

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Regular Meeting – May 5, 2025

Pursuant to due call and notice, a regular meeting of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, May 5, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Prince presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Prince, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton, Thayer.

Staff Present: City Manager Rich Spiczka, Finance Director Donna Coe, City Engineer Sam Anderson, Assistant Planner Melissa Fahrenbruch, Planning Administrative Assistant Ainslee Krause

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

Mayor Prince called for any amendments to the agenda. **Motion by Peterson, seconded by Dickinson to add Discuss City's Response to Letter from Northern Township to the agenda. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Peterson, Thayer, Fiskevold Gould, Prince, Rivera, Eaton, Dickinson. Motion by Peterson, seconded by Eaton, approving the agenda as amended. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.**

MINUTES

The following minutes were presented for approval:

March 24, 2025 Work Session

April 7, 2025 Council Meeting

Motion by Eaton, seconded by Thayer, approving minutes as presented. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

CONSENT AGENDA #1

Mayor Prince called for any amendments to be made to Consent Agenda. The following Consent Agenda items were presented for approval. **Motion by Peterson, seconded by Eaton, to approve Consent Agenda items as follows:**

1. Claims Submitted by Finance Officer in the Amount Of \$758,956.57
2. Claims Submitted by ASM Global for the Sanford Center in the Amount of \$54,989.31
3. Approve March Financials from ASM Global for the Sanford Center
4. 2025 Business License Approvals
5. Approve Special Event Permit for MMIW218 Awareness Walk (May 17)
6. Approve Special Event Permit for 2025 Bike Bemidji - Loop the Lake (June 21)
7. Recommendation from Charter Commission Regarding Charter Amendment
8. Award of Low Quote for Lift Station Refurbishment to Quality Flow Systems (\$42,860)
9. Award of Low Quote for 2025 Sanitary Sewer Slip Lining Project to Visu-Sewer (\$119,750)
10. Authorize Consultant Service Contract with Moore Engineering
11. Declare Surplus Equipment and Authorize Disposal (Parks)
12. **RESOLUTION NO. 6617:** Accepting Donation from North Country Snowmobile Club (\$2,000)
13. **RESOLUTION NO. 6618:** Not Waive the Monetary Limits on Tort Liability

Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Dickinson, Fiskevold Gould, Prince, Eaton, Peterson, Thayer, Rivera.

CONSENT AGENDA #2

Mayor Prince called for any items to be pulled from consent agenda #2. The following Consent Agenda item was presented for approval. **Motion by Thayer, seconded by Dickinson, approving Consent Agenda #2 as follows:**

1. Claims Submitted by Finance Officer for Visit Bemidji in the Amount of \$31,376.93

Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Rivera, Dickinson, Fiskevold Gould, Thayer, Prince, Eaton. Abstain: Peterson due to his role as the Executive Director of Visit Bemidji.

CITIZENS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA

- Mary Crary, 6425 Lavinia Road NE, addressed the council and expressed opposition to Northern Township's application for incorporation and wastewater treatment system.
- Jeanne Jaeger, 5624 Lavinia Road NE, addressed the council and expressed opposition to Northern Township's wastewater treatment system and their plan to incorporate.

PUBLIC HEARING

MS4 Permit – Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program

One of the requirements of the City's Municipal Separate Storm Sewer System (MS4) permit is that an annual meeting must be held to update the city council and to allow the public to make oral and/or written comments on the adequacy of the City's Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program (SWPPP). This meeting has been advertised as a public hearing and after a presentation by city staff the city council should ask for any public questions or comments.

The provisions of the permit require that over the 5-year life of the permit, we address the following six minimum control measures.

1. Public Education and Outreach
2. Public Participation / Involvement
3. Illicit Discharge Detection and Elimination
4. Construction Site Stormwater Runoff Control
5. Post-Construction Stormwater Management for New Development & Redevelopment
6. Pollution Prevention / Good Housekeeping for Municipal Operations

The annual meeting satisfies one of the requirements of the first minimum control measures – public education and outreach.

Permit accomplishments from the past year (2024) include:

1. Completed 22 commercial site plan reviews within the city. Development and designs were reviewed for compliance with city and state runoff treatment and runoff requirements.
2. Articles were published in the city's newsletter about storm water management.
3. We updated our storm water system map in the City of Bemidji.
4. Inspected the condition of 69 of the 177 city storm sewer outlets and 5 out of 29 city storm water ponds in 2024.
5. Erosion Control Residential & Commercial Site Inspections for 2024 totaled 49 sites inspected, with a total of over 64 individual site inspections completed and documented over the course of the construction season.
6. The Street Department used the city's rubber-tired backhoe on storm water maintenance. Refer to the items below for details:
 - o Cleaning ends of culverts (outfalls)
 - o Ditch dredging
 - o Pond dredging (small ponds or swales)
 - o Installing rip rap materials
7. There was 900 LF of storm sewer pipe cleaned
8. Approximately 2850 miles of street sweeping was completed which collected 824 cubic yards of street sweepings.
9. 3 manholes and catch basins had minor repairs completed on them.
10. 50 cubic yards of material was removed from storm sewer outfalls in ditches.

Staff will continue to expand the required work and provisions that the City of Bemidji needs to do for the MS4 Permit. Each year staff evaluates and improves record keeping, providing the most accurate information on file for the MPCA, the public and the City of Bemidji.

Rain Barrel & Compost Bin Program Update

Anderson stated that one of the requirements of our MS4 Program is that the City is required to organize and complete a Public Involvement Activity each year. In 2022, the City implemented a rain barrel program through the Recycling Association of Minnesota (RAM) website that allows city residents to purchase rain barrels online at a discounted rate and reserve it for pick-up. Last year staff ordered 72 and sold-out. Staff pre-ordered 72 rain barrels and with the success of the program added an additional 36 rain barrels. Last year staff added Compost Bins to the program. Staff pre-ordered 54 compost bins and with the success of the program added an additional 36 compost bins.

Orders were accepted online on a first come, first serve basis until all the barrels are purchased ahead of the pick-up date in May. Both the rain barrels and compost bins sold out. The City covers 70% of the cost, plus sales tax using a promotion code at checkout for City residents for both the compost bins and rain barrels. The cost, with the discount, for a rain barrel is \$30 and for a compost bin is \$24. That equates to roughly \$14,000 in city contribution that comes from Stormwater Utility Fund.

Construction Inspection Software Update

Starting in 2024, staff implemented a new web-based program called "ComplianceGO" which was designed to assist with tracking active construction projects throughout the city limits and allowed staff to complete inspections from a phone or tablet. This new program has an added feature of allowing contractors or public users to use it, without a fee, to track on-going inspections required with their projects that disturb over an acre and are also governed by a MPCA Construction Stormwater General Permit. The program tracks rainfall events in real-time and notifies staff and other users when inspections are required based on those pre-set limits set in the system.

Pursuant to published notice, a public hearing was held regarding the MS4 Permit – Storm Water Pollution Prevention Program. Mayor Prince opened the hearing at 6:17 p.m.

Councilmembers addressed questions and concerns with staff.

Hearing no further comments, Prince closed the Public Hearing at 6:26 p.m.

Councilmember Dickinson left at 6:28 p.m.

Public Hearing for Keg N' Cork for the Seasonal Expansion of Liquor License Regarding Outdoor Dining - Consider Permit for Street Café and Seasonable Expansion of Liquor License (2024)

Pursuant to published notice, a Public Hearing was held to receive input regarding a Permit for Keg N' Cork for the Seasonable Expansion of Licenses Regulating Outdoor Dining. Mayor Prince opened the Public Hearing at 6:27 p.m., hearing no comments, Prince closed the Public Hearing at 6:30 p.m.

