

# **BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL COUNCIL WORK SESSION AGENDA**

Monday, January 26, 2026

**City Hall  
317 4th Street NW  
5:30 PM**



**CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

**BUSINESS**

- a) 2026 Legislative Priorities and City Initiatives

**ADJOURN**

# CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM



**Meeting Date:** January 26, 2026  
**Action Requested:** Staff is requesting a clear list of items from council to help set the priority for work in 2026.  
**Prepared By:** Rich Spiczka, City Manager

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## **Background:**

The goal of this council work session is as follows:

1. Create a list of priorities council wishes to present at the Capitol and to lead conversations with state and federal legislators/staff. This could be feedback regarding proposed legislation, bonding requests, conversations regarding changes to existing policy and items like it.
2. Set priorities for what tasks/initiatives the City council would like to be a focal point of the 2026 work of City staff.

## Goal One

In efforts to make time with state and federal elect and staff as meaningful as possible, we would like to create a clear picture from the City of Bemidji on what our needs and priorities are for 2026. Below are a list of items that seem to be large talking points regarding legislation statewide and also items I have heard council mention in previous conversations. The list is not meant to be all-inclusive, but rather to give council a jumping off point for conversation:

### Current Legislative Talking Points

- see attached CGMC Priority document

### Items Council has mentioned in the past

- Hospitality/special use tax
- Legislative changes to usage of Sanford Center sales tax fund
- Feedback on previous legislation and mandates
- Bonding requests

## Goal Two

The hope is to come to a consensus of what items council would like to see become priority in 2026 outside of the normal day to day business of the City.

### Items I have heard council recommend in the past

- Improving housing in Bemidji
- Finding ways to increase and promote economic development
- Creating lasting and effective public/private partnerships
- Public Transportation
- Evaluation of City owned assets
- Evaluation of rental rules/policies/procedures

-Assessment of City buildings/structures

**Recommendation:**

Staff is requesting a clear list of items from council to help set the priority for work in 2026.

# 2026 CGMC TOP LEGISLATIVE PRIORITIES

## LOCAL GOVERNMENT AID (LGA) & TAXES

- Protect the current LGA appropriation
- Allow cities to authorize their own local sales tax (LST) under certain circumstances

## WATER & WASTEWATER INFRASTRUCTURE

- \$200M in total funding for Public Facilities Authority (PFA) programs to support water & wastewater infrastructure
- \$250M for lead service line replacement

## CHILD CARE

- \$20M in bonding for the Greater MN Child Care Facilities Grant Program
- Advocate to increase funding for the DEED Child Care Economic Development grants

## HOUSING

- Advocate for \$20 million for the Greater MN Housing Infrastructure Grants Program for FY26-27 & ongoing
- Eliminate income restriction for housing Tax Increment Finance (TIF) for Greater MN
- Oppose one-size-fits-all zoning & land use mandates on cities
- Ensure usability of MN Housing Finance Agency (MHFA) grant programs for Greater MN

## ECONOMIC DEVELOPMENT

- Invest in the Greater MN Business Development Public Infrastructure (BDPI) Program
  - \$20M in general obligation bonds
  - Protect \$2.5M in annual general fund appropriations

## TRANSPORTATION

- Support an infusion of \$400M in trunk highway bonds into the Corridors of Commerce program to address safety needs of highway travel in Greater MN
- Support funding for the Local Road Improvement Program & the Local Bridge Replacement Program
- Support policies to speed up the phase-in of ongoing funding for small city streets
- Restore funding to the HUTDF with the dedication of revenue from sales tax on auto parts

## EMERGENCY MEDICAL SERVICES (EMS)

- Support ongoing funding for the new EMS Operating Deficit Grant Program
- Support state policy changes that work toward workforce retention & recruitment improvements in Greater MN



