

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
St. Francis City Hall 3750 Bridge Street NW
September 15, 2025
6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The regular City Council meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Mark Vogel.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Mark Vogel, Councilmembers Kevin Robinson, Sarah Udvig, Amy Faanes, and Joe Muehlbauer.

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Deputy Administrator-City Clerk Jenni Wida, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Deputy Administrator-Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, Water and Wastewater Supervisor Parish Barten, Police Chief Todd Schwieger, Fire Chief Dave Schmidt, Finance Director Darcy Mulvihill,

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: ROBINSON APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. City Council Work Session Minutes - August 25, 2025

B. City Council Minutes - September 02, 2025

C. Tasty Pizza Bar & Bowl – Public Dance Permit

D. Gambling Permit

E. Approval of Pay Estimate No. 2 for the 2025 Street Reconstruction Project

F. Payment of Claims

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: MUEHLBAUER APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Mayor Vogel asked City Clerk Wida if they had anyone wanting to speak. She said they did not.

6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. City Cellular Phone Policy - REVISED

Thunstrom reviewed the Staff report in regard to the revised City cellular phone policy.

Mayor Vogel asked if anyone who is a part of a bargaining union would be able to enroll in this policy earlier than when their contract is up. Thunstrom said yes.

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: FAANES TO APPROVE THE REVISED CITY CELLULAR PHONE POLICY.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.
Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

B. Accept Shared Services Study

Fire Chief Schmidt reviewed the Staff report concerning the shared services study conducted with the city of Bethel for fire protection services.

Faanes shared that she is not supportive of the section of the study that says they would need more full-time Staff when the Council has already voted against this. She said they should be looking for ways to reduce expenses and the number of calls rather than just adding to their volume. Schmidt noted that nothing in the study is legally binding. He added that this study was drafted by a third party based on their recommendations.

Faanes said it does not seem right to her that the fifth person to serve on a Fire Protection Board would be the person who conducted this study. She noted that expenses have gotten out of control lately, and they need to find ways to reduce the tax burden on residents and not increase it. She explained that over the last few years, the level of services that the Fire Department is being asked to perform has increased. She suggested they look into call responses from Allina and let them go back to handling the medical calls more often to take the burden off the firefighters. Schmidt reiterated that this is not a request to add any additional firefighters, and this is just the review of the study. He added that they are the cheapest labor unit that is the most highly trained to handle their daily work. He said he will continue to monitor this as they move forward. He noted that they look

at a lot more than just a run volume perspective. He added that having the individual who conducted the study, Charlie Smith, be a part of this process is to have someone who is familiar with the St. Francis fire services and has worked within the district before to help them get to a jumping-off point.

Faanes said that she believes that a big change like moving to a Fire District should be voted on by the residents. Schmidt said he does not know if this would be allowed statutorily. He added that this change would also help with the costs associated with fire services, as it would now be shared between two cities.

Thunstrom explained that they applied to the State three years ago for this shared service study, and they received the funds to have a holistic look at how the fire services are working. She noted that this study looks at how they can break down the cost of the services between the cities involved. She explained that Schmidt will create a budget for the future of the fire services and go to each city to let them know what their share of the budget will be, which is what the Councils will review. She said they will not be losing any authority. She noted that the cost of the fire services for St. Francis will still be included in the budget that the Council votes on every year.

Faanes shared that she will not be supportive of moving forward with the JPA due to the fifth person on the Board being Mr. Smith, who conducted the study.

Udvig noted that part of the reason the firefighters are having to respond to so many medical calls is due to the ambulance response times with Allina. She said that the extra time it takes the ambulance to respond to a call can be a very long time when there is a medical emergency. She stated she does not think they are being irresponsible with the firefighters by having them respond to medical calls. She said she will be supporting this.

Robinson added that this was born out of a need from Bethel. He said he has been involved in this process for the last three years, and he thinks it is more than worthwhile. He shared that he recently had to call 911, and the Fire Department responded in eight minutes, and the ambulance responded in 22 minutes. He said the firefighters are highly trained in what they do. He added that the Fire Department also has one of the smallest budgets within the City. He noted that combining fire services with Bethel is preferred by the Fire Marshall.

