



## CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

February 18, 2026 at 6:30 PM

7701 County Road 110 West Minnetrista, MN 55364

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

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### 1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Whalen called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

- a) Pledge of Allegiance
- b) Introductions: City Council: Mayor Lisa Whalen, Cathleen Reffkin, Claudia Lacy, Peter Vickery, Brian Govern Staff: City Administrator Jasper Kruggel, Finance Director Brian Grimm, Community Development Director David Abel, Director of Public Safety Craig Squires, Assistant City Administrator Paula Bauman, Director of Public Works Gary Peters and City Clerk Ann Meyerhoff (Remote) Consultants: City Attorney Sarah Sonsalla, Kennedy & Graven (Remote) and City Engineer Alyson Fauske, WSB Engineering

- c) Approval of Agenda

Motion made by Councilmember Reffkin, Seconded by Councilmember Govern Approving the Agenda as presented.

Voting Yea: Mayor Whalen, Councilmember Reffkin, Councilmember Vickery, Councilmember Lacy, Councilmember Govern

Motion passed 5-0

### 2) SPECIAL PRESENTATIONS

- a) Accept 2024 GFOA Award

Finance Director Grimm highlighted the city's continued achievement in receiving a prestigious annual audit award, noting that only about 10–15% of cities earn this distinction. The city has received the award consistently since 2004, marking more than 20 years of recognition, and plans to apply again following completion of the 2025 audit. Appreciation was expressed for the finance department's efforts, particularly Senior Accountant Angie Boll and Renae Newman, as well as for the city council's ongoing support. Council members also emphasized that the award enhances financial transparency and helps them better understand the city's financial position, offering congratulations and thanks to the team for their hard work.

### 3) PERSONS TO BE HEARD

Mark Mason of 6605 Sunnyfield Road addressed the council, noting that although he could not attend the Planning Commission meeting in person, he watched the recording but had difficulty hearing portions of it. A 41-year resident of Sunnyfield Road, he shared his perspective on the property in question, explaining that it has operated as a business for as long as he has lived there. He stated that current operations generate significantly less noise and dust than in the past and that the road is in better condition than it was years ago, even during heavy truck use. Mason described the current business owners as good neighbors and said the area remains quiet, especially since his recent retirement has

allowed him to spend more time at home. He expressed support for small businesses in Minnetrista and argued that many concerns raised in written comments were speculative rather than fact-based. Looking ahead, he referenced potential zoning changes around 2040 and questioned how future development in Minnetrista might unfold, noting existing infrastructure near the high school and suggesting that additional development in the area is likely over time.

#### **4) CONSENT AGENDA**

- a) Approve City Council Regular Meeting Minutes
- b) Approve Claims
- c) Res. No. 18-26 Approving Simple Subdivision between 7635 Hwy 7 & 4520 Grimm Rd
- d) Res. No. 19-26 Approve Amendment to Park Capital Improvement Plan
- e) Res. No. 20-26 Award Basketball Court Resurfacing at Jennings Park
- f) Res. No. 21-26 Approve a Joint Powers Agreement between MN DNR and the City of Minnetrista for rehabilitation of the Public Water Access on Whaletail Lake
- g) Motion to Approve Squad Computer Replacements

Motion made by Councilmember Reffkin, Seconded by Councilmember Govern  
Approving the Consent Agenda as presented.

Voting Yea: Mayor Whalen, Councilmember Reffkin, Councilmember Vickery,  
Councilmember Lacy, Councilmember Govern

Motion passed 5-0

#### **5) PUBLIC HEARINGS**

#### **6) BUSINESS ITEMS**

- a) Res. No. 24-26 Denying Interim Use Permit at 1195 & 1205 Sunnyfield Road North

Community Development Director Abel thanked the mayor and council and presented an overview of the interim use permit (IUP) request for the two subject properties shown on the location map. The council previously reviewed a similar request in 2024, but the applicant withdrew it before action was taken. Following that withdrawal, the council initiated legal proceedings regarding the property's use, and after mediation, the applicant reapplied for the IUP now under consideration. The staff member explained that in evaluating an interim use permit, the council must determine whether the proposed use complies with zoning regulations and aligns with the comprehensive plan, taking into account factors such as traffic, environmental impacts, neighborhood character, and surrounding land uses. Public hearing notices were mailed to property owners within 1,500 feet, and several written comments were received and included in the council packet. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on January 26 and, after receiving testimony, voted 4–2 to recommend denial of the request. Staff therefore prepared findings and a resolution for the council's consideration that would deny the interim use.

