



MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION
September 2, 2025

CALL TO ORDER

The meeting was called to order at 5:01 pm.

Present: Mayor: Charlie Miner; Council: Jahn Dyvik, Mike Feldmann, Deirdre Kvale, and Todd Newcomer

Staff Present: City Administrator: Scott Weske; Finance Director: Amanda Nowezki; Public Works Director: Sean Diercks; and City Clerk: Jeanette Moeller

Absent: None

APPROVE AGENDA

A motion was made by Newcomer, seconded by Dyvik, to approve the agenda as presented. Ayes: all.

OPEN CORRESPONDENCE

No one was in attendance to address the City Council during Open Correspondence.

REGULAR BUSINESS

A. Discussion Regarding City Administrator Position

City Clerk Moeller indicated that she had provided bench handouts summarizing initial cost estimates she'd received for search proposals for the upcoming City Administrator vacancy. She briefly outlined her suggestions on the best firms to move forward with for the value. She noted that she had shared with the search firms that there would be a strong internal candidate for the position, Finance Director Nowezki, and one of the firm representatives had candidly commented that the applicant pool recently had been challenging. That same representative asked if the City had ever considered promoting staff rather than an external executive search. She gave an overview of the feedback she had gotten from Abdo about the City of Greenfield's process in filling their City Administrator position. She reported that they received 145 applications, and of those, there were only six candidates who had any direct government experience. With that, Abdo adjusted their scoring criteria to be reflective of the applicant pool given that there was such a limited number of candidates with the desired government experience. Moeller reflected that her biggest concern was that Long Lake was not a resume-building city for a City Administrator and the position would be more attractive to newer Administrator's from outside of the metro area who would be interested in the vacancy as a shorter-term opportunity in the metro area before applying for a larger city.

Councilmember Kvale asked what City Attorney Thames had said about the idea of promoting internally.

Moeller responded that City Attorney Thames was surprised it had taken her this long to ask this question. He also shared that he was aware the applicant pool had not been strong recently. She stated

that she believed that the City had a pretty strong candidate with a tremendous learning ability who had an appetite for the job, and would view the position as a destination more than a stepping stone.

Finance Director Nowezki mentioned that David Drown and Associates also had a mentoring opportunity as part of their services, which would cost quite a bit less than the search assistance. She stated that if the City chooses to hire from outside, this may be something they want to consider regardless for candidates who didn't have government experience.

Councilmember Kvale questioned whether there was a list of criteria for this position.

The Council discussed the importance of skills in finance and human resources within the City Administrator position; possible mentoring options and resources available through the League of Minnesota Cities; what the process could end up being if the City promoted internally and considered restructuring to hire an administrative/utilities clerk; whether a trial or probationary period would be an option for filling this position internally; potential difficulties in using a temp agency to help with the administrative work if they filled the position internally; and the necessity of appointing an Interim City Administrator.

Nowezki explained that she was interested in the City Administrator position, but if it was determined that she was not a good fit for the position, she would not have any hard feelings and would absolutely want to continue her finance duties. If the City Council is interested in moving forward with one of the search firms, she suggested that they consider doing so sooner rather than later.

Councilmember Dyvik asked when Jeff Dahl had left Wayzata and what their hiring process looked like.

City Administrator Weske replied that Wayzata had not even posted the position yet. They had appointed their Public Works Director/City Engineer as the Interim City Manager, and their Deputy City Manager was currently on maternity leave. He believed Wayzata may end up promoting from within and have Deputy City Manager Yager step into the City Manager position.

Mayor Miner mentioned that he had discussed the matter with City Attorney Thames a few weeks ago and had received the same feedback shared by City Clerk Moeller that the City may not need to use an external search process.

Moeller explained that the biggest reason she had encouraged Finance Director Nowezki to apply for the City Administrator position is because she has had a front-row view in watching her grow and learn throughout her time with the City. She stated that she had gotten to know her personally, so she has seen how much she likes a challenge, likes to be busy, and has seen her rise to the occasion time and time again. She added that if the Council chose to move forward with a search firm, she would suggest they consider the engagement proposal provided by Abdo because it handles the applicant screening and whittling down process. She indicated that ultimately she would be seeking Council direction on whether they wanted her to move forward with an official recommendation on a search proposal, or if they were interested in considering the idea of an internal promotion. Based on the feedback the Council had given tonight, she stated that she would prepare an action item for the September 16 meeting to recommend the appointment Finance Director Nowezki as the Interim City Administrator, effective as soon as City Administrator Weske leaves for his new position.