Mayor Vogel shared that he does not have any concerns with the study; however, he does have some concerns with the recommendations within it.

Muehlbauer noted that they are just voting on accepting the study in this item and will be discussing and voting on the actual JPA in the next agenda item.

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: UDVIG TO ACCEPT THE SHARED SERVICES STUDY.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

C. Approve Joint Powers Agreement- Shared Fire Protection

Schmidt reviewed the Staff report in regard to the Joint Powers Agreement for the shared fire services with Bethel.

Muehlbauer asked about the difference between creating the Fire District and the Fire District Board. Schmidt explained that the Fire District will be governed by a Fire District Board, which will be made up of two Councilmembers from St. Francis and Bethel and an at-large member who does not live in either City. He added that the cities will still manage the fiscal piece of fire services.

Muehlbauer asked if they would be creating a taxing district. Schmidt said not right now.

Muehlbauer shared that he understands Faanes' concern with having the person who conducted the study serve on the Board. He asked if there was any other person who would be an option as the fifth Board member. Schmidt explained that since there will be a lot of legal processes that they need to go through from now until the first of the year when the Fire District is established, they will need a full Board to accomplish a lot of these tasks. He noted that the budget for next year is already set, and they do not have the bandwidth to add any additional Staff. He added that Mr. Smith has actively participated in the drafting of the JPA and listened to both cities' goals with the JPA.

Mayor Vogel asked when the JPA would start. Schmidt said it would not start until January of 2026.

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: ROBINSON TO APPROVE THE JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT - SHARED FIRE PROTECTION.

Ayes: Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: Faanes

Motion carries: 4-1

9. NEW BUSINESS

A. Council Appointment to the Fire District Board

Schmidt reviewed the Staff report concerning the Council appointments to the Fire District Board. He recommended appointing Mayor Vogel and Robinson to the Board due to their involvement with this process so far.

Mayor Vogel asked how long the terms would be on the Board. Schmidt said there would be two-year terms, and they would likely offset the terms so they expire at different times.

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: UDVIG TO APPOINT MAYOR VOGEL AND COUNCILMEMBER ROBINSON TO THE FIRE DISTRICT BOARD.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

B. Tax Levy/Stormwater Discussion and Setting of Levy, including adjustment to debt service levies
Resolution 2025-44 adjusting the tax levy for bonded indebtedness
Resolution 2025-45, providing the preliminary approval of a proposed 2026 tax levy and setting the budget public hearing date

Finance Director Mulvihill reviewed the Staff report in regard to the 2026 tax levy, as well as adding the stormwater charges to the tax levy.

Public Works Director Carpenter gave the Council and residents in attendance a presentation on stormwater and what it means.

Robinson asked how much the State has been involved over the last ten years in terms of stormwater. Carpenter explained that as the State tightens up the MS4 permits, they are increasing their level of attention to detail in reporting.

Muehlbauer noted that they are currently just looking to set the preliminary levy, which means it cannot go any higher but could go lower.

Alex Hendrick, 23663 Underclift Street, asked how they are taking new properties into account with this levy. Mulvihill explained that when they get new properties, the new ones may be able to take up some of the tax levy of other properties. She noted the estimated market value includes anything that had a value before July 1, 2024. She explained that if new properties come on, then they are already in the estimated tax capacity.

Robinson added that new properties will add to the number of users on the water and sewer, which will help stabilize the cost of water and sewer for all users.

Tina Carrol, 23045 Ambassador Boulevard, came forward and asked where the taxes for any new properties go. Mulvihill explained that the levy will be set, and the more new properties they have in the City, the more they can spread this levy over each property; however, they likely will not bring in enough new properties for there to be a decrease in individuals' taxes.

Ms. Carrol asked about the fiscal disparities and why they are taken off the taxes. Mulvihill explained that fiscal disparities take 40% of any new commercial or industrial value for the all seven-county metro area.

