



## CITY COUNCIL WORK SESSION MINUTES

February 18, 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.*

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### 1) CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Whalen called the meeting to order at 5:06 p.m.

Council present: Mayor Whalen, Councilmembers Reffkin, 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).

### 2) DISCUSSION ITEMS

#### a) Lift Assist Billing Ordinance

During the work session, Council discussed the potential adoption of a lift assist billing ordinance, prompted by conversations at the Mound Fire Advisory Committee. Staff presented a sample ordinance from Maple Plain, noting that while it primarily addresses assisted living facilities, Minnetrista could tailor an ordinance to fit local needs, including residential properties. Currently, Minnetrista has relatively few lift assist calls and no assisted living facilities, though neighboring communities such as Mound and Spring Park experience higher volumes and are exploring similar measures. Council discussed the logistical considerations of billing, including receiving reports from Mound, issuing invoices, and the likelihood that Medicare may not cover lift assists. Members expressed interest in being proactive and establishing an ordinance framework before future growth or facility development. Discussion included potential tiered fee structures, such as allowing one to three calls per year at no charge for residential or independent living residents, with fees (e.g., \$250 per call) applying thereafter and increasing for frequent users, as well as possibly following Maple Plain's structure for assisted living facilities. Equity considerations, insurance implications, and operational challenges were also discussed. While no urgent timeline was identified, Council indicated general support for drafting a proposed ordinance for further review at a future work session, with possible implementation targeted for January 1.

#### b) Water Bill Adjustment Request and Policy

Council discussed a request from a resident, Mr. Christian, for a reduction of a significantly increased water bill attributed to a malfunctioning water softener. Staff noted that the City currently has no policy allowing discretion to adjust utility bills and presented a sample policy from another community as a potential framework should Council wish to adopt one. Council emphasized the need for a formal policy before granting any credits to avoid inconsistent or arbitrary decisions. Members expressed concern about creating a precedent, particularly for issues involving private plumbing fixtures such as toilets, water softeners, irrigation systems, or other internal failures, and discussed the potential financial impact and "slippery slope" of approving such requests. Public Works Director Peters explained that the softener malfunction was likely caused by deterioration of internal seals rather than water quality issues.

attributable to the City, noting improvements in water treatment since 2017. While acknowledging the hardship of unexpectedly high bills, the majority of Council indicated reluctance to grant a credit without clear evidence of City fault. Council generally agreed that any future consideration of bill adjustments would require a clearly defined policy outlining eligible circumstances, documentation requirements, and limitations. In the end all members agreed not to draft a policy and deal with issues one-on-one as they come.

c) St Bonifacius Fire Department Budget Reconciliation Request

Council reviewed the annual reserve fund allocation request related to the fire service contract, because revenues exceeded expenditures by more than 10% of operating costs. For 2025, \$44,367 is available as Minnetrista's share, which could either be placed into the joint reserve fund or applied as a reduction to the City's contract payment. Staff reported the current reserve balance is approximately \$102,000, and noted that in prior years the City has typically allowed surplus funds to remain in reserve. The reserve has historically been used for unbudgeted capital needs, such as facility improvements and equipment, while larger purchases are often paid in cash through capital funds. Council discussed the growing reserve balance, upcoming leadership transition, and overall budget considerations, including previously authorized personnel and equipment expenses. Given the size of this year's surplus, Council reached consensus to apply the \$44,367 toward reducing the City's contract payment rather than adding it to the reserve fund.

**3) ADJOURNMENT**

Motion by Reffkin, seconded by Lacy to adjourn the meeting at 5:54 p.m.

Motion Passed 5-0