



CITY COUNCIL MEETING
City Hall—Council Chambers, 3989 Central Ave NE
Monday, August 24, 2026
6:00 PM

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

MINUTES

The following are the minutes for the Meeting of the City Council held at 6:00 pm on Monday, August 24, 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 6:02 pm.

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

Also Present: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager; Sara Ion, City Clerk; Scott Lepak, City Attorney; Kelly Monahan, Assistant City Engineer; Joe Clerkin, City resident; Tyler Hambley, City resident; Deb Hultman, City resident; KT Jacobs, City resident; Joe Make, City resident; Shari Mako, City resident

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 5-0.

PROCLAMATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, RECOGNITION, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GUESTS

A. Celebrating 100 Years of Columbia Heights High School

Accepting Proclamation:

Mayor Márquez Simula proclaimed 2026 as the 100th Anniversary of Columbia Heights High School and read the City's proclamation.

Columbia Heights Superintendent Zena Stenvik accepted the Proclamation and thanked the Council. The school will be celebrating the 100th Anniversary on September 12th, and the public is invited to the celebration event.

CITY COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Report of the City Council

Councilmember James mentioned she attended the League of Women Voters Summer Social event, and she congratulated the Columbia Heights Recreation Program for their Mill Street Theater production. She added that she attended the Polish Picnic at Huset Park, the Scaling the Heights event, the City staff thank you breakfast, the Art and Info Fair, and the puppet wagon performance. She thanked the Engineering Department for the mill and overlay project.

Councilmember Buesgens noted that she volunteered with the Blooming Sunshine Garden. She stated she attended the Sustainability Commission, the Central Avenue Beautification Meeting, the Millstreet Play at the High School, a check-in meeting with City Manager Chirpich, the Art and Info Fair, the Fire Relief Association, and the HeightsNext Blooming Sunshine Garden Picnic.

Councilmember Deneen stated she attended the Blooming Sunshine Garden Potluck, the Minnesota Fringe Festival, the Visual Quality Meeting for Central Avenue, and met with local community members to discuss priorities for the upcoming midterm elections. She added that she participated in the joint Council and School Board session.

Councilmember Spriggs stated he did not have anything to report.

Mayor Márquez Simula explained that she attended Cone with a Cop, the Minnesota Fringe Festival, the HeightsNext potluck dinner, the City staff breakfast, and the Scaling the Heights event.

Report of the City Manager

City Manager Chirpich stated the fall newsletter would be arriving in mailboxes next week. The newsletter contains information regarding upcoming events and reminders for residents. He provided a reminder of the Sullivan Lake Park Project and mentioned that grading would begin next week and the project will be completed by the fall. The City Charter dictates that the Council receives the next year's proposed budget by the end of August each year, and it will be published on the City's website tomorrow. There is a proposed 4.1% average increase in the share of property tax levy paid by local taxpayers, and a 9.6% increase in the share of property tax levy that is paid by the metro area. There will be a 4.4% increase in the quarterly water, sewer, and refuse bill for the typical single-family residence with four occupants. There will be a 0.8% increase in State and local aid.

2. City Manager Response to August 10, 2026, Community Forum Concerns.

City Manager Chirpich noted that there was a resident who addressed the Council with comments regarding Central Avenue redevelopment. He provided an update on the next benchmarks related to the project. At the September 8th City Council Work Session, the Council and City staff will sit down with MnDOT for one last work session to refine the last bit of details before the municipal consent deadline.

COMMUNITY FORUM

KT Jacobs, City resident, spoke on behalf of the MnDOT proposal. She mentioned that a petition has circulated and has received 350 signatures in less than two months. She referenced a petition that received 600 signatures and noted that Councilmember Buesgens publicly boasted about having children sign the petition. She explained that the petition that she is presenting has no children's signatures and includes either residents or people who use Central Avenue. She asked that the Council not approve the current MnDOT proposal being put forth for Central Avenue for improvements and to eliminate a plan to reduce traffic lanes to the same lane used by transit buses. MnDOT's initiatives adversely affect businesses along Central Avenue and eliminate adjacent parking, which results in pedestrian traffic and losses to businesses. She mentioned that she has walked the corridor and the businesses are opposed to the proposal. There are several areas where street parking will be removed, which will impact businesses. The goal is to have a safer Central Avenue.

Joe Clerkin, Business owner, noted that he is a business owner along the Central Avenue corridor and explained that he cannot find information about how access to the businesses will be maintained during construction. He added that when a side street was closed for a short time, it was devastating to the business.

Deb Hultman, City resident, stated she is a part of the VFW on Central Avenue. The previous construction that Mr. Clerkin mentioned also impacted the VFW. She explained that she has heard that the Council has already made a decision and it is not worth fighting it since contractors are already lined up. She asked the Council to reconsider how they would do the construction on Central Avenue.

