

M I N U T E S  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
August 4, 2025  
5:30 PM  
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King. Council Members Paul Fischer, Rebecca Waller, Laura Helle, Michael Postma, Oballa Oballa, Jason Baskin and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT:

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Director of Administrative Services Tom Dankert, Police Chief David McKichan, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann, City Attorney Craig Byram and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, KAAL 6 News, and Community Members

Mayor King called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving the agenda as amended. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving Council minutes from July 21, 2025. Carried.

Mayor King recognized Jim Halsey from the Fire Department on his recent retirement. Mayor King thanked him for all his years of service.

Fire Chief McCoy recognized Jim Halsey for all his years of service, thanked him, and stated he will be missed. He introduced the new firefighter Ian Caruso to Council. Chief McCoy is excited to have him onboard.

Mayor King welcomed new firefighter Ian Caruso to the department.

Mayor King introduced the new Salvation Army Lieutenants Juan Hernandez & Omayra Cervantes to Council.

Lieutenant Hernandez thanked the Council for the welcome into the community. Their mission for the community is to serve, and they hope to stay in the community for a few years to assist with community needs.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving the consent agenda as follows:

Licenses:

Mobile: On the Hook Fish & Chips, Laramie, WY  
Mobile: Divine Swine Catering, Inc., Lakeville, MN  
Lodging: Sonya Matter, Matter Cave, Austin, MN  
Temporary Liquor: Paramount Theater on September 11 & 14, 2025

Claims:

a. Pre-list of Bills

Events:

Porchfest on August 29, 2025  
Minnesota Cycling Association High School Bike Race on August 23, 2025

Carried.

## BIDS AND AWARDS

Public Works Director Steven Lang received bids for the sanitary sewer cured in-place pipe (CIPP) lining in the Wildwood and Sterling neighborhoods. The work will consist of pre- and post-lining televising, sewer cleaning, root cutting, several in-line spot repairs, lining the sewer main and routing open the services. Mr. Lang stated the low bid came in at \$651,441.95 and the low bidder was Municipal Pipe Tool Company. The engineering estimate was \$792,467.00. He would recommend awarding the bid to Municipal Pipe Tool Company.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Waller, awarding the bid for the sanitary sewer cured in-place pipe (CIPP) lining to Municipal Pipe Tool Company in the amount of \$651,441.95. Carried 7-0.

## PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Mayor King stated Council and citizens all want what is best for the City of Austin. They are looking to pause the point of sale ordinance until March 1, 2026.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Helle, for preparation of the ordinance. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Waller, for the adoption of the point of sale ordinance. Carried 7-0.

Council Member Helle asked how citizens can be part of a committee to help shape this ordinance moving forward.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated they can contact him if they are interested in being part of this working group.

Council Member Baskin thanked everyone for all their input over these last couple of weeks.

City Clerk Brianne Wolf requested Council approve a new fee for the temporary cannabis event permit registration. She stated as of August 1, 2025, the State will start to issue these permits and she would like to have fee in place if such an event were to be hosted within the City. The Clerk's office has mirrored the fee to match the Community Festival fee at \$100 per day. The fee helps to offset administrative and enforcement costs.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Oballa, approving a fee for temporary cannabis event permit registrations. Carried. 7-0.

City Clerk Brianne Wolf stated in April of this year, the City Council evaluated allowing the Paramount Theatre to obtain a theater liquor license. This license would allow the theater to serve alcohol during events and movie showings. The Clerk's office has received the certified documents needed to process the license and recommends approval to proceed and submit to the State.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, approving a theater liquor license for the Paramount Theatre. Carried. 7-0.

Human Resources Director Trish Wiechmann stated the State of Minnesota will require all employers to participate in a paid family medical leave (PFML) benefit insurance program for their employees under Minnesota Paid Leave Law (Minn. Stat. ch. 268B). Employers may meet this requirement by enrolling in the State-administered plan or by offering a substitute private plan that provides the same or greater level of PFML benefits.

The State plan establishes a PFML insurance premium payment of 0.88% of an employee's taxable wages that may be paid equally by the employer and employee. The city intends to follow this cost-sharing model as outlined by the State with its private plan premium. The City of Austin, through Integrity Employee Benefits LLC, conducted a formal bid process to explore private plan options for PFML. Multiple carriers submitted bids.

MetLife submitted a 0.79% premium rate which is lower than the State Plan at 0.88%. Based on its competitive rate and two-year rate guarantee, it is recommended that the City Council approve MetLife as the provider for the City's PFML benefits under a private plan.

Council Member Postma stated this will be beneficial for the City to go with a private company as they will already be established in administering this fee and plan.

Council Member Helle would like to know the annual cost to the City for administering this plan.

Mr. Dankert stated it would cost approximately \$65,000 to \$75,000 per year if the City pays half of the cost.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving the PFML insurance premium rate with MetLife. Carried. 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin, declaring the property at 700 10<sup>th</sup> Street NE as Hazardous. Carried. 7-0.

Every two years the City enters into an agreement with MnDOT to do light maintenance on Trunk Highway 105. This new agreement includes a 3.5% rate increase.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Oballa, approving an agreement with MnDOT for maintenance along trunk highway 105. Carried. 7-0.

## REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the Oakland Avenue project is beginning. He understands this is not the optimum time to start a road construction project but they need to complete the 4<sup>th</sup> Street NW intersection to make the transition into next year's project smoother.

Council Member Oballa congratulated Jim Halsey on his retirement and welcome to the new firefighter.

Council Member Baskin wished everyone a happy fair week!

Council Member Postma stated he appreciates the citizens that have reached out to him about the high-pitched noise that is coming from the Wastewater Treatment Plant. They are looking into it and trying to solve it.

Council Member Helle stated the Artworks Festival is fast approaching and they are looking for volunteers. She appreciates the discussions they had last week with the Library and the Fire department on their budgets and thanked the board members who attended. It was nice being able to give the department heads time to speak to Council.

Mayor King attended the Benin Independence Day yesterday and it was a great celebration. He appreciated the invitation to the celebration. He relayed Wednesday is the employee appreciation event at the Fairgrounds and encouraged staff to attend. He read the August employee anniversaries.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adjourning the meeting to August 18, 2025. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:01 p.m.

Approved: August 18, 2025

Mayor: \_\_\_\_\_

City Recorder: \_\_\_\_\_