

City of Blair Regular Council Meeting
September 22, 2026

The Mayor and City Council met in regular session in the City Council Chambers on September 22, 2026, at 7:00 PM. 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, Planning and Zoning Administrator McFarland, 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, & #3 – The meeting was called to order by Mayor Rump at 7:00 p.m. following by Roll Call and the Pledge of Allegiance.

Agenda Item #4 – The Consent Agenda approved the following: 4a). Approval of Minutes of the September 8 Budget and Regular meetings, 4b) Clerk report of Mayoral Action of the September 8, 2026, meeting, 4c) Claims as approved by the Finance Committee and 4d) Approve Fall Clean Up and Open Burn with a permit for 2026. Motion by James Letcher, 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 – Mayor Rump opened a public hearing to consider a Conditional Use Permit submitted by Remnant Christian Church, 12364 Rose Drive, Blair, Nebraska, Dale Delisle, agent, for an “Assembly Use: Church” on Lots 3-12, Block 36, City of Blair, Washington County, Nebraska (138 N. 16th Street) for three (3) years. Deputy City Administrator Barrow stated the property is in the Central Business District, where religious/assembly uses require a CUP. The church has 40 current members with approved occupancy of 282–285 people. The Nebraska State Fire Marshal requirements are being met. There are 11 on-street parking spaces in front and staff stipulated installation of one ADA van-accessible parking space in the front lot. The church plans to meet Sunday mornings and Wednesday evenings, which is considered low-traffic times. Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve. Andrew Schenck, 1264 South Street, spoke in support, sharing a personal testimony about the church's role in his spiritual restoration. There were no comments in writing. Mayor Rump closed the public hearing. Motion by Kevin Willis, second by James Letcher to approve the Conditional Use Permit submitted by Remnant Christian Church with the stipulation that one (1) ADA van-accessible parking space be installed in the front lot, for three (3) years. 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 #6 – Mayor Rump opened a public hearing to consider a Conditional Use Permit Application submitted by Stephanie Magnussen, 13232 County Road 27, Blair, Nebraska, for an accessory dwelling unit (ADU) on Lot 2, Sunrise Estates, a Subdivision in Washington County, Nebraska, (13232 County Road 27), for the life of the primary structure. Deputy City Administrator Barrow stated this is the first-ever ADU application since the passage of the ordinance in April 2025 to allow ADU's. The ADU is 988 square feet (under the 1,000 sq ft maximum),