Mayor Whalen gave the opportunity to speak.

The applicant addressed the council, stating they wished to correct what they described as factual inaccuracies and emphasized that the decision should be based on documented history and objective standards rather than personal opinions. They asserted that the property has operated commercially since the 1940s and argued that

its legal nonconforming use status is being disputed due to a single complaint and is currently a matter before the courts. The applicant expressed concern that prior meeting agendas referenced denial before deliberation, suggesting a lack of transparency and a predetermined outcome, and alleged that personal commentary from a council member had replaced substantive land use analysis.

They contended that traffic at the property has decreased significantly—by more than 60% overall and nearly eliminating heavy truck traffic—primarily occurring during weekday work hours. The applicant also responded to comments about vehicles on the site, clarifying that boats and trailers are consistent with marine storage operations, that renters' personal vehicles are typical, and that a referenced RV is privately owned by their family. Regarding environmental concerns, they stated that the Minnehaha Creek Watershed District had raised no objections and that the property has undergone substantial cleanup and improvement.

Citing the city's 2040 Comprehensive Plan, the applicant argued that the proposal aligns with goals supporting commercial and job growth and noted that similar marine-related uses exist nearby within the agricultural district. They emphasized the importance of consistent standards and alleged selective enforcement. The applicant also claimed that opposition efforts were based on misinformation, while asserting that a majority of nearby residents do not oppose the business and that dozens have expressed support. Concluding on a personal note, they described the emotional toll the process has taken on their family, affirmed their faith, and urged the council to ensure fairness, transparency, and equal treatment by approving the interim use permit based on documented facts, reduced impacts, comprehensive plan consistency, and community support.

Mayor Whalen responded by clarifying that the council's role is not to judge the applicant's character or integrity, but to apply city ordinances appropriately. She stated that each interim use permit (IUP) must be evaluated on its own merits and specific circumstances, including its impacts on surrounding properties and infrastructure. While acknowledging that a similar operation on Sunnyfield had previously been approved, she emphasized that prior decisions do not set automatic precedent and that each application must stand on its own.

She noted that resident input is considered as part of the process, and that many individuals had expressed opposition; however, she stressed that public opinion alone does not determine the outcome. Instead, decisions must be grounded in the findings of fact and the city's ordinances. Mayor Whalen rejected claims of unfairness or lack of transparency, stating that the matter had gone through the proper process multiple times. She concluded by asking fellow council members whether there was any desire to approve the interim use permit.

Motion made by Councilmember Vickery, Seconded by Councilmember Reffkin  
Approving Res. No. 24-26 Denying Interim Use Permit at 1195 & 1205 Sunnyfield Road North.

Voting Yea: Mayor Whalen, Councilmember Reffkin, Councilmember Vickery,  
Councilmember Lacy

Voting Nay: Councilmember Govern

Motion passed 4-1

- b) Res. No. 22-26 Approving Comprehension Plan Amendment at 7385, 7501, & 7365 Highway 7

Community Development Director Abel presented a proposal for a comprehensive plan amendment affecting approximately 162 acres on the south side of Highway 7 near the Oak Road intersection. The properties are currently guided as urban reserve under the 2040 comprehensive plan and zoned Stage Development District. The applicant requests re-guidance to Residential Low-Medium, which would expand the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) and allow development in collaboration with MI Homes and Rachel Development. The proposed development is designed to meet the Metropolitan Council's 2050 requirement of 3.5 units per acre for the city.

Staff noted that the amendment would also adjust the minimum density for the Residential Low category from 1.15 to 2 units per acre, aligning with the Met Council's directives and helping achieve the citywide average. Staff found the request consistent with the goals and policies of the 2040 comprehensive plan, with the current zoning supporting the proposed future land use, and no conflicts with Metropolitan Council system statements or forecasts. Public input included a phone inquiry from one neighboring property and comments from nine individuals at the Planning Commission hearing on October 25, mainly regarding traffic, safety, and Highway 7 access, as well as long-term growth planning. Following discussion, the Planning Commission voted 4–1 to recommend approval. Staff recommended that the council approve the comprehensive plan amendment subject to the conditions outlined in the report, and noted that the applicants would provide a PowerPoint presentation for further details.

