



CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES

March 16, 2026 at 5:00 PM

7701 County Road 110 West Minnetrista, MN 55364

Pursuant to Minnesota Statutes, section 13D.02, one or more council members may participate remotely.

1) CALL TO ORDER

Acting Mayor Reffkin called the meeting to order at 5:01 p.m.

Council present: Acting Mayor Reffkin, Councilmembers Vickery, Lacy, Govern. Staff present: City Administrator Kruggel, Finance Director Grimm, Public Works Director Peters, Assistant City Administrator Bauman, Director of Public Safety Squires, City Clerk Meyerhoff (Remote), City Engineer Fauske, City Attorney Sonsalla (Remote). Absent: Mayor Whalen.

2) DISCUSSION ITEMS

a) 9550 West Hill Road Abatement Update

The City Council continued its discussion regarding the abatement process for a specific parcel and a potential second parcel near County Road 110 W. As this is the City's first time undertaking this type of process, staff requested guidance from the City Attorney, who prepared a memorandum outlining the steps to ensure clarity for both staff and Council, including coordination with the Police Department. Staff indicated they are carefully working through the process, repeating certain steps as needed to ensure compliance. It is anticipated that an administrative search warrant—the initial step—may be pursued in early April, weather permitting, to allow for an inventory of the property. Following that, staff will present findings and a report to the Council, at which point the Council will consider whether to issue an abatement order and proceed further. The purpose of the discussion was to ensure all parties understand the process and that it is conducted properly.

Council discussion included a question regarding potential county involvement in the abatement process. Staff confirmed that the City has not yet contacted the county. The City Attorney, participating remotely, advised that while counties are often reluctant to get involved, it would be worthwhile to reach out before proceeding further. She noted that if the county is willing to participate, it could simplify the process and provide access to additional resources.

Staff shared historical context regarding prior county involvement with the property, noting that an environmental services case occurred approximately 25–30 years ago. At that time, the property owner faced enforcement actions, including a citation that went unpaid and resulted in a short jail sentence. More recently, about three years ago, staff revisited the issue and were informed by county officials that the situation was primarily a city responsibility, despite earlier environmental concerns prompting county involvement. Staff indicated they will reconnect with the county to determine whether their position has changed, though they do not anticipate significant involvement based on past interactions.

b) Bayside Lane Stormwater Project Discussion

City Administrator Kruggel provided an update on a utility project involving access to a private property, noting that access itself is not an issue but that the property owner objects to the installation of a proposed pipe. City representatives, including staff and the Mayor, recently met with the property owner to discuss concerns related to a well located either within or adjacent to a drainage and utility easement; a survey is planned to confirm its exact location. The property owner has cited a 1993 state statute indicating that stormwater pipes 8 inches or larger should not be placed within 20 feet of a well, although the proposed pipe is 4 inches and therefore below that threshold. Staff also noted the presence of an existing 12-inch pipe installed near the well prior to the statute's adoption. While staff believe the project complies with applicable regulations and falls within the City's easement rights, the property owner has indicated potential legal action. As contracts for the project have already been executed, staff sought Council input on whether to proceed given the circumstances.

City Engineer Fauske provided additional details regarding the proposed installation of a 4-inch stormwater pipe and ongoing concerns from a nearby property owner. It was noted that the project team consulted directly with the Department of Health, confirming that the 20-foot separation requirement applies only to pipes 8 inches or greater, and therefore does not apply to the proposed 4-inch pipe. Staff also reviewed multiple design options and determined the current plan to be the most feasible despite challenges. The Department of Health also referenced maintaining adequate access for well maintenance; however, staff with extensive well industry experience indicated that typical maintenance or sealing would not be impacted by the proposed pipe placement.

The property owner's primary concern is potential contamination of their well, though staff explained that such a scenario would be highly unlikely given the depth of the well and the nature of stormwater infrastructure. It was also clarified that the well may be located within or very near a recorded drainage and utility easement, which predates the well installation. A survey is planned to confirm its exact location, and if necessary, the City may consider a license agreement to formally address the encroachment. Staff emphasized confidence in the project plan and contractor, while acknowledging the neighbor's opposition, and sought to ensure Council is fully informed of the concerns, risks, and next steps.

A resident 925 Bayside representing properties along Bayside Lane spoke about longstanding drainage issues, noting that flooding has persisted for approximately 26 years, particularly affecting the lowest property at 925 Bayside Lane. The resident described ongoing efforts by multiple homeowners to manage excess groundwater, including installing drain tile, basins, and operating multiple pumps, but stated these measures have not resolved the problem due to saturated conditions. The proposed stormwater pipe was characterized as a practical and much-needed solution that would help direct water away from the area and alleviate repeated flooding concerns. The resident expressed frustration with the neighboring property owner's opposition, stating that the objection appears inconsistent given the presence of an existing larger pipe near the well. The resident urged the Council to proceed with the project, emphasizing the financial burden, property impacts, and safety concerns caused by ongoing flooding.

Council sought legal clarification on whether there were any risks in proceeding with the proposed stormwater project. The City Attorney advised that she is not aware of any legal issues and noted that, although the property owner has suggested possible legal action, no valid legal basis has been presented. She confirmed that the City is permitted to utilize its drainage and utility easements for projects that serve a public benefit, and that the proposed stormwater pipe falls within the intended use of the easement.

Staff further explained that the installation would involve a small, underground 4-inch pipe with minimal surface disruption, primarily installed through boring, with limited inconvenience to the neighboring property. Most visible work would occur on the benefiting properties where connections are made. Affected residents reiterated their support, emphasizing the significant investment already made to manage ongoing flooding and the broader neighborhood benefit of the project.

Following discussion, Council members expressed consensus to proceed with the project as planned, with staff directed to continue moving forward.

c) TH7 TMO Update/Discussion

Staff provided an update on the Trunk Highway 7 Traffic Management Organization (TMO), a regional initiative formed following 2024 legislation to study and improve the corridor. The group, led in part by the City of Shorewood and supported by approximately \$200,000 in state funding, includes multiple west metro communities and has focused on long-term planning tied to a future 2029 MnDOT mill and overlay project. While potential safety improvements have been identified, they remain unfunded, and the TMO's role is largely to coordinate planning and advocate for future resources.

Discussion centered on whether to continue participation and potentially formalize the group through a Joint Powers Agreement (JPA). Council expressed concerns about entering into any agreement that could lead to mandatory financial contributions, particularly given uncertainty about how funds would be allocated and whether Minnetrista would directly benefit. Several members questioned the need for additional spending when MnDOT is responsible for the roadway, while others emphasized the importance of maintaining a seat at the table to influence long-term planning and funding opportunities.

There was general consensus to continue participating in discussions and meetings without committing to a JPA or financial contributions at this time. Council indicated that any future funding requests, even small amounts, should be brought forward for Council consideration. Staff will relay this direction to the group and continue monitoring developments, noting that participation allows the City to stay informed and engaged in regional transportation planning efforts without immediate financial obligation.

3) ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Govern, seconded by Lacy to adjourn at 5:50 p.m.

Motion passed 4-0.

Respectfully Submitted,

Ann Meyerhoff, City Clerk