

M I N U T E S  
CITY COUNCIL MEETING  
January 20, 2026  
5:30 PM  
Council Chambers

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Jason Baskin

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Police Chief David McKichan, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Park, Recreation and Forestry Director Jason Schon, City Attorney Craig Byram, Human Resources Director Tricia Wiechmann, Finance Director Emily Burns and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Honorary Council Member Lindsey Compton

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

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

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving Council minutes from January 5, 2026. Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving the consent agenda as amended.

Licenses:

Massage Therapist: Katy Kelly, Austin, MN  
Mobile Business: Cousins Maine Lobster, Minneapolis, MN  
LPHE Retailer Registration: Star Liquor, Austin, MN  
Tobacco: Austin Tobacco & Vape, Austin, MN  
Tree Service: Olson Timber Company dba Schwebach Tree Service, Sioux Center, IA  
Tree Service: PSquared LLC, Austin, MN  
Right of Way: Consolidated Communications, Mattoon, IL  
Sign Installer: La Crosse Sign Co., Inc, Onalaska, WI  
Lodging Establishment: Bruno Andrade Pimenta Alves, Austin, MN

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of Bills
- b. Financial Report

Events:

Hockey Day Austin on January 31, 2026  
Fall “Fun”raiser on September 19, 2026  
Beyond the Shadows on September 19, 2026

Appointments to Boards and Commissions:

Daniel Zielke to the Parks, Recreation & Forestry Board – term expiring 12/31/2026  
Emily Burns to the Part Time Fire Relief Trustees – term expiring 12/31/2026

Carried.

## PUBLIC HEARINGS

Finance Director Emily Burns stated the Council reviewed the Capital Improvement Plan for the years 2026-2030. The plan proposes spending of \$132,678,650 over the next five-year period, but as they have noted, if funding sources are not accessed for a particular project, then the project would need to be put on hold until all the funding sources are realized. Adoption of the plan gives staff direct authorization to purchase the items specified for 2026.

There were no public comments.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution authorizing the 2026-2030 Capital Improvement Plan. Carried 6-0.

## PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Public Works Director Steven Lang requested Council approve the amendments to the Point of Sale ordinance they reviewed at the January 5<sup>th</sup>, 2026 work session.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Oballa, for preparation of the ordinance. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Helle, for adoption of the ordinance. Carried 6-0.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving a resolution for summary publication of the ordinance. Carried 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City has seen significant costs over the years to the street projects. The goal is to assess approximately 40% of street assessment costs to the property owners. He would recommend increasing street assessment fees by approximately 7%.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution setting 2026 street assessment rates. Carried 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated there is no parking signage in the pool parking lot or the library parking lot to restrict overnight parking and he is requesting City Council approve signage to be placed in these lots to restrict parking from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. except during snow emergencies. This has been reviewed by Parks, Police, Library and Administration and they have come to a consensus.

Council Member Postma asked why a 10 p.m. start time.

Mr. Lang stated they chose this timing as the pool parking lot is tied into a park and these are the times that parks close. They mirrored this for the library.

Council Member Postma is opposed to the 10 p.m. restriction and would like it to be later. He believes as downtown grows this time may be too early and be a restriction on events that may take place. He would like to see midnight be the time placed on the signs.

Police Chief McKichan stated at this time there is no signage and they have a camper that has been parked at the pool lot long term and two vehicles parked at the library long term and there is nothing they can do as there is no restrictions in place at this time.

Council Member Oballa stated there are times when citizens will be in the parks past 10 p.m., especially in the summer at Todd park.

Chief McKichan stated at this time they would like to get signage in these two lots as they have no restrictions in place.

Parks, Recreation, and Parks Director Jason Sehon recommended they mirror the parks timeline.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller to approve the signage in the pool parking lot and the library parking lot as presented to Council with restrictions from 10 p.m. to 6 a.m. Carried 4-2 (Council Member Postma, Council Member Oballa voting Nay).

City Administrator Craig Clark presented an updated agreement from Mower County for a joint Law Enforcement Center. This would allow for an audit of charges. He requested approval of the agreement.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Oballa adopting a resolution approving an agreement with Mower County for a joint law enforcement center. Carried 6-0.

Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Director Jason Sehon stated Austin Utilities (AU) has requested a Mountain Bike Course Easement Donation Agreement be brought to City Council for approval. Staff has reviewed the proposed agreement drafted by City Attorney Craig Byram. This agreement mirrors the agreement previously approved for the Hormel property located south

of the AU property. Staff has met with representatives from AU and the Southern Minnesota Bicycling Club (SMBC) to discuss the proposed agreement. While there were initial concerns regarding maintenance responsibilities, following additional review and discussions with AU and SMBC, staff is comfortable with the agreement as written. The agreement was brought to the Parks, Recreation & Forestry Board at its January 7, 2026 meeting. The Board voted unanimously to recommend City Council approve the proposed agreement as submitted.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle adopting a resolution approving a Mountain Bike Course Easement Donation Agreement. Carried 6-0.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving the UAW – Street and Sewer 2026-2028 labor agreement. Carried 6-0.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving the UAW – WWTP 2026-2028 labor agreement. Carried 6-0.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving the UAW – Parks 2026-2028 labor agreement. Carried 6-0.

Mayor King requested approval of the Council appointments to the Boards and Commissions for 2026.

Council Member Oballa requested he be removed from the Smart Transit Board as he is not able to attend these meetings.

Council Member Fischer stated he would like to replace Council Member Oballa on this board.

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Oballa, approving the 2026 Council Boards and Commission appointments. Carried.

City Administrator Craig Clark requested Council approval of a resolution in favor of enacting a new Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) that would fund a new Law Enforcement Center. He stated the resolution would go to the legislature and if approved it would go to the citizens of Austin to be voted on in November for consideration.

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adopting a resolution in favor of support for a new Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) for a new Law Enforcement Center. Carried 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated Council previously partnered with MnDOT on a design services contract for the development of plans and specifications for the I-90 bridge projects. As MnDOT has worked through the design process with engineering consultant SRF, some cost changes have occurred along the way. This has initiated the need for Amendment No. 3 to the design service contract. There will be no additional costs for the City but they will need to sign the amended agreement and he requested Council approval to sign.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution to sign an amended agreement with MnDOT for the design services on the I-90 bridges project. Carried 6-0.

#### CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL

DJ Ryther addressed the Council as her main concern was a letter being circulated with local Mayors to sign and submit to the State in favor of action against the administration and the recent discovery of fraud. She wanted to know why the Mayor had not signed the letter.

Mayor King stated that his stance has always been that all his time with the Council is public service, and that weighs into the political side. The primary point of their conduit for getting change and for their voice in the legislature is through their Senator, Gene Dornink, and their Representative, Patricia Mueller, and those two avail themselves beautifully to the City Council. They're always a phone call away. Mayor King can provide them with information, and that's how the process should be, whether his signature is on the letter or not. That's where he will end it. He will not be signing. He will continue to use his voice with legislators.

#### HONORARY COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Honorary Council Member Lindsey Compton stated this was another interesting meeting. She was able to attend a presentation on data centers at the Nature Center and it was very informative.

#### REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Council Member Oballa would like to ask the residents of Austin stay calm due to the recent activity in the State of Minnesota with Immigration Enforcement Officers. He asked for citizens to be peaceful and he thanked local law enforcement for all the good work they do. He understands the fear people are experiencing as he must carry his passport with him when he travels even though he is a citizen.

Council Member Helle thanked the Human Resources department for scheduling the strategic planning events on February 21<sup>st</sup>. She stated the Culture and Arts Commission is looking for artists to submit art to be selected to be put on utility boxes. They also need members on this commission if anyone is interested in applying. She thanked Cece Kroc for her service on the Park, Forestry and Recreation Board. She thanked the Human Rights Commission for their work on the Martin Luther King Day event that was held. It was a very nice event and it was great to see so many in the community come out and engage in that. She echoed Council Member Oballa's comments and stated Austin runs on immigrants and they are a key part of our community. She asked that all community members watch out for their neighbors and get to know their neighbors, and stay connected. Community members can also patronize immigrant owned businesses.

Council Member Postma thanked the Human Rights Commission and First Methodist Church for hosting the Martin Luther King Jr. event. He also echoed what Council Member Helle stated and noted it is a tough time in Minnesota and he encourages community members to patronize local businesses.

Council Member Waller congratulated the Austin Packer Dance Team on their recent win during their competition.

City Administrator Craig Clark thanked the Council for meeting with Mr. David Unmacht for their one-on-one sessions and they will be meeting again on February 21<sup>st</sup> for a strategic planning session.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Waller, adjourning the meeting to February 2, 2026. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:39 p.m.

Approved: February 2, 2026

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

City Clerk: \_\_\_\_\_