Motion by Fiskevold Gould, seconded by Thayer, approving the permit to Keg N' Cork for the Seasonable Expansion of Liquor License and Street Dining. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

ORDINANCES

Pursuant to published notice, a Public Hearing was held to receive input regarding an Ordinance Amending the Zoning Map Adopted in Chapter 28 of the Bemidji City Code Entitled "Development Code" (Planning Case ZOA-2025-0002, HBS Properties, LLC. Mayor Prince opened the Public Hearing at 6:32 p.m., hearing no comments the public hearing was closed was 6:33 p.m.

AN ORDINANCE Amending the Zoning Map Adopted in Chapter 28 of the Bemidji City Code Entitled "Development Code" (Planning Case ZOA-2025-0002, HBS Properties, LLC) was given a second reading.

REPORT

Analysis of 2023 Municipal Liquor Store Operations

Coe stated that each year the Office of the State Auditor releases comparative data on municipal liquor operations owned and operated by Minnesota cities.

The tables and analysis derived from the data in this report provides a basis of comparison for municipal liquor operations to highlight the current trends and financial condition of these operations.

For many communities in Greater Minnesota, municipal liquor operations provide access and convenience in areas that might be unable to attract a privately-run establishment. In addition to these functions, profitable municipal liquor operations have provided another source of revenue to supplement traditional tax and fee revenues.

Highlights:

The following ranking includes both Bemidji liquor stores.

- 8th out of 176 cities in highest Operating Revenues (Amount of Sales)
- 7th out of 176 cities in highest Gross Profit (Revenue less Cost of Product)
- 9th out of 176 cities in highest Operating Income (Revenue less the combined Cost of Product and Operating Expenses)

Room for improvement:

The City of Bemidji is 59th out of 176 cities in highest Net Profit as a Percent of Revenue (7.6%). Coe suggested exploring ways to increase efficiency including reducing costs, examining credit card fees, and potentially consolidating purchasing power. There was brief mention of new recreational cannabis products potentially increasing revenue in 2025.

Some councilmembers, including the mayor, suggested exploring ways to use liquor store funds to address social issues like substance abuse recovery programs.

The overall tone was analytical, with council interested in understanding the financial details and potential improvements to the municipal liquor store operations.

NEW BUSINESS

Discuss City's Response to Letter from Northern Township

Spiczka stated that staff is seeking direction with regards to responding to a letter received from Northern Township in response to our request via Resolution No. 6616. Council consensus was to draft a response letter. City staff and legal counsel will review the letter's contents for accuracy. Councilmembers were asked to provide additional context or information they might have about the information in the letter from Northern Township. The city attorney noted the response would help prepare for potential future litigation and would involve a thorough review. Some councilmembers noted inaccuracies in the letter and wanted those addressed in the response.

Motion by Peterson, seconded by Thayer to authorize staff and legal counsel to prepare a response letter to Northern Township. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Peterson, Thayer, Fiskevold Gould, Prince, Rivera, Eaton. Absent: Dickinson.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Councilmember Rivera reported no committee reports.
- Councilmember Thayer reported no committee reports but noted it is National Missing and Murdered Indigenous Relatives Awareness Day (May 5)
- Councilmember Peterson reported no committee reports.
- Councilmember Eaton reported Animal Ordinance Review Committee meets May 6, Airport Authority meets May 21, KRLS Board meets May 15 and Library Board meets May 13
- Mayor Prince reported on the Sanford Center Advisory Board meeting discussing refocusing board mission, potential reporting to the council, discussed scheduling work session regarding subcommittees, changing meeting location back to City Hall; attended Take Back the Night event; attended Affordable Housing Summit in Twin Cities on Mayor's panel; Welcomed Delta Kappa Gamma at their state convention; and attended State of the State address at the capitol

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Monday, May 12 - 5:30 p.m. - Planning Board
- Monday, May 19 - 6:00 p.m. - Council Meeting
- Monday, May 26 - HOLIDAY

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Fiskevold Gould, seconded by Eaton, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 7:21 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Ainslee Krause
Planning & Building Administrative Assistant