Michael Powell, 23045 Ambassador Boulevard, came forward and asked what benefit the City is getting from Vista Prairie when they are getting a tax break. Mulvihill shared that they got the benefit of this property being built in the City, and they are collecting water and sewer rates from each unit.

Muehlbauer added that this kind of financing also has long-term benefits that need to be considered. He shared that this is a balancing act of long-term benefits and short-term effects. He explained that in the past, there was no building maintenance plan in place to help keep up the existing buildings within the City. He said that they now have maintenance plans and funds, which they have not had in the past, but are needed. He stated they have been playing catch-up for a while, and now they are getting to the point where they can start maintaining and leveling things out.

Mr. Powell said they cannot continue to give these developments tax breaks. He shared that costs are going to inevitably go up, but they cannot make it worse by continuing to give tax breaks.

Robinson noted that a benefit to the Vista Prairie development is that there are many seniors in the community who were able to stay living in St. Francis because of this. He added that it also created over 50 jobs within the City with one development.

Mike Rodger, 2770 232nd Lane, came forward and said they need to make a change. He said if they do not create some revenue in the City, then they will be right back in this same place in the next few years. He asked what the WAC and SAC charges were for the Vista Prairie development. He asked if this had been factored into the water and sewer rates. He said he wants the City to be able to give its police officers and firefighters a raise every year, and he would like to see this done by the City creating more revenue. He asked why City Hall was sold for \$600,000 when there was an offer for \$620,000. Mayor Vogel said that it came down to which business was better for the City.

Mr. Rodger noted that big businesses could start to pack up and leave town if changes are not made to taxes. He added that they could have increased City revenue with a City dispensary or the new apartments. He said there are going to be changes that have to be made that the residents will not like if they want their taxes, water, and sewer rates to come down.

Mulvihill shared that the WAC and SAC charges for Vista Prairie were paid in 2024 for \$232,000 for water and \$325,000 for sewer.

Mr. Rodger asked if there is a clause in the tax abatement that says if the property is sold or refinanced, it would come off the tax abatement. He shared that they failed to ask about the average tax abatement. He said they need to start asking these important questions ahead of approving these developments.

Robinson thanked the residents who came forward this evening to share their thoughts with the Council. He shared that the Council is a taxpayer too and does not want taxes to go up as much as anyone else. He said he believes in what the City is doing and the direction they are going. He encouraged residents to continue to share their thoughts and opinions with the Council.

Mayor Vogel shared that the proposed budget is exactly what he asked for from Staff. He noted that costs are going up, but what Staff has proposed is what it will cost each department to keep their operations the same as they are right now. He said he wants there to be a shared sacrifice between the residents and the City.

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: ROBINSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2025-44 ADJUSTING THE TAX LEVY FOR BONDED INDEBTEDNESS.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: MUEHLBAUER TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2025-45 PROVIDING THE PRELIMINARY APPROVAL OF A PROPOSED 2026 TAX LEVY AND SETTING BUDGET PUBLIC HEARING DATE.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

C. Water Sewer Rate Discussion

Carpenter reviewed the Staff report concerning water and sewer rates.

Water and Wastewater Supervisor Barten reviewed the City's sewer and water utility infrastructure and the operations of the water treatment facility.

Robinson asked if there have been any recent financial surprises with sewer and water that the Council should be aware of. Barten said the cost of the filter media types was higher than they anticipated it to be.

Mayor Vogel shared that this entire presentation is available to the residents online through the Staff packet.

Mulvihill reviewed the proposed increases to the water and sewer rates, increasing

water rates by 25% and sewer rates by 5% in 2026. She shared that there is no proposed change to the WAC and SAC charges. She noted that the Council will not need to vote on these proposed changes this evening, as they will be approved as part of updating the fee schedule later in the year.

Robinson asked how many users are on the water system. Barten said it is around 1870.

Robinson asked about the capacity of the system. Barten said they have capacity for around 1400 additional service connections.

Robinson asked if they had evaluated this as the worst-case scenario for the water and sewer increases. Barten said they have used every resource they have to look into the future to try to predict usage. He explained that they are regulated by different State agencies that are not always willing to share how things could be changing.

Robinson asked how St. Francis compares with other cities' water and sewer rates. Carpenter said they were third-ranked among comparable cities.

Faanes asked if the filter media needs to be replaced next year. Barten said it is scheduled for replacement in 2028.

Faanes asked if it would be possible to purchase the media now and store it until it needs to be replaced, so they can purchase it before the cost increases. Barten said they do not have room to store this media right now.

Faanes shared that she was able to tour the water treatment plant, and it was very interesting to see all the great work Staff is doing.

Muehlbauer thanked the residents who were in attendance this evening and shared that he hopes they were able to learn something this evening.

Barten shared that if any resident would like a tour of the water treatment facility, he would be happy to do so.

Mayor Vogel asked why they are not proposing to increase the WAC and SAC charges. Thunstrom explained that they have to set these rates to pay for today's expenses. She said WAC and SAC are for future expenses. She stated they could look at increasing these charges; however, then they would need to go back to developers with this high number, and could risk development not moving forward. She added that they would need an engineer to review an increase in WAC and SAC charges.

Mayor Vogel said he is so happy to see so many residents in attendance this evening. He thanked them for their patience in sitting through this meeting.

10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Ms. Carrol encouraged the City to continue to utilize the sign out front to keep residents up to date on when meetings are occurring.

11. REPORTS - NONE**12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

The Council shared the meetings and events they attended in the past few weeks, as well as highlighting upcoming events.

Faanes shared that she is disturbed by the violence that has been shown towards politicians and people speaking their minds recently. She noted that there was a school shooting in Minneapolis just a few weeks ago. She shared that she lived in Littleton, Colorado, in 1999, where she lived one mile from Columbine High School. She said she watched how this school shooting affected the community. She noted that in most school shootings, the shooter is either a current or former student. She shared her concern with security in schools. She stated she has been asking for the return of School Resource Officers (SROs) in schools since they had been removed. She said the community needs to find a way to help keep its schools and students safer, and she would like to see something done. She stated that they cannot afford to just think that something terrible cannot happen in St. Francis. She suggested creating some kind of task force to help with this.

Police Chief Schwieger shared that they have had many conversations with the superintendent, and they have discussed bringing back the SROs, but it comes down to the budget. He noted that these conversations will need to be had with the School Board. He said he would be happy to take part in a task force.

Kathleen Stadel, DeGardner Circle, shared that there is an upcoming memorial service for retired Police Officer Hamberg-Anderson on September 25. She shared that she worked at the school where Officer Hamberg-Anderson worked, and it was always very reassuring to see her squad car parked at the school.

Udvig shared that there are two Farmers' Markets left this season and encouraged residents to go. She added that she is also a huge advocate for the SROs, while she knows that the budgets are tight.

Robinson asked if they have contingency plans in place at the schools in the event of an active shooter situation. Schwieger shared that they have annual training sessions with school personnel on active shooting situations. He noted that they have good communication with the schools.

Robinson reminded the residents about the upcoming recycling event on September 20.

Mayor Vogel shared that he met with Mulvihill, Carpenter, and the city of Oak Grove to discuss water and sewer rates since they are on the St. Francis system.

Robinson asked how Highway 47 is going. Thunstrom shared that they will be starting some soil testing in the next few weeks. She noted that they are still on track with a 2027 construction, with the design and environmental work done by the end of 2025.

13. UPCOMING EVENTS

September 17 - Planning Commission Meeting - 7:00 pm

September 20 - St. Francis Recycling Event

September 22 - City Council Special Meeting - 5:30 pm

October 06 - City Council Regular Meeting - 6:00 pm

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: FAANES TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

There being no further business, Mayor Vogel adjourned the regular City Council at 8:37 p.m.

Jennifer Wida, City Clerk