Mayor Whalen shared concerns she has received about the safety of Highway 7 and asked Community Director Abel to walk through the process.

Abel explained the process for the proposed comprehensive plan amendment, noting that the current step was the public hearing on re-guiding the properties from Stage Development to Residential Low-Medium density. If the council approves this amendment, it must then be submitted to the Metropolitan Council for a 60– to 120-day review. Once approved, the amendment would return to the council for formal adoption.

Following that, the development could proceed to a concept sketch plan review, which would involve the Planning Commission, Park Commission, and City Council, and would consider access, safety, and other factors. The developer would also be required to hold a neighborhood meeting with nearby residents prior to submitting a preliminary plat application. The preliminary plat and rezoning application would undergo public hearings, including review by the Planning Commission and Park Commission, before a recommendation is made to the council. The final step would be the final plat review, which goes directly to the council after review by staff and relevant commissions. Staff emphasized that, given the scale of the project and involvement of multiple agencies, the overall process would take significant time, and the applicants would provide further details on their proposed timeline.

Steph Griffin, Vice President of Land Acquisition for MI Homes, along with Paul Robinson of Rachel Development, presented the developers' vision for the comprehensive plan amendment and future development of the approximately 160-acre Accrati property south of Highway 7. They explained that MI Homes and Rachel Development, both experienced builders in the Twin Cities with previous projects including Woodland Cove, are under contract to purchase the parcels. The property's location within the urban reserve and proximity to existing infrastructure, including water and sewer, make it suitable for development.

The developers reviewed site constraints, including wetlands, topography, drainage, and Highway 7 access, and described how these factors shaped the concept plan. Wetlands comprise roughly 21 acres, with minimal overall impact, and the plan includes ponds and buffers to manage stormwater. Access to Highway 7 is proposed via a right-in/right-out at the high point of the site, informed by early discussions with MnDOT.

The proposed development includes a mix of housing types: townhomes (1,600–2,000 sq. ft.), detached single-family homes (1,700–3,000+ sq. ft.), and luxury one-level villas near the park, totaling 357 units across approximately 147 gross acres. After accounting for wetlands, buffers, ponds, and Highway 7 right-of-way, the net acreage is roughly 99.3 acres, achieving the Metropolitan Council's density requirement of 3.5 units per acre. About 33% of the site will remain as open space. The developers noted that the project is in early stages, subject to adjustments from regulatory review, public input, and additional studies, with construction anticipated to begin in spring 2027 and first homes available in fall 2027.

This presentation emphasized alignment with the city's comprehensive plan goals, including providing diverse housing options for families and maintaining open space and natural features.

Mark Sender, a long-time farmer at 4705 Grimm Road representing his family, spoke about the proposed development's impact on his property, which has been farmed by his family for 145 years. He emphasized the personal and generational significance of the land and expressed concern about how new residential development could affect his farm operations, particularly regarding noise, trespassing, and interaction with his approximately 30 head of beef cattle. While he noted that fencing is currently adequate and he was less worried about the cattle escaping, his primary concern was the potential impact on residents and maintaining safety and privacy.

City staff responded by explaining that neighborhood meetings with the developer are required to address such concerns. These meetings allow property owners like Mr. Sender to communicate specific issues so that the developer can incorporate mitigation strategies. Staff noted similar approaches were used successfully in previous developments, such as Woodland Cove and Turtle Creek, to balance the needs of existing farms with incoming residential neighbors. Mr. Sender was encouraged to meet directly with the developer to discuss his concerns in detail.

City Attorney Sonsalla highlighted the **\*\*Right to Farm law\*\***, explaining that it legally protects farmers and ranchers from public or private nuisance complaints. This means that if neighbors raise concerns about typical farming activities—such as noise, odor, or other operations—the city generally cannot take action against the farm, since the farm pre-exists the residential development and is exercising its lawful right to operate.

