

# BEMIDJI CITY COUNCIL COUNCIL WORK SESSION AGENDA

Monday, February 23, 2026

City Hall  
317 4th Street NW  
5:30 PM



## CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

## BUSINESS

- a) Council Commissions/Committees
- b) Creation of Budget Committee
- c) Confirm Legislative Priorities

## ADJOURN

# CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM



**Meeting Date:** February 23, 2026  
**Action Requested:** Council consensus on the three posed questions.  
**Prepared By:** Rich Spiczka, City Manager

**Background:**

The City of Bemidji has the following Commissions/Committees/Boards:

Charter Commission	Heritage Preservation Commission	Sustainability Commission
Planning Commission	Public Works Committee*	Public Affairs Committee*
Housing/Redevelopment Authority	City Library Board	Sanford Center Advisory Board
Parks and Trails Commission	Public Arts Commission	Community and Police Advisory Board
Merit Hearing Board*	Proposal Review Committee*	South Shore Design Review Committee*
Revolving Loan Fund Review Committee*	Bemidji Regional Airport Authority Board	Housing Appeals Board*

\*Denotes a Commission or Committee WITHOUT a regular meeting schedule (as needed).

It has been mentioned by council about how to best use these committees and commissions. The following are three talking points that have been mentioned numerous times regarding them.

Question 1: Should the Public Affairs Committee and the Public Works Committee be committees with regularly scheduled meetings? Monthly? Quarterly?

They have been used in the past on an “as needed” basis. They are best used to be able to educate council and discuss options/issues brought to the full council with a recommendation. They could be an asset to the City if used in a regular manner. If the full council trust the process of the recommendations being brought forward, it would streamline processes. If all the items brought before these committees are going to be fully debated as a new business item at the council level, there is little point to these groups meeting/providing recommendations. If the council believes these committees should meet regularly, it may be best to propose a schedule for their meeting. In the essence of efficiency and convenience:

- Public Affairs: February, May, August, November
- Public Works: January, April, July, October

The recommendation would be that these meetings would be scheduled for 4:30pm ahead of the full city council meeting on the third Monday of the month. These meetings could involve recommendations that would be heard at the first city council meeting of the next month.

Question 2: Can the council provide funding to commissions in order for them to properly work their mission?

The commissions/committees are created to “do the work” they are tasked with. For commissions like Sustainability and Public Arts etc. funding would allow them to do more of their work and potentially allow them to proceed with projects and initiatives that need funding. A couple of examples:

Sustainability and Public Arts: They could very well be the conduit and jumping off point for grants and resources to work their mission. Often, those grants/initiatives require a match or a partnership with a private entity(that might cost money) to get them off the ground. If they had an annual budget that they controlled they could keep that work moving without having to find staff support or stop their work pending full council approval.

Would the council support annual budgeted amounts for individual commissions to do their work or support a fund that they make requests from to do their work? Please note that this could mean changes will be needed to ordinance, depending on how it shakes out, but the City can navigate it if the council feels this is a valid idea. If so, staff would bring ideas on how this could work the best and what, if any, ordinance changes may be triggered in doing so.

Question 3: What process does the City want to use to evaluate commissions/committees/boards How should we assess them continuing or being necessary?

I think this broad question is to assure the reasons/needs in which we have them is still pertinent. Example: Community and Police Advisory has struggled to get a quorum to meet.

Do we want to create an annual process to validate the need for each of these groups?

**Recommendation:**

Council consensus on the three posed questions.

# CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM



**Meeting Date:** February 23, 2026  
**Action Requested:** Council consensus on Framework of a Budget Committee  
**Prepared By:** Rich Spiczka, City Manager

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## Background:

As City Manager I am recommending the creation of a Budget Committee that consists of staff and council members to facilitate the budget process each year. The goals of the process are:

- To educate both elect and staff of what the process means to each
- To shed light on realities and needs within department budgets
- To create understanding of decision making methods to provide city services
- To create a thorough and transparent process of creating the annual budget

We solicited information through as many resources as we could to get a feel for how other communities accomplish this. We were at the mercy of those willing to respond and you will see entities of various sizes, as well as some charter and some non charter cities. In the summary information provided, the methods are various and timelines/frequency are as well. With this being our original lift in creation of the committee, I see the 2026 process as more labor intensive than ones that follow. I want to hear council perspective on what it might look like/how it could work, but in order to provide a framework, I have a process laid out below.

My recommendation regarding the committee is as follows:

Members:	Three councilmembers, Finance Director, City Manager
Timeline:	Begin in April with committee becoming familiar with budget, 2026 Q1 Initial educational meetings with each department head in May/early June Committee Report to council at the June work session CIP/2027 Draft Budget meetings in July/August with each department head Draft Budget report to the council at the August 2026 Work Session

**\*\*NOTE:** This committee would follow Open Meeting Law with published meeting dates/times and be open to the public.

## Sections from the Bemidji City Charter:

Section 6.02 POWERS AND DUTIES OF THE CITY MANAGER. The manager shall be responsible to the council for the administration of the city's affairs. He/She shall have the powers and duties set forth in the following subdivisions:

Subd. 1. The manager shall see that this Charter and the laws, ordinances, and resolutions of the city are enforced.

