc, Inv, 90.00; Principal Financial Group, Pen, 3104.92; Rachel Sears, Ref, 50.00; Relx Inc, Inv, 310.00; Royalty Roofing, Ref, 50.00; S & S Pumping Service Llc, Svc, 21375.00; S.E. Smith & Sons, Inv, 1327.25; Sapp Bros Petroleum Inc, Inv, 3972.62; Scollard, Makenzie, Ref, 50.00; Security Equipment Inc, Inv, 5115.84; Seh Inc, Svc, 25253.17; Spartan Stores Llc, Inv, 48.59; Stahlnecker Bieker, Kimberly, Svc, 360.00; Streakwave Wireless Inc, Inv, 3894.56; Sts Truck Service, Inv, 641.25; Summit Fire Protection Co, Inv, 273.00; Superior Environmental Solutions, Inv, 67560.59; Superior Green Inc, Svc, 16762.68; Symbolarts, Inv, 177.50; Talbot Law Office Pc Llo, Svc, 4038.50; The Guardian Life Ins Co, Inv, 8053.90; The Sign Depot, Svc, 2000.14; The Team Approach Inc, Inv, 432.00; Thermal Options, Svc, 200.00; Thiele Geotech Inc, Inv, 800.00; Thompson Solutions Group, Inv, 2265.25; Thrasher Inc, Ref, 50.00; Trc Enterprise, Inv, 250.00; Trekk Design Group, Inv, 3862.00; Troy Wakefield General Contracting, Ref, 200.00; Ty's Outdoor Power & Service, Inv, 25.87; Uline, Inv, 744.79; Us Silica, Ref, 500.00; Verizon 883740345-00001, Inv, 1515.48; W&K Construction Llc, Re, 50.00; Wakefield Towing And Recovery, Svc, 814.00; Walsh Exteriors Llc, Ref, 50.00; Warren Services Inc, Svc, 410.00; Washington County Enterprise, Inv, 563.40; Washington County Register, Inv, 38.00; Western Oil Ii Llc, Gas, 8512.89; White Castle Roofing, Ref, 50.00; Zeigler, Xach, Ref, 50.00.

Melinda K. Rump, Mayor

ATTEST:

Brenda Wheeler, City Clerk

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Council Meeting September 8, 2026