Council Member Reffkin asked how's our water capacity for 357 more homes when the new, when the new plant and clear well storage are up? It was noted that this will have to be addressed with this development. They will have to look at piping being brought all the way down from the new water treatment plant.

Motion made by Councilmember Reffkin, Seconded by Councilmember Govern Approving Res. No. 22-26 Approving Comprehensive Plan Amendment at 7385, 7501 & 7365 Highway 7.

Voting Yea: Mayor Whalen, Councilmember Reffkin, Councilmember Vickery, Councilmember Lacy, Councilmember Govern

Motion passed 5-0

c) Res. No. 23-26 Approving Comprehensive Plan Amendment at 9400 Highway 7

Community Development Director presented item for council considered a request to amend the **\*\*comprehensive plan\*\*** for a 68-acre property at 9400 State Highway 7, located in the southwestern corner of Minnetrista along the Hennepin–Carver county line. Currently guided as permanent agricultural and zoned agricultural preserve, the applicant seeks to re-guide the property to **\*\*residential low-medium density\*\*** and expand the Metropolitan Urban Service Area (MUSA) for future development. A concept plan prepared by Randall Anderson shows compliance with the city’s density goals of 3.5 units per acre. Staff noted that this change is consistent with the 2040 comprehensive plan and does not affect the Metropolitan Council forecast or system statements. Public notices were sent within 500 feet, with one adjacent property owner contacting staff regarding traffic and future growth. The Planning Commission held a public hearing on January 26, during which several residents spoke, primarily raising concerns about traffic on Highway 7. Preliminary discussions have been held with MnDOT regarding potential access, including the possibility of a right-in, right-out driveway. The Planning Commission voted 6-0 to recommend approval, and staff also recommends approval, pending council action and Metropolitan Council review.

Motion made by Councilmember Reffkin, Seconded by Councilmember Vickery approving Res. No. 23-26 Approving Comprehensive Plan Amendment at 9400 Hwy 7. Voting Yea: Mayor Whalen, Councilmember Reffkin, Councilmember Vickery, Councilmember Lacy, Councilmember Govern

d) Receive Bids for the 2026 Street Improvement Project, City Project 01-26

The council reviewed the scope and bidding results for the 2026 Street Improvement Project, which includes mill and overlay work on several streets, limited full-depth pavement replacement, spot curb and gutter repairs, ADA-compliant pedestrian ramps, utility improvements, culvert work on Game Farm Road, and infiltration barriers in sanitary sewer manholes. Several bid alternates were included, such as an underseal for Game Farm Road to extend pavement life, trail improvements, and hydrant relocation. Six bids were received, all coming in below the engineer’s estimate of approximately \$3.5 million. Staff recommended awarding the base bid along with alternates two and three, but not alternate one (trail improvements), due to a pricing error from one bidder and the potential to obtain more competitive quotes separately. The lowest responsible base bid was identified, and staff noted positive past performance from both leading contractors. The assessable portion of the project applies to a section of Game Farm Road, with proposed assessments capped at \$10,000 per parcel—well below the estimated \$16,500 cost per parcel without the cap—consistent with city policy. Funding sources were outlined, including state aid eligibility for portions of the work. The council accepted the bids and approved a resolution declaring the costs to be assessed, ordering preparation of the proposed assessments, and calling a public hearing for March 16, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. Final contract award is expected at that meeting after coordinating funding details with the partnering city and completing required assessment hearing procedures.

Motion made by Councilmember Reffkin, Seconded by Councilmember Vickery Receiving Bids for the 2026 Street Improvement Project, City Project 01-26. Voting Yea: Mayor Whalen, Councilmember Reffkin, Councilmember Vickery, Councilmember Lacy, Councilmember Govern

Motion passed 5-0.

- e) Res. No. 25-26 Declare Cost to be Assessed, Order Preparation of Proposed Assessments and Call for the Hearing on Proposed Assessments for the 2026 Street Improvement Project

Motion made by Councilmember Lacy, Seconded by Councilmember Vickery Approving Res. No. 25-26 Declare Cost to be Assessed, Order Preparation of Proposed Assessments and Call for the Hearing on Proposed Assessments for the 2026 Street Improvement Project.

Voting Yea: Mayor Whalen, Councilmember Reffkin, Councilmember Vickery, Councilmember Lacy, Councilmember Govern

Motion passed 5-0.

