



**CITY COUNCIL MEETING**  
**City Hall—Council Chambers, 3989 Central Ave NE**  
**Monday, June 22, 2026**  
**6:00 PM**

**Mayor**  
*Amada Márquez Simula*  
**Councilmembers**  
*Connie Buesgens*  
*Rachel James*  
*Justice Spriggs*  
*Laurel Deneen*  
**City Manager**  
*Aaron Chirpich*

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## **MINUTES**

The following are the minutes for the Meeting of the City Council held at 6:00 pm on Monday, June 22, 2026, in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3989 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

### **WELCOME/CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL**

Mayor Márquez Simula called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Present: Mayor Márquez Simula; Councilmember Deneen; Councilmember Spriggs; Councilmember James

Absent: Councilmember Buesgens

Also Present: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager; Jesse Hauf, IT Director; Sara Ion, City Clerk; Dan O'Brien, Fire Chief; John Stutzman, Parks and Recreation Director; Christen Craig, City resident; Jonathan Aldrich, Fire Captain; Kyle Hall, Fire Captain; Alex Katterjohn, Firefighter/Inspector; Quinn Rod, Firefighter/Inspector

### **MISSION STATEMENT**

*Columbia Heights is a vibrant, healthy, and connected City. We are here to actively support the community, deliver equitable services, build and strengthen connections, improve upon our past, and uphold our successes. We strive to be better and ensure Columbia Heights is a great place for everyone, today and in the future.*

#### **A. Columbia Heights City Council and Staff Norms.**

While we are accountable to each other for these norms, the Mayor and City Manager will help us adhere to them with respectful reminders and reinforcement as needed.

### **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

### **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

*Motion by Councilmember Deneen, seconded by Councilmember James, to approve the Agenda as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 4-0.*

### **PROCLAMATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, RECOGNITION, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GUESTS**

#### **A. Introduction of New Fire Department Personnel.**

*Presented by Dan O'Brien, Fire Chief*

Fire Chief O'Brien introduced the new Fire Department personnel. Jonathan Aldrich, Fire Captain, started as a fire explorer in 2000 and joined the City's reserve division in 2005, and became a paid on-call firefighter in 2005, and is now hired to train other firefighters.

Kyle Hall, Fire Captain, was a fire explorer and became a member of the Fire Department in 2009. He was a firefighter inspector in 2020 and was appointed Fire Captain in 2026. Quinn Rod, Firefighter/Inspector, was a fire explorer in 2019 and joined as a paid-on-call firefighter in 2020. Alex Katterjohn, Firefighter/Inspector, joined the Fire Department in 2025.

The new Fire Department personnel introduced themselves and thanked the Council.

**B. Galdogob, Somalia, Sister City Day**

Mayor Márquez Simula proclaimed July 01, 2026, as Sister City Day and read the City's proclamation.

**C. Juneteenth**

*Accepting Proclamation: Christen Craig*

Mayor Márquez Simula proclaimed June 19, 2026, as Juneteenth Freedom Day, and Council Member James read the City's proclamation.

Christen Craig accepted the Proclamation. She read a quote from Isabella Wilkerson's book "Caste: The Origins of Our Discontents" and noted that Juneteenth is a day where those who are descendants of people who were enslaved can recall the fortitude and perseverance of their ancestors. She explained that she is a descendant of enslaved people. She explained that her descendants went on to find their own freedom and speak up for injustices they were experiencing. The work of her ancestors has allowed her to be a first-generation graduate three times and a homeowner in the City. She noted that she was proud of how the City handled Operation Metro Surge because it showed fortitude and perseverance against injustice.

**D. Park and Recreation Month**

*Accepting Proclamation: John Stutzman, Parks and Recreation Director*

Mayor Márquez Simula proclaimed July 2026 as Park and Recreation Month, and Councilmember Deneen read the City's proclamation.

City Manager Chirpich noted that Parks and Recreation Director Stutzman was on his way and would be attending the meeting shortly. Márquez Simula suggested that the Council move on to City Council and Administrative Reports until Parks and Recreation Director Stutzman arrives at the meeting.

**CITY COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS**

**Report of the City Council**

Councilmember James stated she attended the Columbia Heights Peace Breakfast, the Columbia Heights High School graduation, meetings with other Councilmembers and staff regarding the right to renew, and the Public Hearing regarding Central Avenue. She shared a statement regarding the Public Hearing for Central Avenue and highlighted the need for safety for everyone, expressed support for creating a safer corridor, improving transit access, upgrading aging infrastructure, and making it easier for people to walk and bike throughout the community. She noted the support of emergency personnel. She expressed concern regarding the impact the construction will have on businesses and explained that the City will work with MnDOT and businesses to ensure there is minimal impact. She added that she hosted a Monarca Democracy Defense training.

Councilmember Deneen noted that she attended the Public Hearing for Central Avenue and agreed with Councilmember James' comments. She noted that she attended the community event at Huset Park, and explained that there are QR codes around the City that will encourage residents to provide feedback for the Park Master Plan.