on a 4-acre lot meeting the 25-foot setback requirement. It will have separate utility connections, a separate entrance via an existing lane, and cannot be sold separately from the principal property. The ADU will not exceed the height of the primary structure and is residential in appearance. Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve. There were no comments from the floor or in writing. Mayor Rump closed the public hearing. Motion by Brent Clark, second by Gary Banner to approve the Conditional Use Permit submitted by Stephanie Magnussen as presented for the life of the structure. 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 #7 – Mayor Rump opened a public hearing to consider a Conditional Use Permit application submitted by Tri 5 Management, LLC, Jay Vandenbroucke, owner, 10603 S. 180th Street, Omaha, Nebraska, for “Car and truck sales, both new and used, without full service and repairs” on Lots 24, 25, 26 & 27, Block 15, City of Blair, also known as the Original Townsite of Blair, Washington County, Nebraska, together with that part of vacated State Street adjacent to subject property (1620 State Street) for one (1) year. Deputy City Administrator Barrow stated the property is in the AML district with a Special Mixed-Use Industrial (SMI) overlay, which allows uses from both the Central Business District and ACH District, making car/truck sales permissible as an exception. The applicant plans to display all vehicles inside the building showrooms, with a maximum of two vehicles under an exterior-covered awning which is not in the right of way. Jay Bandenbroucke, 10603 S. 180th St., Omaha, applicant, stated he specializes in classic vehicles as old as 1962 and has been in the business his whole life. Council member Banner asked why he only requested one year and expressed concerns about nearby residences. The applicant stated the one-year term was suggested by staff during the application process and confirmed he had no plans for outdoor storage or storage in the back of the building. Planning Commission voted unanimously to approve. There were no comments from the floor or in writing. Mayor Rump closed the public hearing. Motion by Frank Wolff, second by Brent Clark to approve the Conditional Use Permit application submitted by Tri 5 Management, LLC, for one (1) year. 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 – Mayor Rump opened a public hearing to consider a Conditional Use Permit application submitted by Buddies Rentals, LLC, James Nielsen, owner, 17325 Co Rd 4, Herman, NE, for “Rental and Leasing Establishments, Outside and Inside Storage” on Lots 13, 14 & 15, Block 52, City of Blair, Washington County, Nebraska (1165 Lincoln Street) for one (1) year. Deputy City Administrator Barrow stated the ACH-zoned property requires a Conditional Use Permit (CUP) for this use. Rental inventory includes skid loaders, mini excavators, trailers, and boom lifts. The site is small, and the building was constructed in 1995 partially over the property line which makes it non-conforming. A significant concern was raised that equipment is currently stored in the right of way, as it was at the applicant's previous location on State Street. The applicant did not appear at either the Planning Commission meeting or the City Council meeting. Planning Commission voted 3–2 to approve with a stipulation that the right of way must remain clear at all times. Logan Baker, 505 N 24th Street noted the right-of-way issue was present at the previous location as well. Council debated reducing the term from one year to six months due to the right-of-way concerns and the applicant's absence. There were no comments in writing. Mayor Rump closed the public hearing. Motion by Gary Banner, second by Brent Clark to approve the Conditional Use Permit application submitted by Buddies Rentals for six months with the stipulation that the right-of-way must remain clear at all times. 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 Administration Heaton stated the Parks, Cemetery, and Recreation Board recommended approval of the design and layout for a future bike playground/pump track at Steyer Park, proposed by Brent Fulmer and the Thor Group who are known for mountain bike trails at Black Elk. The facility targets younger/newer riders and features three main elements, a downhill strider path for small children, a mid-level skills section with high bank turns and varied surfaces, and additional features. All paths will be asphalt, and all built features

