

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Regular Meeting – June 16, 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, June 16, 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, City Engineer Sam Anderson, City Clerk Michelle Miller

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

Mayor Prince called for any amendments to the agenda. **Motion by Peterson, seconded by Thayer, approving the agenda 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 Dickinson, seconded by Rivera, to approve Consent Agenda items as follows:**

1. Claims Submitted by Finance Officer in the Amount of \$2,563,135.40
2. Claims Submitted by ASM Global for the Sanford Center in the Amount of \$36,101.89
3. **RESOLUTION NO. 6626:** Authorizing Grant Agreement with Minnesota Department of Transportation for State Funded Program for IJJA Discretionary Grant Assistance
4. **RESOLUTION NO. 6627:** Approving State of Minnesota JPA with the City of Bemidji on Behalf of its Police Department Regarding the Minnesota Internet Crimes Against Children Task Force (ICAC)
5. **RESOLUTION NO. 6628:** Approving the First Amendment to the Real Property Declaration for the Grant Agreement Between the City of Bemidji and the State of Minnesota for the Bemidji Regional Airport Development Park BDPI Project
6. **RESOLUTION NO. 6629:** Approving Gambling Premises Permit for Lawful Gambling to BYHA at the Corner Bar
7. Approve Opioid Grant Funding and Agreement with Beltrami County Opioid Steering Committee.
8. Approve Purchase of Tommy Gate Lift Gate (Parks)
9. Approve Grant Agreement for Office of Violence Against Women Analyst
10. Approve Change Order #2 for the Cameron Park Restroom Project for \$1,000
11. Approve Comparable Cities List for Grading and Compensation Study
12. Declare Surplus Equipment and Authorize Disposal
13. Declare Neilson Reise's Ice Plant and Associated Piping as Surplus Property

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

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 Eaton, seconded by Dickinson, approving Consent Agenda #2 as follows:**

1. Claims Submitted by Finance Officer for Visit Bemidji in the Amount of \$1,185.25

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

CITIZENS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA

- Linda Odegaard expressed concerns about safety and cleanliness at the Bemidji Public Library, which she believes has become a shelter for homeless individuals, affecting the library's use and community connection.
- Anna Carlson addressed the council regarding the Sustainability Commission emphasizing collaboration, transparency, and continued engagement in sustainability initiatives for the Bemidji community.

ORDINANCES

Consider Ordinance Amending the City of Bemidji Council-Manager Charter Amending Chapter 12 Entitled "General Provisions", Adding Section 12.17 Charter Violations

AN ORDINANCE Amending the City of Bemidji Council-Manager Charter Amending Chapter 12 Entitled "General Provisions", Adding Section 12.17 Charter Violations was given a final reading and failed by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Rivera. Nays: Prince, Thayer, Dickinson, Eaton, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson.

REPORT

HRDC, led by Naomi Carlson and Anna Carlson, presented an update on the Comprehensive Plan, highlighting the following:

Community Engagement Strategy:

- Relationship-focused approach
- Prioritizing trust-building
- Aiming to go "far together" rather than "fast alone"
- Networking with multiple community organizations

Engagement Tools:

- Developing a hub site to showcase community input
- Creating GIS mapping tool for neighborhood identification
- Using iPads for interactive surveys at community events
- Planning surveys with 3-5 broad questions

Targeting diverse events like:

- Music at the Waterfront
- Dragon Boat Festival
- Watermark Arts Festival
- National Night Out
- County Fair
- Beach Bash

Specific Focus Areas:

- Reaching out to businesses (including those outside city limits)
- Engaging with nonprofits
- Connecting with various community groups
- Hosting neighborhood picnics
- Developing comprehensive community calendar

Timeline:

- Six-month progress so far
- Community engagement throughout summer and fall
- Aiming for comprehensive, inclusive plan
- Flexible approach to accommodate community needs

Overall goal: Create a collaborative, community-driven comprehensive plan that reflects Bemidji's diverse perspectives and future aspirations.

Councilmembers raised several key questions and concerns about the HRDC comprehensive plan:

Business and Economic Development Concerns:

- Need to engage businesses beyond Chamber of Commerce members
- Include economic development agencies like Greater Bemidji
- Reach out to developers who build outside city limits
- Understand barriers to business development

Community Engagement Depth:

- Ensure diverse representation
- Engage with multiple community groups (LGBTQ+, indigenous businesses, nonprofits)
- Avoid survey bias
- Provide accessibility for people with vision issues or language barriers
- Consider proxy surveying for confidential settings

Survey and Outreach Methodology:

- Implement technical safeguards to prevent duplicate responses
- Create alternative survey formats
- Extend survey timelines for nonprofits
- Engage with groups serving underrepresented populations

Event Coverage:

Expand beyond arts-focused events

Include community events like:

- Beltrami County Fair
- Water Carnival
- National Night Out
- High school and BSU sports events

- Fourth of July parade

Housing and Development:

- Understand why developers build outside city limits
- Engage with housing developers and landlord associations

Timeline Concerns:

- Recognize the complexity of creating a comprehensive, long-term plan
- Build flexibility into the planning process
- Focus on creating a sustainable engagement framework

COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Councilmember Eaton:
 - KRLS met on June 12 discussed 2026 levy request (3% increase)
 - Library board meeting scheduled for next day
- Councilmember Rivera:
 - Upcoming HRA meeting; requested potential work session regarding HRA
- Councilmember Thayer:
 - Attended 100-year-old celebration
 - Met with Northern Township representatives
 - Participated in League of Minnesota Cities event
- Councilmember Peterson reported on Fire Relief Association:
 - Events: Fishing Has No Boundaries; Water Carnival parade, trash pickup, "Fill the Boot" fundraiser; pancake breakfast for Heroes and Helpers; assisting with fireworks perimeter boats
 - Business: finalizing bylaws; exploring gambling fundraising opportunities
- Councilmember Dickinson had no report
- Councilmember Fiskevold Gould had no report.
- Mayor Prince:
 - Attended League of Minnesota Cities Insurance Trust orientation
 - Met with Northern Township representatives
 - Discussed potential modifications to city manager agreement with legal counsel

CLOSED MEETING

Prince stated that council will need to discuss in closed session for pending or threatened litigation, pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.05, Subd. 3(b) concerning the consolidated boundary adjustment proceedings involving Northern Township and the City of Bemidji, Minnesota Office of Administration File Numbers OAH 71-0330-40846 and OAH 71-0330-40869. Prince read into the record that the need for confidentiality outweighs the purposes served by the open-meeting law in this case based on the following:

- The City Council and legal counsel need to have a candid and open discussion of strategic considerations regarding the pending litigation.
- The only business to be discussed in the closed session is the pending litigation.
- An open session would be detrimental because it may take place in the presence of individuals or parties involved in the litigation and thereby divulge legal strategy that may be detrimental to the interests of the City and taxpayers.
- A closed session would benefit the public because the ultimate outcome of the threatened litigation may impact the finances, operations, future growth, services, economic development, and rights of the City.

Motion by Eaton, seconded by Peterson to close the meeting pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 13D.05, Subd. 3(b) regarding pending or threatened litigation concerning the consolidated boundary adjustment proceedings involving Northern Township and the City of Bemidji, Minnesota Office of Administration File Numbers OAH 71-0330-40846 and OAH 71-0330-40869. Motion carried by unanimous roll call vote. Meeting closed at 7:26 p.m.

Those in attendance: Rich Spiczka, Sam Anderson, Robert Kringler and Michelle Miller.

REOPEN MEETING

Having completed their business in closed meeting, Prince reopened the City Council meeting at 9:15 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- Monday, June 23 - Work Session (Neilson Reise Facility Use/Grant Update and City Operations Discussion)
- Monday, June 30 - Work Session (if needed)
- Monday, July 7 - Council Meeting
- Monday, July 14 - Planning Board

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Peterson, seconded by Dickinson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 9:19 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk