

MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
December 1, 2025
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

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

MEMBERS ABSENT:

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 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 Oballa, approving the agenda as amended. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving Council minutes from November 17, 2025. Carried.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

Licenses:

Exempt Gambling (Raffle): Whitetails Unlimited Southern MN Deer Camp on January 10, 2026

Claims:

a. Pre-list of bills

Carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A public hearing was held for the renewal of a currency exchange license for Tienda y Taqueria Guerrero, Inc.

City Clerk Brienne Wolf stated the City has had no issues with the business and requested Council approval of the renewal of the currency exchange license for Tienda y Taqueria Guerrero, Inc.

There were no comments from the public.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving the renewal of the currency exchange license. Carried. 7-0.

AWARDING BIDS

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City received bids for removal of a hazardous building located at 2400 4th Drive SW. Hansen Hauling & Excavating, Inc. came in with the low bid of \$6,500. They will also be required to perform asbestos testing at a cost of \$334.47. He recommends awarding the bid to Hansen Hauling & Excavating, Inc.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Helle, awarding the bid for removal of a hazardous building to Hansen Hauling & Excavating, Inc. Carried. 7-0.

PETITIONS AND REQUESTS

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution granting an on-sale liquor license and Sunday on-sale liquor license to Landeros Mexican Restaurant, LLC for 2026. Carried 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adopting a resolution requesting feasibility reports for 2026 street reconstruction projects. Carried 7-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang requested approval of an asbestos and hazardous materials inspection for the El Parral Bar & Ballroom located at 210 4th Street NE. The Institute for Environmental Assessment, Inc. (IEA) would conduct the testing. The proposal to conduct the testing would be \$8,950 and \$21.00 per bulk sample. The costs would be eligible for reimbursement using 50% DNR grant and 50% Local Option Sales Tax.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving a request for inspection of asbestos and hazardous materials at 210 4th Street NE. Carried 7-0.

City Administrator Craig Clark relayed the Hormel Foundation Grant Awards the City requested were granted except for the request for \$20 million for the municipal pool. The grant request for the fireworks was reduced from \$25,000 to \$23,000 and the grant request for the Artworks Center was reduced from \$76,931 to \$72,000. In total, the City was approved for \$961,500 for 2026. Mr. Clark requests a resolution to approve acceptance of the grants.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting a resolution approving the 2026 Hormel Foundation Grant Awards. Carried 5-0. (Council Members Helle and Oballa Abstaining)

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving an MOA agreement with the AAO bargaining group for health insurance. Carried. 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Fischer, adopting a resolution approving an MOA agreement with the UAW-WWTP bargaining group for health insurance. Carried. 7-0.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, approving a motion to adopt the City of Austin's Minnesota Paid Family and Medical Leave Policy. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Fischer, seconded by Council Member Waller, to grant the Planning and Zoning Department the power to contract for the removal of junk and/or illegally stored vehicles at 104 3rd Avenue SE, Rose Property. Carried.

Mayor King had Council Member Laura Helle vote on the Charter Amendments that were brought forth at the November 17th Council Meeting since she was not in attendance at that meeting. Council Member Helle was asked if she was in favor of the follow charter amendments:

The proposed changes replacing 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. Council Member Helle voted in favor of the changes.

The proposed changes to the City Charter for changes to civil penalties. 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. Council Member Helle voted in favor of the changes.

The proposed changes to the City Charter providing more clarity within the Parks Charter Sections. Council Member Helle voted in favor of the changes.

CITIZENS ADDRESSING THE COUNCIL

None

HONORARY COUNCIL MEMBER COMMENTS

Ms. Compton thanked the Council for the opportunity to participate in Council meetings.

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

City Administrator Craig Clark stated the black Friday community event was well attended. He thanked all that participated.

Council Member Baskin stated the Port Authority is having conversations around a strategic road map they have put together and where they would like to go over the next ten years and what their priorities are. They are having good discussions and are involving local businesses and local stakeholders in these conversations. He thanked the Hormel Foundation for their generosity. He also thanked the streets, parks, and all others that assisted with the snow removal over the holiday weekend.

Council Member-at-Large Austin thanked the City employees involved with the snow removal over the holiday weekend. Their services are appreciated. He thanked engineering for the work they did in assisting with getting the 4th Street Bridge open.

Council Member Helle stated she agrees with everything being said. She stated Wednesday, December 3rd there is an event at First United Methodist Church in support of the overnight shelter efforts. She stated on December 19th the Parks and Recreation department will be hosting a Skate with Santa event at Packer Arena. On December 9th, the Nature Center will be hosting a Merry & Bright event.

Council Member Oballa wanted it noted for the record he does not abstain from the vote for the Hormel Foundation grants. He is in favor of accepting the grants. He congratulated and welcomed the new Honorary Council Member Lindsey Compton. He stated that is where he started and now he is a Council Member. He encouraged Ms. Compton to use this opportunity to learn more about the City.

Council Member Fischer thanked all that were involved in the snow clean up efforts over the holiday weekend.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated with the snow cleanup efforts underway if citizens have a vehicle parked on the road, please move it to a side of the road that has been plowed so they can clean both sides of the road and widen them back out. He also stated the temporary stop lights on 14th Street NW will be taken out over the next weeks now that the 4th Street bridge has opened.

Police Chief David McKichan reminded the public to please shovel their sidewalks as well. It is essential for pedestrians, children, and people with disabilities to be able to navigate in the snow.

Council Member Helle asked if the City has alternate parking and Police Chief McKichan relayed they only enforce that when there is a snow emergency.

Mayor King stated the Truth in Taxation Hearing will be held on December 3rd at 6:00 p.m. in Council Chambers. He read off the December employee anniversaries.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Baskin, adjourning the meeting to December 15, 2025. Carried.

Adjourned: 5:54 p.m.
Approved: December 15, 2025

Mayor: _____

City Clerk: _____