will use recycled wood. The estimated cost is \$350,000. The city does not currently have funds for this project. Brent Fulmer and the Thor Group will pursue donations and grants. No city dollars are expected currently. The design was adjusted to avoid removing any trees, including a large magnolia. Only storm-damaged trees would be removed. The pool is to the east, and the Steyer Park main bathroom is to the south of the proposed area. Motion by Brent Clark, second by Kevin Willis to approve the recommendation from the Parks, Cemetery and Recreation Board regarding the design and layout of the future bike playground. 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 #10 – Deputy City Administrator Heaton presented a proposal to increase wastewater (sewer) rates. The existing plan has approved 10% annual increases for three years; the proposal combines the next two scheduled increases into a single 20% increase effective October 1 aligning with the city's fiscal year start rather than January. For a customer using 5,000 gallons, the projected bill, after increases, would be approximately \$41.28, compared to a statewide average of over \$80 among 18–19 surveyed Nebraska communities. Blair remains the lowest in the sample group. The wastewater plant was built in the late 1970s with minimal major overhauls. Key challenges include sludge disposal which is currently land-applied three times per week on Iowa farmland, but it is increasingly difficult to find willing farmers due to state restrictions and neighbor complaints. Staff are negotiating with the City of Fremont regarding them taking Blair's waste and exploring a dewatering/composting system with S & S Pumping. A future rate modeling study will be done in the next 6 months which will aim to shift larger increases to high-end industrial users rather than minimal residential users for water. The Water and Sewer Committee recommended approval. Council member Letcher introduced Resolution 2026-101 approving an increase in city sewer rates. Motion by James Letcher, second by Kevin Willis to adopt Resolution No. 2026-101 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 #11 – Deputy City Administrator Heaton stated as part of the same utility rate review, a 1.5% water rate increase was proposed, consistent with the previously approved annual 1.5% increase (currently in year three of a 10-year plan). The start date is moved to October 1 to align with the fiscal year. No additional increase beyond the standard 1.5% was requested for water. The water plant is in better condition than the wastewater plant, partly due to improvements funded by Cargill. The Water and Sewer Committee recommended approval. Council member Letcher introduced Resolution 2026-102 approving an increase in city water rates. Motion by James Letcher, second by Rick Paulsen to adopt Resolution No. 2026-102 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 #12 – Police Chief Kinsey presented a request to purchase 21 ballistic helmets for the Blair Police Department's 22 sworn officers. The helmets are ballistic nylon woven Kevlar capable of stopping most handgun rounds and some lower-velocity rifle rounds. Cost is \$538 per helmet. The helmets carry a 10-year manufacturer warranty compared to 5 years for daily-worn body armor vests. They will be stored in officers' vehicles for high-risk incidents, not worn daily. The helmets are department property and do not transfer with officers. Funding is available through the public safety bond. Chief Kenzie demonstrated the helmet at the meeting. The Finance Committee recommended approval. Council member Banner introduced Resolution 2026-103 approving the purchase of Ballistic Helmets for the Blair Police Department. Motion by Gary Banner, second by Brent Clark to adopt Resolution No. 2026-103 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 #13 – Deputy City Administrator Scott presented amendments to the animal sheltering services agreement between the City of Blair and the Friends of the Jeanette Hunt Animal Shelter. The agreement had not been substantively updated since 2015. Key changes include: (1) moving the annual operations presentation and funding

request from June to April to better align with budget planning; (2) shifting quarterly payments from the 1st of the month to the end of the quarter months (avoiding payment on October 1, the first day of the fiscal year); and (3) increasing the annual funding amount to \$175,000 for FY27, approved during the budget process. Council Member Paulson raised the issue of surrounding communities such as Fort Calhoun, Arlington, and Kennard not contributing their fair share. Jenny Eriksen, 13429 Spring Ridge, Blair, spoke on behalf of the animal shelter stating that Washington County is contributing \$10,000 pending final vote; Fort Calhoun is expected to contribute their portion (not yet confirmed); Kennard has not responded and was warned services may be discontinued; and Arlington has not responded. The shelter's board is pressuring non-contributing entities to support the shelter to continue services. The Finance Committee recommended approval. Council member Clark introduced Resolution 2026-104 amending the agreement for animal sheltering services between the City of Blair and the Friends of the Jeanette Hunt Animal Shelter. Motion by Brent Clark, second by Frank Wolff to adopt Resolution No. 2026-104 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 #14 – Deputy City Administrator Heaton provided several updates: (1) Strong Towns is pursuing a Guinness World Record designation for the 80-foot trail at Blair Mini Park (corner of 19th and Washington Street near Anytime Fitness) as the shortest trail in Nebraska and potentially the country. There is no cost to the city.; (2) A Safe Streets for All second open house is scheduled for the September 29 at 6:00–8:00 PM in council chambers, with a 10–15 minute presentation by the firm SEH followed by an open house format which is open to council, planning commission, and the public but there will be no official action taken; (3) The Fire vs. Police/City Hall softball game is scheduled for Saturday at 6:15 PM at the youth complex; and (4) Several city hall staff and council members will be attending the League Conference in Lincoln Wednesday through Friday.

