

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Regular Meeting – August 18, 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, August 18, 2025, at 6:05 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 (attended via WebEx-out of town), Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton, Thayer.

Staff Present: City Manager Rich Spiczka, City Engineer Sam Anderson, Finance Director Donna Coe, Police Chief Mike Mastin, Police Sergeant Jesse Becker, City Clerk Michelle Miller

SWEARING IN CEREMONY FOR POLICE DEPARTMENT

City Clerk Miller administered the Oath of Office to Police Officers Sanderson and Avila and Community Service Officers Allwine and Murphy Vossberg.

AMENDMENTS TO AGENDA

Mayor Prince called for any amendments to the agenda. **Motion by Eaton, seconded by Peterson, approving the agenda as presented. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Peterson, Thayer, Fiskevold Gould, Prince, Rivera, Eaton, Dickinson**

MINUTES

The following minutes were presented for approval:

- June 23, 2025 Work Session
- July 7, 2025 Council Meeting
- July 21, 2025 Council Meeting

Motion by Eaton, seconded by Fiskevold Gould, approving the June 23, 2025 minutes as presented. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Prince, Thayer, Dickinson, Eaton, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson. Rivera abstained due to absence from the June 23 meeting.

Motion by Eaton, seconded by Thayer, approving the July 7 and July 21 minutes as presented. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Eaton, Prince, Peterson, Thayer, Dickinson, Rivera, 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 Thayer, to approve Consent Agenda items as follows:**

1. Claims Submitted by Finance Officer in the Amount Of \$1,691,997.45
2. Claims Submitted by ASM Global for the Sanford Center in the Amount of \$101,281.45
3. 2025 Business License Approvals
4. Approve Quote from Zepole Restaurant Supply for \$6,961.42 for the Sanford Center (CIP)
5. Approve Quote from Uline for \$1,148.66 for the Sanford Center (CIP)
6. Approve RFP for Group Employee Health Insurance
7. Approve Special Event Permit for Bemidji High School Homecoming Parade (September 21)
8. Approve Temporary 1 Day Consumption and Display Permit (Watermark Art Center)
9. Approve Change Order No. 5 for WWTP Final Clarifier Project - City Project 23-03
10. Declare Surplus Equipment and Authorize Disposal (Police)
11. **RESOLUTION NO. 6640:** Establishing Taxicab Fares for Ride Away, LLC
12. **RESOLUTION NO. 6641:** Rejecting all Bids Received for the Rail Corridor Soil Remediation and Earthwork Project - City Project 25-05

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. Rivera requested that the item be pulled for discussion.

CITIZENS WITH BUSINESS NOT ON AGENDA

- Reed Olson, 711 14th Street NW, Reed Olson announced the formation of a tenant's union for Bemidji, highlighting the decline in owner-occupied homes and the increasing need for renter support in the community. The union aims to provide a safe space for renters to voice concerns without fear of retaliation, advocate for a local and potentially statewide renters' Bill of Rights, and support efforts to rebuild affordable housing.

REPORT**Bemidji Police Department Security Camera Registration and Mapping (SCRAM) Program**

Jesse Becker, Police Sergeant, presented the Security Camera Registration and Mapping (SCRAM) program, stating it is a voluntary initiative by the police department to help solve crimes more efficiently. Residents and businesses can register their security cameras with the department, providing contact information and camera locations. This information is used to create a private map accessible only to law enforcement, allowing officers to quickly identify and contact camera owners near a crime scene to request footage. Becker emphasized that (1) Registration is voluntary and only collects location and contact info, not live access or login credentials; and (2) The program aims to build community partnerships and speed up investigations by reducing the need for door-to-door inquiries.

Councilmembers provided the following comments:

- Privacy and Legal Concerns: Councilmembers asked about privacy for camera owners, how data would be protected, and whether registration could make owners subject to court orders or data requests. The city attorney clarified that registered information would likely be protected as investigative data, but further legal review was suggested.
- Community Education: Several members emphasized the need for clear public education about what the program is (voluntary, no live access, no login info collected) and what it is not, to prevent misunderstandings and alleviate fears.
- Outreach: Suggestions included presenting the program to the Community and Police Advisory Board and reaching out to apartment complexes and landlord associations.

NEW BUSINESS**Consider Professional Services Agreement for 2027 Middle School Drive NW Reconstruction - City Project 27-02**

Anderson reported that on a 4-year rotation, Bemidji receives federal grant money to assist with road reconstruction projects that meet certain criteria based on traffic volumes and state aid designations. The last project the City used this funding on was Norton Avenue NW in 2023 and are anticipating roughly \$1 million in federal funding again in 2027. In anticipation of the project, City staff have programmed in the remainder of Middle School Drive NW between 23rd Street NW and 15th Street NW to use this federal funding.

Leading up to formal design and eventual construction, city staff would like the assistance from an engineering firm specializing in traffic analysis and road design to look at the current traffic levels and provide some alternatives for this corridor along with support city staff through a public engagement process. Staff have received a proposal from KLJ to assist staff with the concept design and public engagement for the project. KLJ assisted MnDOT through the TH 197 corridor study, and they have already analyzed a portion of Middle School Drive & Hannah Avenue as part of that TH 197 study.

With approval, this process would take the next 6-8 months to develop an approved concept design for the corridor prior to beginning preliminary and final design through the remainder of 2026 in anticipation of 2027 construction. The consultant fees would be covered by the State Aid Construction Account.

Motion by Peterson, seconded by Eaton authorizing the mayor and city manager to enter into a professional services agreement with KLJ in an amount not to exceed \$67,000 for the concept phase of the 2027 Middle School Drive NW Reconstruction Project – City Project 27-02. Motion carried by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Rivera, Peterson, Dickinson, Fiskevold Gould, Thayer, Prince, Eaton.

Councilmember Peterson stepped away from the Fall Food Festival item due to his involvement with the First City of Lights Foundation.

Consider Special Event Permit for the Fall Food Festival (September 18-21)

Councilmember Rivera raised several points regarding the fall food festival:

- Asked about the expected number of attendees and whether the event would require portable toilets, especially since the event runs after the tourist information center closes.
- Inquired if there were more vendors this year compared to last year and whether all participating food trucks had current city licenses.
- Expressed that, while staff did not require additional portable toilets this year, it would be wise to monitor attendance and restroom needs for future events as the festival grows.
- Supported following staff recommendations for this year but requested that the issue of portable restroom facilities be noted in the minutes for future evaluation.

Councilmember Thayer commented on applying restroom requirements consistently across all events, including nonprofit and other community gatherings.

Motion by Fiskevold Gould, seconded by Thayer approving the special event permit for the Fall Food Festival from the First City of Lights Foundation for September 18-21. Motion

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

Councilmember Peterson returned to the meeting.

COUNCIL COMMITTEE UPDATES

- Councilmember Eaton reported on upcoming meetings for the animal ordinance, Airport Authority, and Library Board.
- Councilmember Rivera shared updates from the Public Arts committee, including efforts to refurbish public art at the wastewater treatment plant requesting council input on funding.
- Councilmember Thayer provided updates from the HRDC, Sanford Event Center Advisory Board, and Sustainability Commission (discussing comprehensive planning, a successful community picnic, tree inventory efforts); and Downtown Business Alliance meeting.
- Councilmember Peterson summarized the Firefighters' Relief Association meeting, including fundraising success, bylaw amendments, and benefit level discussions.
- Councilmember Fiskevold Gould had no report.
- Councilmember Dickinson had no report.
- Mayor Prince reported on radio updates, National Night Out participation, a Federal Reserve Bank roundtable, and Police Advisory Board candidate interview.

Prince called for a brief recess at 7:24 p.m. Meeting reconvened at 7:30 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 Dickinson 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: Fiskevold Gould, Eaton, Rivera, Peterson, Prince, Dickinson, Thayer. Meeting closed at 7:32 p.m.

Those in attendance: Rich Spiczka, Sam Anderson, Robert Kringler, Chad Arnesen, and Michelle Miller. Peterson left the meeting at approximately 8:46 p.m.

REOPEN MEETING

Having completed their business in closed meeting, Prince reopened the City Council meeting at 9:16 p.m.

UPCOMING MEETINGS

- August 25 (5:30) - Work Session (Storm Recovery Update)
- August 28 (6:00) - Joint Informational Hearing with Northern Township
- September 1 – Holiday
- September 2 (6:00) - Council Meeting

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Dickinson, seconded by Eaton, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 9:17 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,


Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk