

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Work Session – July 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, July 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 (5:33), Peterson, Dickinson, Rivera, Eaton, Thayer.

Present: Rich Spiczka, Melissa Fahrenbruch, Michelle Miller, Jordan Lutz, Charles Biberg

Sustainability Commission

Jordan Lutz and Charles Biberg, Chair and Vice Chair of the Sustainability Commission, presented to the City Council about the Green Steps program, a voluntary sustainability initiative for Minnesota cities covering the following key points:

- The Green Steps program provides a framework of 29 best practices grouped into five categories, with 181 possible actions for cities to improve sustainability. The city is currently at Step 3, with Step 4 involving tracking and reporting progress on selected metrics, and Step 5 focusing on improving those metrics.
- Recent changes to the program have made it more flexible, allowing cities to choose which metrics to track rather than requiring a set list.
- The Commission recommended five focus areas for the city: efficient building operations (energy and water use benchmarking), waste reduction (especially at the Sanford Center), climate adaptation and resilience planning, urban tree canopy management, and efficient city fleet operations (including electric vehicle infrastructure).
- Much of the required data is already being collected by city departments, but a key challenge is identifying a staff member or position to coordinate data collection, reporting, and champion the program.
- Councilmembers discussed the importance of setting achievable goals, the need for staff capacity, and the value of the program as a framework for continuous improvement and community engagement.
- The program is supported by state agencies and provides opportunities for collaboration and resource sharing with other cities.
- There was consensus to move forward with assigning responsibility for the program, with the city manager to return with staffing options and time commitments.

The presentation emphasized the Green Steps program as a flexible, pragmatic framework for sustainability, highlighted the city's progress and opportunities, and focused on the need for dedicated staff support to ensure effective implementation and reporting.

ADJOURN

There being no further business, motion by Peterson, seconded by Eaton, to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote. Meeting adjourned at 6:40 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk