

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Regular Meeting – July 7, 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, July 7, 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 (6:04), Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera (6:01), 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 Eaton, approving the agenda as presented. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Absent: Fiskevold Gould**

MINUTES

The following minutes were presented for approval:

- May 5, 2025 Board of Review
- May 5, 2025 Council Meeting
- May 5, 2025 BEDA Meeting
- May 12, 2025 Special Council Meeting

Motion by Eaton, seconded by Thayer, approving minutes as presented. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Absent: Fiskevold Gould

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 \$1,938,042.73
2. Claims Submitted by ASM Global for the Sanford Center in the Amount of \$42,992.63
3. Approve May Financials from ASM Global for the Sanford Center
4. 2025 Business License Approvals
5. Approve Quote for City Street Striping to Sir Lines-A Lot (\$33,174.40)
6. **RESOLUTION NO. 6630:** Approving Depositories for City Funds in 2025
7. **RESOLUTION NO. 6631:** Accepting Donation from Books and More/Union Station Thrift Shop (\$2,386.19)
8. Approve Special Event Permit for Bemidji Dragon Boat Festival
9. **RESOLUTION NO. 6632:** Approving the Site and Alcohol for the Dragon Boat Festival
10. Approve Temporary 1-4 Day Liquor License for Bemidji Dragon Boat
11. Approve Temporary 1-4 Day Liquor License for United Way
12. Approve Settlement and Release Agreement Between City and William Batchelder
13. Approve Council Travel Authorization-MRCTI Annual Conference (Twin Cities), September 16-17-Prince

Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Peterson, Thayer, Prince, Rivera, Eaton. Abstain: Dickinson due to a relationship with individual in Item 12. Absent: Fiskevold Gould

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 \$42,118.24

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

CITIZENS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA

- No appearance.

NEW BUSINESS

City Storm Response Update

- City staff provided an update on the storm response, highlighting the rapid mobilization for emergency response, curbside debris pickup, and the fast-tracking of business licenses for

tree services and building permits. The city coordinated with the Red Cross for resource distribution and damage assessment.

- Governor Walz declared a peacetime emergency, allowing partial reimbursement for infrastructure cleanup.
- Council members and staff discussed challenges with debris pickup, especially on private roads due to liability concerns. The city is working to assist all neighborhoods, with a focus on public right-of-way.
- Multiple contractors are engaged in debris removal, and the city is tracking progress with internal maps. The goal is to complete one full round of pickup citywide before returning for additional rounds.
- There was discussion about providing resources for tree removal, including connecting residents with arborists, and exploring assistance for those without insurance.
- The city has waived late fees for utility bills due to mail delays and is open to further assistance for residents struggling with.
- Councilmembers expressed gratitude for staff and community efforts and discussed the emotional impact of tree loss and the importance of community.
- Questions were raised about responsibility for hazardous trees overhanging public roads, with staff explaining the process for prioritizing and addressing these hazards.
- The city is processing storm debris, with logs and branches being separated and mulched. There are ongoing discussions about potential public use of wood chips and the feasibility of using downed wood for lumber.
- Fire hazard concerns were discussed, with staff monitoring the situation and considering additional contractors if needed.
- Park cleanup is ongoing, with significant damage in some parks (e.g., Diamond Point Park). The city is balancing costs, safety, and public expectations for reopening parks.
- The council broadly supported using city housing funds (\$214,000) and revolving loan funds (\$784,000) to assist homeowners and businesses impacted by the storm. There was consensus on exploring partnerships with local organizations to maximize assistance and on possibly waiving certain fees.
- Staff will return with proposals for deploying these funds and partnering with other organizations for administration and outreach.

Resolution Extending Local Emergency Declaration

RESOLUTION NO. 6633: Extending a Local Emergency Declaration Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Sections 12.29 and 12.37 Until July 22, 2025 was offered by Councilmember Peterson, who moved its adoption, and upon due second by Councilmember Thayer, passed by unanimous voice vote.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Councilmember Fiskevold Gould had no committee reports but did attend the League of Minnesota Cities Annual Meeting.
- Councilmember Peterson attended a long-range planning meeting with rural fire partners, discussed storm recovery and the status of the SAFER grant (not available this year). The group is working on alternative solutions for fire department staffing.
- Councilmember Thayer will forward minutes from the downtown business committee to Michelle for distribution. The meeting focused on storm damages, planning upcoming events, and support for local businesses affected by the storm.
- Councilmember Rivera had no committee reports; HRA meeting lacked a quorum. Noted that HRA director Debbie will retire at the end of the year, and discussions are underway about the replacement process and HRA's role.
- Councilmember Eaton attended a budget committee meeting for the Bemidji Regional Airport Authority, which is starting its annual budget process (about \$1.6 million for operations). Upcoming meetings will address construction projects and a recently resolved bid challenge.
- Councilmember Dickinson had no report.
- Mayor Prince:
 - Gave a community update at the Launch Pad on June 18.
 - Attended a Sanford Center Advisory Board meeting, which included a report on the center's role as an emergency shelter and storm damage.
 - Participated in an airport commission meeting; financials are improving, and a special meeting is scheduled to address airport repairs.
 - Attended a Greater Bemidji board meeting, encouraged more information sharing about DEED business programs. Noted a railroad corridor update with potential development interest.
 - Attended a Greater Minnesota Housing Fund loan committee meeting
 - Briefly attended the LMC annual conference, where he connected with officials from other cities affected by disasters.
 - Provided a monthly update on local radio.

Prince called for a brief recess at 7:18 p.m. Meeting reconvened at 7:25 p.m. with all members present.

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 Fiskevold Gould 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 voice vote. Meeting closed at 7:28 p.m.

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

REOPEN MEETING

Having completed their business in closed meeting, Prince reopened the City Council meeting at 8:45 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- July 14 - Planning Board
- July 21 - Council Meeting
- July 28 - Work Session (HRA/Storm Relief Update)

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Fiskevold Gould, seconded by Peterson, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 8:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk