



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 14, 2025

5:00 PM

Mayor Connelly called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

PRESENT: Mayor Tasha Connelly, Councilor Molly MacGregor, Councilor Tom Sutherland, Councilor Rick Blake, Councilor Dan Mertes

STAFF: Tom Pagel, Chad Sterle, Natalee Bushman, Kimberly Gibeau, Brooks Bachmann, Andy Morgan, Bill Saw, Kevin Ott, Chery Pierzina, Carl Babich, Will Richter, Jeremy Nelson, Rob Mattei

PROCLAMATIONS/PRESENTATIONS:

1. Oath of Office for Office Brooks Bachmann

Police Officer Brooks Bachmann takes the Oath of Office for the Grand Rapids Police Department.

POSITIVE HAPPENINGS IN THE CITY:

Mayor Connelly recognized the recent graduation of Police Captain Kevin Ott from the FBI National Academy. This elite 10-week leadership program, held in Virginia, is highly competitive—accepting less than 1% of law enforcement officers worldwide. Captain Ott's acceptance and successful completion of the program is a significant achievement that benefits not only his personal development but also strengthens the Grand Rapids Police Department and the wider community. His selection reflects his outstanding character, leadership, and dedication.

PUBLIC FORUM:

No one from the public wished to speak.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

Mayor Connelly shared that, along with Councilor Sutherland, she recently attended a City-County meeting with commissioners from Itasca County. To keep the Council informed, it was noted that Library Director Will Richter and the Mayor will present a proposed joint powers agreement (JPA) to the County Board for consideration. This JPA is not a formal governance agreement but is intended to initiate a collaborative conversation between city and county staff focused on conducting a long-range feasibility study for library operations. The proposal, suggested by the County Attorney, aims to address funding inequities. The County is currently in its budgeting process, and while no decisions have been made yet, the intent is to continue moving the conversation forward.

In addition, during the recent Range Mayors meeting, Director Paul Peltier requested a letter of support regarding the MPCA's (Minnesota Pollution Control Agency) sulfate standards related to the KEETAC water permit. Peltier is drafting a letter on behalf of the Range Mayors to submit as public comment. The concern is that the MPCA has acknowledged the standards they set cannot realistically be met, and if enforced, the consequences could be severe—impacting not only KEETAC and MINNTAC mining operations but also industries like logging. With roughly 1,800 locals employed at KEETAC and MINNTAC, the potential regional economic impact is significant. The public comment period opens July 8, and a public meeting is scheduled for September 3. The Range Mayors plan to finalize and submit the support letter before then, ideally at their next meeting in early August.

Mayor Connelly addresses public concern and rumors about the closure of Northland Second Harvest in Grand Rapids, clarifying that neither the food shelf nor the food bank is closing. The distribution center is relocating to Duluth, but Second Harvest will continue to operate and maintain a presence locally. Rising food and transportation costs are prompting some organizational changes, but community food access will remain intact.

Along Mayor Casper of Cohasset, Mayor Connelly attended the North Country Trail Town Designation event on July 10th. Grand Rapids is now recognized as a trail town along the North Country Trail, which spans from Vermont to North Dakota and is the largest of the 11 national scenic trails in the U.S. It uniquely crosses the Mississippi River in Grand Rapids. The trail has a positive impact on tourism, lodging, and the local economy; bringing in visitors from multiple states. The city is planning to add signage on entry points to highlight this designation.

Councilor Rick Blake attended the RAMS summer meeting on June 30th, where several legislative topics were discussed that impact the region. One topic was potential relief from the financial burden of changing high school mascots, which could save districts significant funds. It was also noted that county aid and Local Government Aid (LGA) were preserved in the state budget, a critical support for local governments. Emergency medical services (EMS) aid was also addressed, highlighting its importance to surrounding communities even if it doesn't directly impact the city. The successful passage of the bonding bill was emphasized as essential to avoiding project delays. Efforts continue on several issues, including expanding housing support through bipartisan work and lifting the nuclear moratorium to allow for more energy options in the future. A proposal to apply a tax on recreational properties to help fund school districts did not pass but remains a possibility for future sessions. This would particularly benefit counties with large numbers of seasonal properties.

At the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities meeting, attendees acknowledged the recent tragic deaths of a legislative leader and her husband, and the attack on another senator and his wife. Both individuals were recognized for their advocacy and balanced support of Greater Minnesota issues.

Councilor Blake also shared an update regarding the potential acquisition of Minnesota Power by the Canadian Pension Plan and Global Infrastructure Partners. The Minnesota Commerce Department has reached an agreement supporting the acquisition, and although it's not yet finalized, they are recommending approval to the Minnesota Public Utilities Commission. This move could lead to significant infrastructure investment in the state through Minnesota Power. Upcoming meetings related to the Minnesota Power Integrated Resource Plan were also mentioned. These meetings will cover topics such as the use of natural gas at Minnesota Power facilities, which has implications for preserving local revenues in Itasca County. The meeting schedule includes a virtual session on July 23, an in-person meeting in Eveleth on July 22, and another in Cohasset on July 28. Participation is encouraged, especially for those interested in regional energy planning and economic impacts.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

2. Approve Council minutes for Monday, June 23, 2025 Worksession and Regular meetings.

Motion made by Councilor Sutherland, Second by Councilor Blake to approve Council meetings for Monday, June 23, 2025 as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Sutherland, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

VERIFIED CLAIMS:

3. Approve the verified claims for the period June 17, 2025 to July 7, 2025 in the total amount of \$568,844.60.

Motion made by Councilor Mertes, Second by Councilor MacGregor to approve the verified claims as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Sutherland, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

CONSENT AGENDA:

4. Consider approving agreements with Twist of Fate and Time Machine for musical performances at 2025 Tall Timber Days event.
5. Authorize signatures on Trimble/CityWorks Mutual Nondisclosure Agreement and CityWorks/Azteca Systems Addendum #4-Licensee Acknowledgement and Oracle America Inc License Amendment #1.
6. Consider approval of Change Order 2 for CP 2025-1, SE 7th Avenue Mill & Overlay Project.
7. Consider Voiding Lost Accounts Payable Checks and Issue Replacement Checks.
8. Consider new pay grade and salary for Public Works Seasonal Employee for the 2025 Spring/Summer Maintenance Season.
9. Consider Voiding Lost Accounts Payable Checks and Issue Replacement Checks.
10. Consider a request by the police department to apply and accept a grant from the Minnesota Office of Traffic Safety for 10 child safety seats.
11. Consider agreement with Blandin Paper Company related to Rapids Radio Rockfest.
12. Consider entering into a Cleaning Services Agreement with Northwoods Cleaning Company at City Hall, Central School, and the library.
13. Consider Voiding Lost Accounts Payable Checks and Issue Replacement Checks.
14. Consider annual review of Data Access Policy.
15. Consider authorizing the Fire Department to enter contract with service provider Angie Baratto MA, LPCC.
16. Considering approving the HMEP grant agreement from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety.

17. Consider authorizing the police department to apply for a 2025-2026 Toward Zero Deaths (TZD) grant from the Minnesota Department of Public Safety- Office of Traffic Safety for the purpose of extra traffic enforcement.
18. Consider a parking lot agreement with the Blandin Foundation
19. Consider a request by the police department to apply for a DWI officer grant through the Office of Traffic Safety (OTS).
20. Consider making a motion to increase the hourly Hazmat rate of pay.
- 20a. Consider adopting a resolution approving a collateral assignment and subordination of Development Assistance Agreement, TIF Note and Tax Abatement Note.

Motion made by Councilor Blake, Second by Councilor Sutherland to approve the Consent agenda as amended with the addition of item 20a. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Sutherland, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

SET REGULAR AGENDA:

Motion made by Councilor Blake, Seconded by Councilor MacGregor to approve the Regular agenda as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Sutherland, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

ADMINISTRATION:

21. Consider appointment of Will Richter to the Zoning Administrator position.

The City Council previously approved the posting for the Zoning Administrator position in May. Following the posting, the City received three applications, and all three candidates were interviewed. The hiring committee, consisting of Rob Matei, Matt Wegworth, and Chery Pierzina, is recommending the appointment of Will Richter to the position, with an official start date of August 4, 2025.

Motion made by Councilor MacGregor, Second by Councilor Sutherland to appoint Will Richter to the position of Zoning Administrator as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Sutherland, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

22. Consider one-time special payment to MSRS Health Care Savings Plan to insurance eligible employees, due to increase in health insurance deductible.

In response to a \$500 increase in employee health insurance deductibles effective January 1st, the City is addressing statutory obligations under Minnesota Statute 471.6161, which requires agreement between the public employer and employee unions before any reduction in the aggregate value of insurance benefits. To comply, the City has prepared memorandums of understanding to provide one-time \$500 payments to affected employees. These payments will be deposited into MSRS accounts for members of the two police unions, clerical, and library bargaining units, and into Health Savings Accounts for Public Works 49ers members. These actions are outlined under agenda items 22 and 23, respectively.

Motion made by Councilor MacGregor, Second by Councilor Sutherland to approve special payment to MSRS Health Care Savings Plan to insurance eligible employees as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Sutherland, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

23. Consider one-time special payment to Operating Engineers Local 49 Health Reimbursement Arrangement (HRA) to insurance eligible employees, due to increase in health insurance deductible.

Motion made by Councilor Blake, Second by Councilor Mertes to approve special payment to Operating Engineers Local 39 HRA as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Sutherland, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

24. Consider appointment of Amy Dettmer to the vacant Director of Library Services position and request authorization to post two part-time positions.

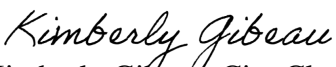
The City is pleased to recommend the appointment of Amy Dettmer to the role of Director of Library Services, effective August 4, 2025. Amy has served the Grand Rapids Area Library since 2006, first as a Reference Librarian, and for the past 17 years as Assistant Library Director. She will receive an annual salary of \$92,576.33, classified as exempt and aligned with salary grade 13.

As the Assistant Library Director position will remain vacant, the Library is requesting authorization to post, advertise, interview, and hire for two part-time Library Public Services Clerk I positions. These positions will range from 20 to 28 hours per week to support ongoing service needs.

Motion made by Councilor MacGregor, Second by Councilor Sutherland to approve the appointment of Amy Dettmer to the position of Director of Library Services and begin the process of filling two part-time Library Public Services Clerk I positions as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Sutherland, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:33 PM.

Respectfully submitted:


Kimberly Gibeau, City Clerk