Sheri Mako, City resident, stated she used to work at Immaculate Conception School. She explained that the school has taken in two more schools in one building. There will be a lot of kids on both sides of Central Avenue. She expressed concern regarding the safety of the children and asked the Council to make the project as safe as possible.

Joe Mako, City resident, noted that Central Avenue is a highway and is not a place where cars slow down for a roundabout. He explained that it is not a good idea to install roundabouts on Central Avenue because it will cause traffic congestion. He added that the City needs to take care of the businesses along Central Avenue.

Andrew Mako, City resident, spoke about the proposed roundabouts for Central Avenue. He explained that there is a lot of data that shows that there is an effectiveness that goes towards roundabouts. However, data for new roundabouts shows that collisions will happen more frequently than fatal accidents because drivers are not used to the new roundabout. About 70% of drivers have not received driver's education regarding how to go through roundabouts.

Tyler Hambley, City resident, referenced the minutes for the City Council Work Session for August 3rd where they discussed the topic of the rental cap density limit. He explained that he is in the process of purchasing land in East Bethel and has the intention of keeping his home in Columbia Heights to rent the home to friends who are moving to the area. He added that he currently owns a rental property in the City. He explained that he would like to keep the home and be able to give it to his children someday and to stay connected to the City. He expressed concern regarding the availability of low-income housing for people of color. He inquired about the research that goes into the rental density cap and if it is the right mechanism to achieve the Council's goal to ensure that homes are well kept and out-of-State buyers are not purchasing the homes for financial gain. He asked if there was a different mechanism to be able to sift through people who want to rent their homes so that people do not have to sell their homes in the City. He noted that the exemption would only provide him one to two years and would be faced with the same problem and would like to keep the property indefinitely. He asked about the legality of the private property rights by having a rental density cap.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion by Councilmember Spriggs, seconded by Councilmember James, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

1. **Approve July 27, 2026, Special City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes.**
Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
MOTION: Move to approve the July 27, 2026, Special City Council Work Session meeting minutes.
2. **Approve August 3, 2026, City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes.**
Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
MOTION: Move to approve the August 3, 2026, City Council Work Session meeting minutes.
3. **Approve August 10, 2026, City Council Meeting Minutes.**
Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
MOTION: Move to approve the August 10, 2026, City Council meeting minutes.
4. **Accept April 16, 2026, Charter Commission Meeting Minutes.**
Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
MOTION: Move to accept the April 16, 2026, City Council meeting minutes.
5. **Accept the May 27, 2026, and June 24, 2026, Park & Recreation Commission Meeting Minutes.**
Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
MOTION: Move to accept the May 27, 2026, and June 24, 2026, Park & Recreation Commission meeting minutes.
6. **Approval of Joint Powers Agreement for Anoka County's Reconstruction of 40th Avenue From Main St to University Avenue.**
Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
MOTION: Move to approve the Joint Powers Agreement with Anoka County, agreeing to

use State Aid funds (402.3191) for the City's cost participation estimated at \$381,944.65 for construction and engineering expenses.

7. Rental Occupancy Licenses for Approval.

Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager

MOTION: Move to approve the items listed for rental housing license applications for August 24, 2026, in that they have met the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code.

8. 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 to claims paid by check and by electronic funds transfer in the amount of \$1,307,165.70.

ITEMS FOR CONSIDERATION

Bid Considerations

9. Consideration of Corrective Asphalt Materials Proposal for Bituminous Street Surface Treatment, Project 2601.

Presenting Item: Kelly Monahan, Assistant City Engineer

Assistant City Engineer Monahan stated asphalt pavements become brittle over time due to oxidative aging and environmental exposure. Application of spray-on rejuvenator products within the first years of a pavement's life restores the flexibility and adhesion properties of the asphalt binder material, extending the life of the pavement.

Assistant City Engineer Monahan noted that there are many rejuvenator products on the market, but local and state research indicate that performance varies widely by product. The City began treating new asphalt pavements with the rejuvenator product Reclamite in 2021. Reclamite is used widely and successfully in the metro area, and research literature indicates it is considered a top-performing product in the state. Reapplication of rejuvenator products is recommended 2-7 years after initial application to maximize the pavement life benefit. Layering different rejuvenator products risks incompatibility issues which may affect pavement performance.

Assistant City Engineer Monahan stated Reclamite exhibits the highest performance history and value among the rejuvenator products available today. With future reapplication in mind, Staff considers Reclamite to be the best product for the City to continue to use to maintain new asphalt pavements.

Mayor Márquez Simula asked if information could be shared on social media regarding the product and application. Assistant City Engineer Monahan replied that staff is drafting an FAQ page to be posted.

Motion by Councilmember Buesgens, seconded by Councilmember James, to accept the proposal from Corrective Asphalt Materials to apply Reclamite to the described city pavements, Project 2601, for an estimated cost of \$49,772.97 appropriated from Infrastructure Funds 430.6323.44000.2601. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Deneen, seconded by Councilmember Spriggs, to adjourn. All Ayes, Motion Carried 5-0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:50 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,

Aaron Chirphich, City Manager