Agenda Item #15 – Motion by Gary Banner, second by Kent Long to adjourn the meeting 7:56 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: Abe's Trash, Svc 2094.48; Access Technologies, Inc., Inv, 327.84; Acco, Inv, 4850.09; Advantage Archives Llc, Inv, 7545.00; Air Products & Chemicals, Inv, 9621.52; American Legal Publishing, Inv, 3328.50; Amerisource Hr Consulting Grp, Pysl, 2250.00; Armstrong, Jared, Reimb, 327.11; Assethr, Pysl, 566120.68; Axon Enterprises Inc, Inv, 1820.00; Babkel Mechanical, Inv, 930.87; Baird Holm Llp, Inv, 2240.50; Bennett Construction, Ref, 500.00; Black Hills Energy, Inv, 1036.19; Bobcat Of Omaha, Inv, 305.35; Bomgaars Supply Inc, Inv, 2232.07; Bs&A Software Llc, Inv, 712.50; Cdw Government Inc, Inv, 2686.09; Cede & Co, Cd, 772040.63; City Of Blair, Inv, 1140.97; Commercial Recreation Specialists, Inv, 610.00; Core & Main Lp, Inv, 4530.44; Country Inn & Suites By Radisson, Inv, 733.79; Cummins Inc, Inv, 3374.37; Custom Peaks Building, Ref, 500.00; Datashield, Svc, 90.08; Dws Llc, Inv, 325.00; Ecolab, Inv, 93999.68; Eriksen Construction Co Inc, Inv, 132373.03; Ethan Roe, Reimb, 428.60; Fairfield Inn & Suites, Inv, 139.95; Fairway Oil Co, Inv, 188.80; First National Bank, Inv, 3707.34; Fremont Electric Inc, Svc, 335.36; Galls Llc, Inv, 26.73; Hach Co, Inv, 915.13; Hawkins Inc, Svc, 11770.00; Hayes & Associates Llc Cpa, Svc, 10000.00; Heartland Natural Gas Llc, Inv, 16.19; Henton Trenching Inc, Svc, 220.00; Ingersoll Rand Company, Inv, 199.75; Howard, Steven, Inv, 135.83; Hrb Pest Control Llc, Svc, 350.00; Huntel Security, Svc, 294.68; Ingersoll Rand Company, Inv, 1007.99; J Nielsen Construction Llc, Ref, 1500.00; Jeh Specialized Transport, Inv, 4453.60; Jetter's Plumbing Inc, Svc, 492.33; Jim Geiger & Sons Construction, Ref, 500.00; Johnson Service Co, Svc, 19950.00; Langer, Jeremy, Ref, 50.00; Mellen & Associates Inc, Inv, 882.00; Midwest Laboratories Inc, Svc, 1006.73; Mississippi Lime Co Llc, Inv, 32997.19; Municipal Supply Inc, Inv, 2014.30; Ndwee - Licenses, Inv, 115.00; Nebraska Dept Of Revenue, Tax, 21263.90; Nebraska Public Health, Inv, 1090.00; Orchard Valley Inc, Ref, 500.00; Paper, Derek, Reimb,

559.30; Point C, Ins, 5089.28; Principal Financial Group, Pen, 91367.62; Pvs Dx Inc, Inv, 30.00; Randy's Mobile Electronics, Svc, 800.00; Sams Club Mc/Synb, Inv, 632.84; Snyder & Associates, Svc, 7270.50; Steve Bohlen, Pen, 1749.83; Streakwave Wireless Inc, Inv, 7851.83; Swenson, Scott T., Inv, 950.00; The Sign Depot, Svc, 801.56; Thermal Heating Air & Plumbing, Svc, 5898.65; Thompson Solutions Group, Svc, 2253.25; Tim Gregory Construction, Ref, 250.00; Us Postal Service, Inv, 1975.82; Us Postal Service Fort Calhoun, Inv, 500.00; Vessco Inc, Inv, 2100.00; Waste Management Of Ne, Svc, 49.59; Westover, Michael, Reimb, 330.15; Woods & Aitken Llp, Svc, 28900.90; Xylem Water Solutions Usa Inc, Inv, 5000.00.

Melinda K. Rump, Mayor

ATTEST:

Brenda Wheeler, City Clerk

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