## 7) ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS

- a) Staff Reports

Administrator Kruggel reported that he and the mayor traveled to the State Capitol to meet with Representative Marj Fogelman, co-chair of the House Capital Investment Committee, to advocate for the city's proposed project funding. Although the representative was initially unfamiliar with the project, they provided an overview and received positive feedback, with Fogelman indicating the proposal appeared to offer strong value and a reasonable funding request of less than 50% of total project costs. However, she expressed uncertainty about whether a bonding bill would pass this session. The city will follow up with updated information, including 2026 water rate comparisons showing the city's rates are among the highest—approximately \$101 per month for 10,000 gallons, placing it in the top 15% compared to other communities, some of which range from \$35 to \$265 monthly. Officials noted that future rate increases may be necessary, though new development could help offset costs through connection and user fees. They also emphasized that, unlike many cities that base sewer charges on water usage, this city uses a flat sewer fee. Additional meetings are scheduled with key legislators, including Senator Pappas and Representative Lee, both leaders on capital investment committees, as part of ongoing efforts to secure state funding—particularly important given the city is constructing a \$21 million plant without state financial support. The outcome remains uncertain, especially in an election year, but officials will continue their advocacy.

- b) Council Reports

- i) Mayor Lisa Whalen

The mayor reported that she attended a Northwest League meeting, where she now serves as chair, and participated in city updates and regional information sharing. She highlighted the city's water infrastructure project and noted that several other communities are now facing the need to build treatment plants as well, underscoring that this is a growing statewide challenge. She also shared that she received a request from Andrew Myers asking for the city's legislative priorities. She communicated that the city's top priority is securing bonding funds, particularly to support the city's major infrastructure investments. A second priority is maintaining local control over local issues, especially regarding housing and zoning policy discussions at the state level. Additionally, she raised concerns about challenges cities face when forming or restructuring joint powers agreements for fire services, particularly the financial burden of merging fire relief funds, and suggested potential legislative solutions to assist

communities. Public safety remains a priority, and she also advocated for increased funding for the Highway 7 Transportation Management Organization to continue promoting long-term safety improvements through MnDOT engagement. She clarified the distinction between the Highway 7 coalition, which focuses on infrastructure and roadway safety improvements, and a separate public safety coalition addressing policing and enforcement matters. The mayor concluded by noting she has continued meeting with other elected officials to discuss and advance the city's needs.

ii) Cathleen Reffkin

Council members reported on the recent Mound Fire Commission meeting, noting that the fire chief position has been posted earlier than planned, accelerating the hiring timeline by three months. Interviews will begin soon, with the goal of having a new chief in place by April to allow for overlap before Chief Peterson's retirement. As a result, the previously approved deputy chief position has been delayed until early fall. Their Administrative staff member indicated she plans to remain 12 to 18 months after the chief's retirement, providing valuable continuity. The commission received its actuarial report for the pension fund and voted to increase the relief association payout to \$7,100 to match St. Bonifacius, bringing the fund to 105% funded. However, disagreements remain over monthly pension payouts, with only 23 departments statewide still using that structure; discussions about potentially splitting the relief fund are ongoing, including outreach to state representatives for possible legislative assistance. Members were reminded that fire service topics will be discussed further at the upcoming strategic planning session and joint meeting on the 26th.

Operationally, the department currently has 38 firefighters, including its first female firefighter, and has added 13 members in the past 18 months. In 2025, the department responded to 807 total calls—494 medical and 313 fire—totaling 10,788 service hours, with medical calls largely driven by lift assists and repeat callers. Officials noted that a proposed Lift Assist ordinance could help reduce non-emergency medical responses. The meeting concluded with recognition of Shane Gardner as Mound Firefighter of the Year for 2025.

iii) Claudia Lacy

iv) Peter Vickery

Pioneer-Sarah Creek Watershed Management Commission meeting tomorrow night.

v) Brian Govern

**8) ADJOURNMENT**

Motion made by Councilmember Vickery, Seconded by Councilmember Lacy to adjourn the meeting at 8:45 p.m.

Voting Yea: Councilmember Reffkin, Councilmember Vickery, Councilmember Lacy, Councilmember Govern