

M I N U T E S
CITY COUNCIL MEETING
May 4, 2026
5:30 PM
Council Chambers

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

MEMBERS ABSENT: Council Member Paul Fischer

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

APPEARING IN PERSON: Austin Daily Herald, Members of the Community, Officers from the Austin Police Department and Firefighters from the Austin Fire Department

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

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Baskin, approving the agenda. Carried.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Oballa, approving Council minutes from April 20, 2026. Carried.

Mayor King recognized the retirement of Administrative Assistant Patty Hamilton from the Parks, Recreation and Forestry Department.

Mayor King recognized the retirement of Firefighter Tim Hanson from the Austin Fire Department.

Police Chief McKichan, Lt. Hartman, and Officer Betts from the Police Department presented awards to Officer Tamke, Officer Hansen, Officer Bradley, and Officer Sherwood for their exceptional service in the field. The Police department has created a new program to recognize officers, citizens, and staff for going above and beyond their everyday duties and responsibilities and hopes to grow this program in the future.

CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Waller, approving the consent agenda.

Licenses:

Temporary Liquor: VFW Post 1216 on June 6, 2026
Temporary Liquor: Pundit Beer Co. LLC on July 3-4, 2026
Temporary Liquor: VFW Post 1216 on August 8, 2026
Temporary Liquor: Mower County Fair on August 11-16, 2026
Exempt Gambling (raffle): United Catholic Schools Foundation on June 19, 2026
Exempt Gambling (bingo): United Way of Mower County on August 21, 2026
Mobile Business: Kettlecorn Retriever, Brownsdale, MN
Mobile Business: Love Bubble Tea, Austin, MN
Lodging Establishment: The Cozy Corner, Austin, MN
Sign Installer: Scenic Sign, Corp, Sauk Rapids, MN

Claims:

a. Pre-list of Bills

Events:

Taste of Nations on May 16, 2026
Downtown Dish – Arts & Eats Festival on June 13, 2026

Appointments:

Emilia Rojas Felix to the Library Board – term expiring December 31, 2027

Carried.

PUBLIC HEARINGS

A public hearing was held for a tax abatement requested by Bigelow & Lennon. They are proposing to build a single-family home located on a vacant lot on parcel identification number 34.523.0270, valued at approximately \$269,000.00. City Administrator Craig Clark stated the application is in conformance with the City's policy for tax abatement.

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

Finance Director Emily Burns requested Council approve the voluntary participation in the Performance Measurements Program. The City has been participating since 2013.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving participation in the Office of the State Auditor's Voluntary 2026 Performance Measurements Program. Carried 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the City is pursuing a Hazard Mitigation Grant for property acquisition to remove flood-prone properties from the floodplain, specifically 210 4th Street NE and 500 Oakland Avenue East. The DNR has identified up to \$490,000 in grant funding, which will be matched with Local Option Sales Tax dollars for \$980,000 in eligible project costs. An additional \$43,500 in engineering services for appraisals and environmental testing is not grant-eligible and will be paid entirely with Local Option Sales Tax funds. The total project budget is \$1,023,500, with \$490,000 funded by the DNR grant and \$533,500 funded through Local Option Sales Tax. Mr. Lang is requesting an amendment to Resolution 17277 to revise the City's local funding commitment to \$533,500 from Fund 40000.

Moved by Council Member Baskin, seconded by Council Member Postma, adopting a resolution approving an amendment to a DNR Flood Mitigation Grant. Carried 6-0.

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated the Hormel Stipulation Agreement details penalties associated with exceedances in relations to an ICM agreement. This has been reviewed by all parties. This agreement would date back to July 2025 and go to present. Mr. Lang is requesting approval of the agreement.

Moved by Council Member Postma, seconded by Council Member Waller, adopting a resolution approving the Hormel Stipulation Agreement. Carried 4-0. (Council Member Baskin and Oballa abstaining)

Public Works Director Steven Lang stated they received a proposal for an agreement in the amount of \$25,000 to develop plans and specs for the rebidding of the replacement of the failed coating system on the Industrial EQ/Digester No. 2. Mr. Lang recommends approval of this agreement.

Moved by Council Member Oballa, seconded by Council Member Helle, adopting a resolution approving an agreement with WHKS for engineering services at the Wastewater Treatment Plant. Carried 6-0.

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

REPORTS AND RECOMMENDATIONS

City Administrator Craig Clark stated Fire Chief Jim McCoy will be retiring on the 8th of May. Mr. Clark thanked him for his service. Troy Tigner will stand in as interim Fire Chief.

Mr. Clark announced Lt. Michael Hartman will be the new Police Chief beginning June 22nd.

Mr. Clark stated the local option sales tax is moving along in the legislature. He stated there is a joint School/County/City Board meeting on May 11th. He would request they cancel the Joint County/City meeting on May 20th.

Council Member Helle stated she would like to begin working on the City Council Code of Conduct. She stated budgeting will be upon them before they know it. She would like to see any information or proposals on alternate revenue sources. She would be interested in information on municipal cannabis. She stated 4th Avenue Fest is on June 3rd and invited the public to attend.

Council Member Postma thanked the Officers that were recognized this evening and congratulated both the exiting and entering Police Chiefs.

Council Member Baskin congratulated those that retired and thanked the police officers. He commended the officers on their recognition program and would like to see this rolled out to other departments. He thanked Chief McKichan and Chief McCoy for their service to the City of Austin. He welcomed Chief Hartman to the City of Austin.

Mayor King read the May anniversaries.

Moved by Council Member-at-Large Austin, seconded by Council Member Oballa, adjourning the meeting to May 18, 2026. Carried.

Adjourned: 6:11 p.m.

Approved: May 4, 2026

Mayor: _____

City Clerk: _____