

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
May 18, 2026
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

MEMBERS PRESENT: Mayor King, Council Members Laura Helle, Jason Baskin, Oballa Oballa, Michael Postma, Council Member Paul Fischer (attending remotely) and Council Member-at-Large Jeff Austin

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Rebecca Waller

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Interim Police Chief Michael Hartman, Public Works Director Steven Lang, Park, Recreation and Forestry Director Jason Sehon, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, City Attorney Craig Byram, Finance Director Emily Burns, Human Resources Director Tricia Wiechmann, and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, Members of the Community

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

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving the agenda. Carried. 6-0.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving Council minutes from May 4, 2026. Carried. 6-0.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving the consent agenda. Carried 6-0.

Licenses:

Mobile: Right of Way, H&M Underground Solutions, Austin, MN

Mobile: First Alliance Credit Union, Rochester, MN

Mobile: The Sugar Shack, Albert Lea, MN

Claims:

a. Pre-list of Bills

b. Credit Card Report

c. Financial Report

Events:

4th Avenue Fest on June 3, 2026

Freedom Fest 2026 on July 3-5, 2026

More Than Pink/Beyond Blue 5k on July 30, 2026

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A tax abatement request was presented from New Horizon. They are proposing to build a single-family home located at 1304 17th St NW, parcel number 34.468.0100, valued at approximately \$400,000.00. The application is in conformance with the City's policy for tax abatement. They are requesting approval.

There were no comments from the public.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving the tax abatement. Carried 6-0.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Public Works Director Steven Lang requested approval of a cooperative construction agreement with MnDOT to approve the construction of a pedestrian bridge near I90 over the Cedar River. This project would be 100% State funded. This agreement would require the City be responsible for ongoing maintenance responsibilities.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving a MnDOT Cooperative Construction Agreement. Carried 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang requested Council approval of the sale of the following equipment: 2006 Sterling Acterra Tandem Axle Dump Truck #77, 2011 Ford F-150 #91, and a 2005 Dodge Ram 2500 #92. Mr. Lang stated this equipment is scheduled for replacement as part of the City's CIP equipment replacement program. Staff request authorization to sell the equipment through Hamilton Auction Company.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Oballa, approving a motion for the sale of city equipment. Carried 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang requested approval of a MnDNR Flood Mitigation Grant. Mr. Lang stated the project costs will involve acquisition, environmental and demolition for a total project cost of \$1,023,500. The grant will reimburse the City 50% of all eligible project expenses, not to exceed \$490,000. The remaining \$533,500 of project expenses will come from the Local Option Sales Tax. Mr. Lang would request Council authorization for the Mayor and City Administrator to execute the grant agreement.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving the acceptance of a MnDNR Flood Mitigation Grant. Carried 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang requested Council approval to accept a grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA) for the Ellis Ditch Climate Resiliency Study. Mr. Lang stated this project is identified in the 5-year CIP to evaluate stormwater flows in Ellis Ditch

and develop a project to improve the storm sewer, sanitary sewer and roadway on 6th Avenue SE. Total project costs are \$106,240.00 with grant funding of \$96,581.82 and local Stormwater Utility District funds of \$9,658.18. He stated if the grant were approved, the City would then enter into an agreement with WHKS to complete the work identified in the grant. He would request Council approval of the MPCA Stormwater Resiliency Grant with local funds from the Stormwater Utility District fund.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving the acceptance of a grant from the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency for Stormwater Resilience. Carried 6-0.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace requested Council action on a variance request at 1004 2nd Avenue SW. The variance request is to allow 4 detached structures (all existing) and increase the aggregate square footage from 1200sq. ft. to 1236 sq. ft. A neighbor who received notice of the public hearing, met with staff and expressed concern at another structure being added, but did not object when they realized the variance related to an existing shed. The Planning Commission with five members present recommends Council approve the variance.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving a motion granting the variance at 1004 2nd Avenue SW. Carried 6-0.

Planning and Zoning Administrator Holly Wallace requested Council action on a fence appeal request at 210 4th Street SW. The request is to add a 6-foot privacy fence between his house and garage to the sidewalk. The home is setback approximately 13 feet and the garage approximately 16 feet, less than the 25-foot residential front yard requirement. The fence may start at the setback of the house and/or garage. The Planning Commission with five members present, recommends Council deny the fence appeal request.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving a motion to deny the fence appeal request at 210 4th Street SW. Carried 6-0.

Human Resources Director Tricia Wiechmann stated with current efforts underway to redevelop the City's website she requests approval to add the CivicPlus Process Automation and Digital Services (PADS) module to the project scope. Ms. Wiechmann stated the PADS platform is designed to replace paper-based and manual workflows with online forms, automated routing, digital approvals, notifications, scheduling tools, and integrated resident service. She stated the initial implementation to add these services would be \$3,089.58. These processes would benefit not only human resources but other departments within the City.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving the CivicPlus PADS add-on. Carried 6-0.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution approving the 2026, 2027, and 2028 Base Pay Structure. Carried 4-2. (Council Member Helle & Council Member Oballa Nay)

Moved by Council Member Helle, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adopting a resolution accepting donations to the City of Austin. Carried 6-0.

CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL

Michael Dale, 80302 180th Street, Glenville, MN, would like to know more about the power plant lease to SMMPA. He would like to know more about the property taxes with this parcel, how much it would cost to run this plant, and how much the company would charge for power.

Mayor King relayed Austin Utilities would oversee the power plant.

Justin Hutchinson, 1502 3rd Street NE, VFW Post 1216 Commander, introduced himself and talked about the upcoming Buddy Poppy Drive.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

City Administrator Craig Clark relayed open candidacy starts tomorrow. He stated the Local Option Sales Tax will not be moving forward for the local law enforcement center.

Council Member Helle stated the Fourth Avenue Fest is on June 3rd and encouraged the public to attend. She thanked the Friends of the Nature Center for their efforts in raising funds for the nature playscape. She talked about seasonal employment opportunities through the Parks and Recreation office. Lastly, she recognized Public Works. As it was Public Works Week, she commended them on their cost-saving efforts with the recent repair of a dump truck. She stated it would be great to recognize the efforts of all City departments throughout the year.

Council Member-at-Large Austin stated there was a Library Board meeting last week and they will be participating in the Fourth Avenue Fest.

Council Member Postma acknowledged the Public Works Department for Public Works Week. He stated he attended an open housing viewing for the new home construction project between the HRA and Riverland Community College and is excited to see a new home go on the market. He stated next year they will be building a town home.

Council Member Baskin stated he is appreciative of the recent state funding approved for the Hormel Institute. He congratulated the Austin Bruins on their successful season. He congratulated the Austin High School Adapted Bowling team and finally he congratulated Austin Native Holli Mayer as she was recently sworn in as a new Third District Judge.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adjourning the meeting to June 1, 2026. Carried 6-0.

Adjourned: 6:18 p.m.

Approved: June 1, 2026

Mayor: _____

City Clerk: _____