Councilmember Spriggs stated he attended the Central Avenue Public Hearing and a virtual presentation on wealth and income inequality.

Mayor Márquez Simula mentioned she attended the City's Peace Breakfast, the Sustainability Commission meeting, and congratulated the recent high school graduates. She stated she attended a Cities for Safer and Stable Communities meeting, a meeting with the City Manager, and the Central Avenue Public Hearing. She mentioned that the Art Info Fair was cancelled due to rain.

#### **Report of the City Manager**

City Manager Chirpich noted that it is Jamboree week and that there would be a time capsule opening on June 25<sup>th</sup> at noon. The time capsule was placed on July 3<sup>rd</sup>, 1976. The City is developing a 10-year Parks and Recreation system plan to guide future planning and improvements for parks, trails, recreation facilities, and natural spaces throughout the community. The system plan website can be found on the City's website and Facebook page, and there is a link for the public to provide feedback.

City Manager Chirpich reviewed the activities for the Jamboree event. The parade is scheduled for June 26<sup>th</sup> at 6:00 pm, fireworks will take place on Saturday, June 27<sup>th</sup> at dusk, and Music in the Park will take place on Sunday from 1:00 until 4:00 pm at Huset Park East. The rescheduled Art and Info Fair will be on August 19<sup>th</sup> from 4:00 until 7:00 pm.

#### **PROCLAMATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, RECOGNITION, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GUESTS (cont.)**

##### **D. Park and Recreation Month (cont.)**

Parks and Recreation Director Stutzman accepted the Proclamation and explained that he is excited to bring his passion and excitement to the City. He thanked the Council.

#### **COMMUNITY FORUM**

There were no Community Forum comments.

## CONSENT AGENDA

*Motion by Councilmember Spriggs, seconded by Councilmember James, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 4-0.*

1. **Approve June 1, 2026, City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes.**  
*Presenting Item: City Manager Aaron Chirpich*  
MOTION: Move to approve the June 1, 2026, City Council Work Session meeting minutes.
2. **Approve June 8, 2026, City Council Meeting Minutes.**  
*Presenting Item: City Manager Aaron Chirpich*  
MOTION: Move to approve the June 8, 2026, City Council meeting minutes.
3. **Approve June 16, 2026, Special City Council Meeting Minutes.**  
*Presenting Item: City Manager Aaron Chirpich*  
MOTION: Move to approve the June 16, 2026, Special City Council meeting minutes.
4. **Adopt Resolution 2026-041, Amending the Capital Equipment Budget (Fund 431) for the Replacement of Unit 0402 with a 2026 Ford F-350 4x4 XLT with Forestry Upfitting, Including Vehicle Disposal.**  
*Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager*  
MOTION: Move to waive the reading of Resolution 2026-041, there being ample copies available to the public.  
MOTION: Move to adopt Resolution 2026-041, Amending the Capital Equipment Budget (Fund 431) for the Replacement of Unit 0402 with a 2026 Ford F-350 4x4 XLT with Forestry Upfitting, including Vehicle Disposal.
5. **Adopt Resolution 2026-44, City Approval of Special Legislation Related to the Alatus Tax Increment Financing (TIF) District at 4300 Central.**  
*Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager*  
MOTION: Move to waive the reading of Resolution 2026-044, there being ample copies available to the public.  
MOTION: Motion to adopt Resolution 2026-044, approving laws of Minnesota 2026, chapter 128, article 6, section 6, relating to the Alatus Tax Increment Financing District.
6. **Approval of Final Payment for 2024 Safe Routes to School, City Project 1807.**  
*Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager*  
MOTION: Move to accept the work for the 2024 Safe Routes to School, City Project 1807, and authorize final payment of \$24,899.79 to Concrete Idea, Inc. of Plymouth, Minnesota.
7. **Approve Actions of the Columbia Heights Volunteer Relief Association**  
*Presenting Item: Aaron Chiprich, City Manager*  
MOTION: Move to approve the amendment to the Columbia Heights Volunteer Relief Association Bylaws as approved by the Columbia Heights Volunteer Relief Association Board of Trustees and general membership.

**8. License Agenda.**

*Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager*

MOTION: Move to approve the items as listed on the business license agenda for June 22, 2026, as presented.

**9. Rental Occupancy Licenses for Approval.**

*Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager*

MOTION: Move to approve the items listed for rental housing license applications for June 22, 2026, in that they have met the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code.

**10. Review of Bills.**

*Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager*

MOTION: Move that in accordance with Minnesota Statute 412.271, subd. 8 the City Council has reviewed the enclosed list of claims paid by check and by electronic funds transfer in the amount of \$1,056,647.00.

**ADJOURNMENT**

*Motion by Councilmember Deneen, seconded by Councilmember James, to adjourn. All Ayes, Motion Carried 4-0.*

Meeting adjourned at 6:43 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

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Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary