

June 2, 2026

ITEM: New Business – Ad Hoc Working Group Report

BACKGROUND: The Ad Hoc Working Group met on Monday, May 18, 2026, to discuss concerns raised by Watonwan County Cares (WCC) related to immigration enforcement activity within the community and the impact those events have on residents.

The goal communicated by representatives of WCC is to increase transparency with the public. It was communicated that 1 in 400 people in Watonwan County were arrested and residents felt targeted.

Immigration enforcement is a federal responsibility, and the City does not have authority over federal immigration law or ICE operations. The City does not have policies requiring proactive cooperation with ICE beyond any legal obligation required under state or federal law.

A significant portion of the discussion centered around community perception, fear, misinformation, and the role communication and social media played during prior immigration enforcement activity. Representatives from WCC expressed interest in the city providing additional public communication intended to reassure residents and clarify the city's role and jurisdiction.

City representatives communicated the importance of maintaining a neutral position focused on public safety, avoiding political escalation, and ensuring the city does not unintentionally create confusion regarding its legal authority or responsibilities.

Two potential action items were identified for possible consideration:

1. Drafting a neutral public statement clarifying that the City is a local government entity and does not enforce federal immigration law.
2. Exploring whether immigration-related resource information should be linked or referenced on the city website.

STAFF RECOMMENDATION: Discussion.