

# Sanford Center Advisory Board

Meeting Minutes

November 19, 2025, at 7:00AM

City Hall Conference Room

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## 1 Call to Order

Chair **Mayor Jorge Prince** called the meeting to order at 7 00 am with a quorum present.

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## 2 Attendance

### Present

- **Mayor Jorge Prince** Council Representative Chair
- **Audrey Thayer** Council Representative
- **Brady Laudon** VisitBemidji Representative
- **Steven Johnson** At Large
- **Andra Vaughn** At Large
- **Tracy Pogue** Chamber of Commerce Representative
- **Donna Coe** City of Bemidji Representative
- **Rich Spiczka** City of Bemidji Representative
- **Trevor Johnson** Sanford Center Finance
- **Nate** Sanford Center Staff
- **Scott Turn** Bemidji Area Chamber of Commerce Guest

### Absent

- **Kayla Winkler** Naming Rights Representative
- **Eric Tweten** Inn Keeper Association Representative

- **Bobby Anderson** Sanford Center Representative Leave of Absence
  - **Brittany Lauritsen** BSU Representative
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### **3 Approval of Agenda**

The agenda was approved by unanimous consent.

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### **4 Approval of Minutes**

The October minutes were not included in the packet. It was noted that they had been submitted to City staff but were unintentionally omitted.

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## **5 Monthly Financials for September 2025**

### **5.1 September Results**

- Operating loss for September was **\$147,218**.
- Behind budget by **\$35,492**
- Behind forecast by **\$15,691**
- Year to date through September the Center is **\$173,535** behind budget.
- Current projected operating loss for fiscal year 2025 is **\$520,884**.

Food and beverage income, utilities, insurance, and the cancellation of the Minnesota Rodeo Finals all contributed.

### **5.2 Utility Costs and Storm Reimbursement**

Higher electricity costs stem from storm related building impacts and contractor activity.

The Center is pursuing reimbursement through the League of Minnesota Cities which requires a review of two to three years of historical utility data.

Timing for reimbursement remains uncertain.

### **5.3 Mayor Prince Cash Flow Comment**

Mayor Prince expressed concern that the combination of the projected operating loss and pending storm related reimbursements could affect the Center's year end cash position.

He stressed the importance of identifying any issues early to avoid a late financial request during levy season when the community is still recovering from storm impacts.

He encouraged close month to month monitoring so that any concerns can be addressed proactively.

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## **6 Committee Updates**

### **Marketing Committee**

The committee reported forward progress in reaching statewide associations and identifying potential conference and tradeshow opportunities.

Contacts have been made with food service associations, resorts, school nutrition, festivals, care providers, brewers, and fire service groups.

Upcoming Sanford Center events were also reviewed including BSU hockey and Pink the Rink.

The committee will shift to a quarterly meeting schedule beginning in 2026 to maintain structured follow-through.

### **Other Committees**

Finance and Operations committees are being reestablished and scheduled to provide more consistent oversight throughout 2026.

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## **7 Convention and Trade Show Sales Discussion**

### **7.1 Visit Bemidji Bandwidth**

Visit Bemidji noted briefly that their office is fully committed with current duties and cannot take on additional statewide sales responsibilities.

### **7.2 Chamber Technology Support**

The Chamber's visitor AI analytics tools can help strengthen proposals and illustrate economic impact but do not replace active sales or outreach efforts.

### **7.3 Regional Comparisons**

Board members referenced that cities including Grand Forks Fargo Duluth St. Cloud and Brainerd maintain more structured efforts to recruit conferences and association events.

### **7.4 Importance of Pursuing RFPs**

Board members emphasized the need to actively pursue RFPs for conferences and tradeshow since many associations plan events years in advance. Building relationships early and maintaining regular communication is essential to landing these opportunities.

### **7.5 Board Direction**

Board members agreed that this topic has been reviewed in several meetings and that continued discussion without action is no longer productive. The Board stressed the need for immediate movement from conversation to execution.

The Advisory Board recommended that **ASM take the lead** in exploring and establishing a dedicated outside sales position focused on:

- Statewide and Nationwide outreach
- association relationships
- identification and pursuit of RFPs
- development of a long-term conference pipeline
- coordination with Visit Bemidji and the Chamber

Board members also supported organizing a **joint meeting with the Visit Bemidji Board** to clearly define shared roles and expectations.

The message from the Board was clear: **the time for talking has passed and execution must begin immediately.**

## 8 General Manager Report

In the absence of **Bobby Anderson**, staff summarized key updates:

- MercyMe concert and Pink the Rink were successful
- World Juniors Pre Tournament Series will welcome Czechia Latvia and Slovakia from December 19 through December 23
- Merchandise will be offered for World Juniors through Skeeter Stitch and USA Hockey
- Princess Bride has been rescheduled by ASM to July 12, 2026
- Youth hockey teams are using Sanford Center ice temporarily due to Nymore Rink issues.

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## 9 Adjournment

Mayor Prince requested a motion to adjourn.

First Andra Vaughn

Second Brady Laudon

Motion approved unanimously.

Meeting adjourned.