

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
November 17, 2025
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Laura Helle

STAFF PRESENT: City Administrator Craig Clark, Police Chief David McKichan, Fire Chief Jim McCoy, Assistant City Engineer Andrew Sorenson, Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace, Library Director Julie Clinefelter, Park, Recreation and Forestry Director Jason Sehon, City Attorney Craig Byram, Human Resources Director Patricia Wiechmann, and City Clerk Brianne Wolf

APPEARING IN PERSON: Members of the Community

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 Baskin, approving Council minutes from November 3, 2025. Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Licenses:

Tree Service: Diego Landscaping Lawn Mowing and Trees Services LLC, Austin, MN

Liquor Catering: Green Mill, Albert Lea, MN

Exempt Gambling (raffle): United Catholic Schools Foundation of Austin, MN on January 7, 2026

Exempt Gambling (raffle): Knights of Columbus Council 1201 on January 24, 2026

Exempt Gambling (raffle): Mower County Fair/Mower County Agricultural Society on February 21, 2026

****See December 1, 2025 Council Minutes for additional details regarding Charter Commission ordinance changes**

Claims:

- a. Pre-list of bills

Appointments:

Lindsey Compton as the Honorary Council Member – December 1, 2025 to February 17, 2026.

Carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

City Administrator Craig Clark presented a City Charter change to Council for approval. He stated the Mayor would be voting on all three changes. The proposed change would replace Sections 8.01-8.03 with a new 8.01 and 8.02. The effective change would be to remove the Mayor as the head of the police department and retain the same personnel structure as all other department heads under the City Administrator.

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

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Postma, for the adoption of the ordinance and change to the City Charter regarding the police department. Carried 7-0.

City Administrator Craig Clark presented a City Charter change on civil penalties to Council. He stated this change more clearly identifies the City's right to assess citations for civil penalties. This would be added to the Charter under section 7.02.

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

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Waller, for the adoption of the ordinance and change to the City Charter regarding civil penalties. Carried 7-0.

City Administrator Craig Clark presented City Charter changes to Council for approval. The proposed changes would bring forward more clarity within the Parks Charter sections. The following proposed changes were proposed or retained: clearly state the Council have oversight and budgetary control, but subject to that oversight and budgetary control the Park Board is tasked with managing and controlling the parks and recreational facilities of the City. It states the Park Board has direct responsibility for caring for trees and other plantings on public grounds and right-of-ways. It retains the former verbiage that places upon the Park Board the function of "devising" a system of public parks and recreational facilities. It retains the former verbiage that described the process of submitting the annual report and budget request. It retains the former verbiage that described how members of the Park Board are appointed and removed. It changes the language about how accounts payable and other obligations are handled. It retained the language that talks about the "secretary" taking possession of revenues but added language about them coordinating with the

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Finance Director in making sure those funds are properly recorded. Clarified that it is the City that will acquire lands to be dedicated as park lands, or construct facilities that will be used for recreational purposes. Clarified that the Park Board should recommend these things to the Council. Clarified that Human Resources is done by the City, employees are employees of the City, with City Administrator oversight and Council empowered to set policy. Retained existing provisions about Park Board setting rules in parks, and police retaining jurisdiction within parks.

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

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Oballa, for the adoption of the ordinance and change to the City Charter to the Parks, Recreation, and Forestry department. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving of the summary publication of the ordinance. Carried 7-0.

AWARDING BIDS

Parks, Recreation, and Forestry Director Jason Sehon stated the Austin Minnesota Area Pickleball Association (AMAPA) made a donation to the City of Austin in the amount of \$35,000 to cover the estimated cost of engineering services for the pickleball court project. The cost estimate was based on engineering and design services to be 7% of the estimated \$500,000 total project budget. Engineering services rendered will provide a design, plans and specifications, and cost estimate, allowing this project to move forward pending overall project funding approval. The City received three proposals for engineering services. The low bid came in at \$32,000 from Larson Engineering. Mr. Sehon would recommend awarding the bid to Larson Engineering.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Oballa, awarding the bid for engineering services to Larson Engineering. Carried. 6-0.

Assistant City Engineer Andrew Sorenson stated the engineering department requested proposals from three consultants to perform soil borings in twenty one locations and provide geotechnical reports on their findings. The geotechnical reports will provide the engineering department information regarding the soil conditions for the 2026 & 2027 construction projects. The project will be funded using Local Fund 49. The low bid came in at \$15,146 and he would recommend awarding the bid to Chosen Valley Testing, Inc.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Baskin awarding the bid for soil borings to Chosen Valley Testing, Inc. Carried. 6-0.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baskin, setting a public hearing for December 15, 2025 on the adoption of the 5-year Capital Improvement Plan. Carried. 6-0.

****See December 1, 2025 Council Minutes for additional details regarding Charter Commission ordinance changes**

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member-at-Large Austin, granting off-sale liquor licenses, club on-sale licenses, wine /strong beer on-sale licenses, brewer off-sale malt liquor licenses, Sunday hard liquor on-sale, Sunday wine on-sale licenses, Sunday brewer off-sale, brewer taproom with Sunday, brewer taproom, and 3.2 beer on and off-sale licenses. Carried. 6-0.

Assistant City Engineer Andrew Sorenson requested Council approve a three-year individual control mechanism (ICM) agreement with LL Parks, LLC. The agreement would expire on December 31st, 2028.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Fischer, approving an ICM agreement with LL Parks, LLC. Carried. 6-0.

Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace reviewed a variance request for an accessory structure. Ms. Wallace stated the structure is 16x25 and would be an addition to the existing garage. The Planning Commission approved the request. There were no objections from the public to this request.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving the variance request for the accessory structure. Carried.

Planning and Zoning Director Holly Wallace reviewed an amendment to a variance request for a reduction of green space at Astrup Properties. Ms. Wallace stated the petitioner is requesting a reduction to 9.4% greenspace from the previous 11% greenspace. The Planning Commission approved the request. There were no objections from the public to this request.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving the greenspace variance request. Carried.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Postma, approving a twenty year agreement for waste water treatment with Hormel Foods. Carried. 4-0. (Council Member Baskin and Oballa, Abstaining)

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, approving an MOA agreement with the AEA bargaining group. Carried. 6-0.

CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL

Brad Johnson from the Austin Enhancement Group invited the public to come downtown the evening after Thanksgiving for a holiday celebration.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

Council Member Baskin congratulated the Austin Packer Swim team and the Austin Packer Dance team on their recent wins at state.

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Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adjourning the meeting to December 1, 2025. Carried.

Adjourned: 5:58 p.m.

Approved: December 1, 2025

Mayor: _____

City Clerk: _____

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