

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Work Session – April 28, 2025

Pursuant to due call and notice, a work session of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, April 28, 2025 at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Prince presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Prince, Fiskevold Gould (5:31), Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton, Thayer.

Present: City Manager Rich Spiczka, City Engineer Sam Anderson, City Clerk Michelle Miller

Lead and Copper Update

Through the Environmental Protection Agency and the Minnesota Department of Health, Anderson highlighted the city's efforts to identify and replace galvanized lines, with 127 requiring replacement and 327 categorized as unknown. The city received approval for its inventory in October and is preparing for grant funding to cover replacement costs through the Minnesota Department of Health, expecting to receive between \$2-2.5 million to replace galvanized lines.

Over the years staff have researched historical records, including old index card files, and updating the GIS mapping system to track water service line materials. The City has offered free lead testing to homeowners, with only one test showing a very low, non-concerning lead detection. The city will develop a pre-approved list of plumbers for emergency repairs and can reimburse costs up to \$10,000-\$12,000 per service line. Staff are committed to continuing investigations to reduce the number of unknown lines and ensure water service safety.

No action was needed with the council supportive of the process as presented.

Open Forum Policy Discussion

Council discussed the need for a formal policy related to open forum, the importance of public comment, and the logistics of handling materials and public participation. Items discussed and key considerations:

Location, Timing and Participation:

- Consensus to keep public comment at the beginning of the meeting
- Maintain 3-minute time limit per speaker
- Consider a total time allocation (e.g., 15-20 minutes total)
- No requirement to sign up in advance
- Potentially allow clarifying questions from council

Material Presentation:

- Most councilmembers opposed using audio-visual equipment
- Prefer materials be emailed or handed directly to council
- Materials would become part of public record

Agenda Item Comments:

- Generally, discourage commenting on agenda items
- Suggest alternative methods like comment forms for agenda-specific feedback

Additional Considerations:

- Develop clear decorum rules
- Potentially different rules for public hearings vs. open forum
- Explore follow-up mechanisms for citizen concerns

The council agreed to continue developing a comprehensive policy with input from staff and legal counsel.

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 6:46 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk