

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Regular Meeting – July 21, 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 21, 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 Finance Director Donna Coe, 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.**

MINUTES

The following minutes were presented for approval:

- May 19, 2025 Council Meeting
- May 27, 2025 Work Session
- May 27, 2025 BEDA Meeting

Motion by Eaton, seconded by Thayer, approving minutes as presented. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Abstain: Fiskevold Gould due to being absent from those meetings.

CONSENT AGENDA

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

1. Claims Submitted by Finance Officer in the Amount Of \$2,844,814.10
2. Claims Submitted by ASM Global for the Sanford Center in the Amount of \$69,197.30
3. 2025 Business License Approvals
4. Approve Special Event Permit for HRDC
5. Approve Special Event Permit for Bemidji Dragon Boat 5k
6. **RESOLUTION NO. 6634:** Approving Donation from Bike Bemidji - Loop the Lake (\$250.00)
7. **RESOLUTION NO. 6635:** Rejecting all Bids Received for City Project 25-03
8. Approve OTP Site Host Agreement (EV Charger at South Shore)
9. Approve Professional Services Agreement Amendment for Barr Engineering - City Project 25-05

Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

CITIZENS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA

- Misty Bray addressed the council to express her appreciation for the city's prompt and effective response to the recent storm. She described witnessing the storm's aftermath firsthand and noted how responsive and helpful city staff were in answering questions and providing information. Misty specifically thanked the fire department, police department, street works, and other city staff for their hard work and dedication during the cleanup and recovery efforts.

REPORT

State Representative District 2A Bidal Duran

Representative Bidal Duran provided a comprehensive legislative update to the council, covering the following key areas:

- Explained the delay in his visit due to legislative responsibilities and expressed appreciation for the city's leadership and community response to recent challenges.
- Emphasized his commitment to small government, local control, limiting unfunded mandates, and fiscal responsibility. Duran stated his role is to support local officials and ensure the state does not overreach.
- Acknowledged recent tragedies affecting elected officials and described his actions to ensure the safety of local officials, including requesting extra patrols.
- Highlighted the importance of working across the aisle, especially given the historic 67-67 tie in the House, which required bipartisan cooperation on committees and legislation.
- Discussed significant budget cuts, appropriations for labor, economic development, tourism, and small business assistance, and highlighted grant opportunities for local governments.
- Detailed state funding for various housing programs and described efforts to bring a housing pilot program to the area, targeting not just low-income but also middle-income residents (the "ALICE" population).

- Reviewed the state's tax situation, noting Minnesota's high tax rates and the out-migration of higher-income residents. He cautioned against further tax increases and discussed the need to incentivize people to stay in Minnesota.
- Reported on increased funding for public safety, new policies (e.g., fentanyl penalties, domestic violence notifications), and his advocacy for supporting law enforcement and fighting unfunded mandates.
- Mentioned bonding focused on water, roads, and bridges, and highlighted a bill he passed for hearing protection for peace officers.
- Warned about ongoing fraud issues in state programs and a looming \$6 billion deficit, stressing the need for fiscal responsibility.
- Noted only minor changes to the Paid Family Medical Leave program this session and announced an upcoming presentation for the community to discuss concerns.
- Encouraged ongoing communication with the council and offered to provide updated data and further legislative updates as needed.

Throughout his report, Duran responded to council questions about housing, mental health, migration data, and local funding allocations, and he expressed willingness to follow up on specific requests for information.

NEW BUSINESS

Consider Professional Services Agreement for North Lake Bemidji Water & Sanitary Sewer Extension Project - City Project 25-07

Anderson stated that the Beltrami County Highway Department is proposing to reconstruct CSAH 20 (Birchmont Beach Road NE) in the 2026 construction season. This is an opportunity to extend City water and sanitary sewer to areas identified in our water & sanitary sewer comprehensive plans for proposed utility expansion while not having to cover the associated road replacement costs, which lessens the city's project costs overall. This proposed utility extension will not require improvements to the WWTP and provides an alternate solution to those properties along the corridor that may have current or future septic issues.

In order to meet the proposed timelines of the upcoming county road project, staff have procured a proposal from Bolton & Menk to provide design & bidding services for \$351,000 to assist city staff with design, and bidding services for this project. Bolton & Menk are a reputable and capable firm that has done other projects within the city. The engineering design fees are proposed to be covered by sanitary sewer reserve funds.

Upon approval, topographical survey and preliminary design would begin immediately with the intent to have those tasks completed by end of September. Final design is scheduled to be completed by the end of 2025 to meet the county's road design & bidding timelines.

Motion by Eaton, seconded by Thayer, authorizing staff to enter into a professional services agreement with Bolton & Menk in an amount not to exceed \$351,000 for the North Lake Bemidji Water & Sanitary Sewer Extension Project – City Project 25-07. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Peterson, Thayer, Fiskevold Gould, Prince, Rivera, Eaton, Dickinson.

Storm Response Update

- City staff provided an update on ongoing storm cleanup and recovery efforts, emphasizing coordination with Beltrami County for tracking expenses and resources to ensure proper reimbursement under the state emergency declaration (75% reimbursable, city responsible for 25%).
- The city is at maximum contractor capacity for debris removal, with about 12 private contractor units working. City staff are now focused on managing operations and processing sites.
- The first round of debris cleanup is over halfway complete, with the goal to finish before winter. Public patience was requested as not all areas have been reached yet.
- Residents were reminded to keep debris (excluding stumps and root balls) on the curb, not in alleys, for pickup. Narrow streets and alleys present challenges, but case-by-case accommodations are being made for those unable to move debris.
- Parks and trails are being reopened as they are made safe, with about 80% of trails open. Diamond Point Park cleanup is nearly complete, but final stump removal and restoration are still pending.
- The city is stockpiling wood for potential public use (e.g., firewood, mulch) once processing congestion eases.
- Residents are encouraged to help keep storm drains clear of debris but not to rake debris into them.
- Public works provided a contact number for residents needing special assistance with debris or reporting issues like low-hanging wires or hazardous trees.

- There are plans to communicate directly with residents on private drives about a targeted debris pickup process, as these areas require special handling due to access and liability concerns.
- Stump removal for city-owned trees is being planned for after the main emergency cleanup, while options for private stumps are still being considered.
- MnDOT has assisted with initial cleanup on trunk highways, but street sweeping and catch basin maintenance remain primarily the city's responsibility.
- Councilmembers relayed community feedback, asked about specific problem areas, and discussed the need for clear public communication and mapping of cleanup progress.
- The city is considering future use of salvaged timber for community projects but is currently focused on immediate recovery.
- The update concluded with appreciation for staff and community cooperation, and a reminder that further communication and updates will continue as the situation evolves.

Resolution Extending Local Emergency Declaration

RESOLUTION NO. 6636: Extending a Local Emergency Declaration Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Sections 12.29 and 12.37 until August 21, 2025 was offered by Councilmember Thayer, who moved its adoption, and upon due second by Councilmember Peterson, passed by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Prince, Rivera, Thayer, Dickinson, Eaton, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Councilmember Peterson has no committee reports.
- Councilmember Thayer provided an update on the sustainability work session scheduled for July 28, focusing on preparation and the GreenStep Cities programs impact on the city. Also attended the HRDC annual meeting and distributed the annual report to councilmembers.
- Councilmember Rivera had no committee reports.
- Councilmember Eaton reported that the ordinance committee meets August 5 and is close to finalizing edits. The Airport Authority met on July 16 to discuss the 2026 preliminary budget, toured renovated facilities, and addressed storm damage. There was agreement on a levy increase but noted previous years' levies were offset by COVID funds. The Executive Director's annual review was completed. Deer management will continue on private property only. Was unable to attend the KRLS board meeting but shared updates on grant applications and a special personnel meeting scheduled for Thursday.
- Councilmember Dickinson had no committee report.
- Councilmember Fiskevold Gould Attended the Beltrami County Historical Society meeting, where they discussed grant applications, created a collection management committee, and updated the caboose exhibit. The society is considering moving the "History Mystery" from December to October. Currently drafting some new policies. Attended the "In Memoriam of Trees" concert and the "Art of the Park" event.
- Mayor Prince reported that Representative Pete Stauber toured Diamond Point Park and the Sanford Center with city officials. Attended airport commission meetings, noting significant storm damage and ongoing repairs. Participated in a Sanford Center Advisory Board special meeting focused on the board bylaws and member expectations. Met with the Minnesota State Auditor discussing reporting requirements and unfunded mandates. Attended the Greater Bemidji board meeting, which discussed business disaster relief and potential development projects. Reminded the council of the upcoming CGMC annual conference being hosted at the Sanford Center.

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.

Prince called for a brief recess at 7:40 p.m. Meeting reconvened at 7:45 p.m. with all members present.

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 the following roll call vote: Yeas: Eaton, Prince, Peterson, Thayer, Dickinson, Rivera, Fiskevold Gould. Meeting closed at 7:47 p.m.

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

REOPEN MEETING

Having completed their business in closed meeting, Prince reopened the City Council meeting at 8:37 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- July 28 – Work Session (HRA/Storm Relief Update/Sustainability)
- August 4 – Council Meeting
- August 11 – Planning Board
- August 18 – Council Meeting

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 8:38 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk