

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

BEMIDJI, MINNESOTA

Special Meeting – September 22, 2025

Pursuant to due call and notice, a special meeting of the City Council of the City of Bemidji, Beltrami County, Minnesota, was held on Monday, September 22, 2025, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall, Mayor Prince presiding.

Upon roll call, the following Councilmembers were declared present: Prince, Fiskevold Gould, Rivera, Eaton, Thayer.

AGENDA

Prince stated that due to technical difficulties, there will not be a closed session on the agenda. Staff suggested adding a resolution for consideration in open session to the agenda. **Motion by Eaton, seconded by Thayer adding Resolution of the Bemidji City Council Rejecting a Purported Settlement Offer from Northern Township Concerning Pending Contested Boundary Adjustment Proceedings to the agenda. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.**

BUSINESS

Authorize Grant Submission to Bernick's Family Foundation for the Recreation Department

The Recreation Department intends to apply for funding to support "Kids in the Outdoors," a series of one-day special events for youth ages 6–17. The program is designed to encourage active and healthy lifestyles, offer inclusive and accessible outdoor recreation experiences, build social connections and lifelong skills in youth.

Proposed event highlights include:

- Paddle & Play (kayaking and paddleboarding)
- Bike Adventure Day
- Outdoor Athletic Sampler
- Ninja Warrior/Circuit Challenge
- Mindful Movement in Nature

Grant funds would be used to cover supplies, equipment, and qualified instructors, ensuring safe and engaging programming for all participants.

Motion by Fiskevold Gould, seconded by Thayer authorizing grant submission to Bernick's Family Foundation for the Recreation Department. Motion carried by unanimous voice vote.

Resolution Approving FY2026 Traffic Safety Officer/DWI Officer Grant-MN DPS

The Bemidji Police Department has been selected again and awarded a State-wide grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety-Office of Traffic Safety to fund a dedicated DWI enforcement officer. This grant will reimburse the City for wages, benefits, overtime and attendance at the annual 2025 "Toward Zero Deaths" conference for the assigned officer from October 1, 2025 to September 30, 2026. The total amount of reimbursement possible from this grant for the specified period is \$146,493.82

The funding would not require a new hire, but rather fund an existing officer, already trained in advanced DWI detection and enforcement techniques. This would result in the above as salary savings for that period.

The application for the grant was limited to the top 25 counties in the State with the highest number of traffic fatalities, departments with 20 or more officers, and already active with a TZD program in good standing. For FY2025, and to date, the BPD DWI/Traffic Safety Officer has identified and arrested 152 persons for DWI, over 60% have been controlled substance related. BPD has participated in the dedicated DWI enforcement officer since October 1, 2019, and has been an important part of traffic safety and preventing dangerous drivers from operating vehicles in our city.

RESOLUTION NO. 6650: Authorizing Execution of Grant Agreement with MN Department of Public Safety for 2026 DWI Officers Grant Application was offered by Councilmember Thayer, who moved its adoption, and upon due second by Councilmember Fiskevold Gould, passed by unanimous voice vote.

Preliminary Levy Discussion and Resolution Setting Preliminary Tax Levy for Taxes Payable in 2026 and Setting the Truth in Taxation Hearing Date

Spiczka state that the City is required to set the preliminary levy by September 30, 2025. This levy is only the "ceiling" and can be lowered before we set the final levy at the regular council meeting on December 15, 2025. As we work through the details required to create a decent framework for setting the levy staff is focused on assuring we can offer the same level of service expected to our City, while focusing on efficiency. Spiczka stated that as we budget from year to year, there are uncontrollable items that will increase in cost in the event of supplies we need, services we must

procure and wages/benefits we provide to staff to continue to serve our public. In order to simplify the budget process with the events of the storm in June, staff is working the budget with the understanding that liquor store funds will be used to cover the overages in 2025 due to the storm. The only real impact on 2026 numbers is that Liquor Store fund transfers into other budget areas may be limited until we can restore our City Policy mandated 50% reserve.

Staff presented historical levy data, levy options for 2026 (2%, 4%, 6%, 8%), and property tax examples illustrating impacts for different property types. The preliminary levy discussion centered around balancing city needs (public safety, capital improvements, reserves) with taxpayer affordability. Staff and council acknowledged uncertainty regarding some costs (e.g., storm recovery, insurance, legal fees) and discussed the limits and risks of using reserves or specific revenue sources (like liquor store funds).

Councilmembers expressed concern about the financial impact on homeowners, renters, and businesses, particularly in light of recent storm-related expenses. There was broad agreement to set the preliminary levy at 6% as a maximum, while expressing a hope to reduce it before final adoption if possible, after further analysis and updated data. Several councilors highlighted the need for alternative funding sources (such as hospitality taxes or increased fees) and stressed the importance of separating essential from non-essential expenses.

RESOLUTION NO. 6651: Approving Preliminary Tax Levy for Taxes Payable in 2026 at 6% and Setting the 2025 Truth in Taxation Hearing for Monday, December 1 at 6:00 p.m. was offered by Councilmember Rivera, who moved its adoption, and upon due second by Councilmember Thayer, passed by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Thayer, Fiskevold Gould, Prince, Rivera, Eaton, Dickinson. Nays: Peterson.

Consider Resolution Rejecting Settlement Offer from Northern Township Concerning Pending Contested Boundary Adjustment Proceedings

The council considered a resolution to reject a settlement offer from Northern Township concerning contested boundary adjustments. Councilmember Dickinson raised concerns about perceived inflammatory language in the resolution (specifically, the words "generous," "significant," and "favorable") and moved to amend the resolution by removing "generous" and "significant," with discussion about retaining "favorable" and replacing "significant" with "numerous concessions."

RESOLUTION NO. 6652: Rejecting a Purported Settlement Offer from Northern Township Concerning Pending Contested Boundary Adjustment Proceedings with changes to the third WHEREAS paragraph by eliminating the word generous in the second sentence and replacing the word significant in the third sentence with "numerous concessions" and retaining "favorable financial terms" was offered by Councilmember Dickinson, who moved its adoption, and upon due second by Councilmember Eaton, passed by the following roll call vote: Yeas: Prince, Rivera, Thayer, Dickinson, Eaton, Fiskevold Gould, Peterson.

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 7:25 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,



Michelle R. Miller
City Clerk