Councilmember Kvale reflected that she liked the idea of promoting from within the City and described her reasons.

Mayor Miner voiced his agreement and explained the reasons he felt Finance Director Nowezki would be a good fit for the position.

Councilmember Feldmann noted that, regardless of which approach they end up taking, he supported the idea of appointing an Interim City Administrator. He asked about potential operational compliance issues with the approach they were considering.

Nowezki responded that she had spoken with Abdo already to prepare for the temporary limited staff situation. She confirmed she would not have any signing authority at this point to ensure there were no compliance issues with segregation of duties.

B. Continue Discussion of Preliminary Budget and Levy Considerations

Weske gave a brief presentation on the budget factors for 2026 including not receiving LGA, a slight increase in building permit revenues, salary/benefits costs, and an expected increase in insurance premiums. He reviewed the 2024 and 2025 final levies in comparison with the 2026 preliminary levy, which currently shows an increase of 2.28% over 2025 while maintaining a flat City tax rate. He noted that within the proposed 2026 budget, \$10,000 was allocated for planning and professional services related to the 2050 Comprehensive Plan, \$60,000 for seal coating as a transfer from the General Fund to the Coating Fund, \$50,000 for the Fire Department as a transfer from the General Fund to the Fire Department capital fund, and \$40,000 for removal of Emerald Ash Borer impacted ash trees from the City's rights-of-way and parks.

The Council asked questions about the planned fund transfers; the Fire Department capital fund; whether there would be any credit for the member cities and the equipment being brought into the JPA, and concerns about the contributions and Long Lake potentially ending up paying a larger percentage than they should be; that Orono had been ordered to pay Long Lake legal fees and the communication has been they would not cut the City a check, but rather would cover Long Lake's capital fund contributions for the next five years.

Councilmember Dyvik observed that the repayment of the legal fees should not be factored into the conversation about the various equipment contributions from each city. He added that he just wanted to see all of the capital related information as he had thought it was something that would be laid out clearly for the Council.

Weske noted that the information the Council was interested in related to the various equipment costs was available through Orono Councilmember Steve Persian.

Councilmember Dyvik stated that the Fire Department budget was currently anticipated to be \$1.2 million for operations, which is up from about \$700,000.

Weske replied that the increases are all due to personnel.

Councilmember Dyvik recalled that the staffing levels still needed to be worked out.

Weske indicated that the City's major capital items for 2026 were a fund transfer from Fund 401 for the City Hall building for \$50,000; and the recommendation to use existing or create fund accounts for CIP items from Fund 401, with a transfer of funds from 401 to allocate starting balances, and further creating an annual transfer amount from the 401.

Nowezki clarified that the reason for separating CIP funds is that everyone has a different idea of what a capital improvement is and what the funds should be used for.

Councilmember Kvale believed that this approach will be helpful for decision-making by the Council.

Weske commented that currently he had a total of \$300,000 budgeted for fire services, but it may be able to be reduced once hard operating numbers for the JPA are available.

Councilmember Kvale reiterated that the anticipated operating cost was a huge jump from 2025.

Weske mentioned that his proposed preliminary budget was down a bit from what he had presented to Council the last time they discussed the budget, but acknowledged that it would be a tight budget.

Moeller informed Council that a substitute from the LMCC would be present to record the following meeting, and the substitute had shared that he would need a five-minute warning to get the video feed set up for the livestream of the regular City Council meeting.

The Council discussed street projects, the possibility of doing engineering work in 2026, Sewer and Water Fund usage for some of the street projects, Metropolitan Council treatment fee increases, reserve fund balance, and how a more cost-effective staffing model may give the City some money for other things.

Weske stated that he would bring more information back to the Council for discussion at their next meeting. He sought confirmation that the Council's goal was to keep the tax rate the same.

It was the consensus of the Council that their overall goal was to maintain a level tax rate.

OTHER BUSINESS

No other business was discussed.

ADJOURN

Hearing no objection, Mayor Miner adjourned the meeting by general consent at 6:26 pm.

Respectfully submitted,

Scott Weske
City Administrator