Subd. 2. The manager shall appoint and may suspend and remove, upon the basis of merit and fitness and subject to applicable personnel rules, the city clerk, all heads of

departments, and all subordinate officers and employees except for personnel who are governed by appropriate civil service commissions and/or other relevant boards as provided by statute.

Subd. 3. The manager shall direct and supervise all departments, officers, and agencies of the city, except as otherwise provided by law or Charter.

Subd. 4. The manager shall attend all meetings of the council and may take part in discussion but not vote; but the council may, in its discretion, exclude the manager from any meeting at which the manager's removal is considered.

Subd. 5. The manager shall recommend to the council for adoption such measures, as he/she deems necessary for the welfare of the people and for the efficient administration of the city's affairs.

Subd. 6. The manager shall keep the council fully advised on the financial condition and needs of the city, and shall prepare and submit to the council the annual budget and capital program.

Subd. 7. The manager shall submit to the council and make available to the public a complete report on the finances and administrative activities of the city at the end of each fiscal year.

Subd. 8. With the approval of the council, the manager may designate a properly qualified person to perform the duties of the manager during his/her absence or disability or while the office is vacant.

**Section 7.04 SUBMISSION OF BUDGET.** Annually the manager shall submit to the council the recommended budget. The budget shall provide a complete financial plan for all city funds and activities for the ensuing fiscal year and, except as required by law or Charter, shall be in such form as the manager deems desirable or the council may require. It shall include a summary and show in detail all estimated income and all proposed expenditures, including debt service and comparative figures for the current fiscal year, actual and estimated, and the preceding fiscal year. In addition to showing proposed expenditures for current operations, it shall show proposed capital expenditures to be made during the year and the proposed method of financing each such capital expenditure. For each utility operated by the city, the budget shall show anticipated net surplus or deficit and the proposed method of its disposition; subsidiary budgets for each such utility giving income and expenditure information shall be included or attached as appendices. The total proposed operating budget to be provided from the property tax shall not exceed the amounts authorized by law and this Charter. Consistent with these provisions, the budget shall contain such information and be in the form prescribed by ordinance and by law.

**Section 7.05 CAPITAL IMPROVEMENT PROGRAM.** The manager shall prepare and submit to the council a recommended five-year capital improvement program along with the annual budget. The capital improvement program shall include a list of all capital improvements proposed to be undertaken during the next five fiscal years, with appropriate supporting information as to the necessity for such improvements; cost estimates, method of financing, and recommended time schedules for each improvement; and the estimated annual cost of operating and maintaining the facilities to be constructed or acquired. This information shall be revised and extended each year for capital improvements still pending or in progress. The city council shall hold a public hearing on the capital improvement program and adopt it with or without amendment with the annual budget.

**Recommendation:**

Council consensus on framework of a Budget Committee to be placed on the consent agenda on the Monday March 2, 2026 council meeting agenda.

## Budget Committee Examples

### **Beltrami County**

Members: Aud/Treasurer, Finance Director, Administrator, 2 rotating commissioners

Starts in May runs through September

Meetings of Committee and also meetings with individual departments

Board develops principles and priorities that committee works with staff to align

### **Alexandria (Charter required)**

Members: City Administrator, Mayor, One Council member(2 yrs)

Start End of April, weekly meetings during the day until August

April/May- meetings with entities requesting money from City

June/July- CIP and meetings with Department Heads

First work session in August recommended budget to full council

### **Pelican Rapids**

Members: 2 council members, City Administrator, City Clerk/Treasurer

Staff meetings prior to early August

Mid August meetings of committee start and run through November

Typically a meeting with committee for each department- understanding/requests

5-8 total meeting process

### **Detroit Lakes (Charter required)**

Budget Committee is their Finance Committee- staff and 4 council members

Starts late July/Early August – lead by finance committee but all council invited

They meet 6-8 times throughout August

### **Fergus Falls**

Tax Levy Committee- Administrator, Mayor and 2 council members

Starts in June- monthly meetings to compare actuals to future template

\*Staples process very similar to Fergus Falls

## **Braham**

Mayor, council member, City Admin, Department Heads

Start in early Spring- compare council vision/goals with proposed budgets

Work done to align budgets with goals/visions of the council

# CITY COUNCIL AGENDA ITEM



**Meeting Date:** February 23, 2026  
**Action Requested:** Consensus to support the items presented.  
**Prepared By:** Rich Spiczka, City Manager

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## **Background:**

As we head into the time of year where multiple councilors and staff will be advocating for the City of Bemidji down in St. Paul, we want to assure the council has clear priorities regarding items to mention to our legislators. Staff is looking for council confirmation on the items we have discussed previously so elect can go to St. Paul with clear and concise information.

\*Support for Representative Bidal Duran's bill calling for 100% disaster reimbursement for the City of Bemidji following the June 2025 State Disaster Declaration.

\*Support for Representative Bidal Duran's bill calling for sales tax rebate regarding storm recovery supplies purchased due to the June 2025 storm.

\*The Bemidji City Council unanimously believes that zoning should remain within local control and the state should NOT institute statewide zoning regulations.

\*To stress the importance of Local Government Aid(LGA) as a revenue source for municipalities.

\*The state be mindful of continuing to provide funding and initiatives that support the development of housing in Greater Minnesota.

\*To reinforce that funding will continue to be a barrier to maintaining quality municipal service and that the state should continue to maintain a robust municipal funding model.

## **Recommendation:**

Consensus to support the items presented.