MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL MEETING

AUGUST 10, 2026

Mayor Shawn Reinke called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Council members present were Neil Herzberg, Paul Thielen, Megan Brick, and Donna Allee. Others present were Tariq Al-Rifai, City Administrator; Kristin Leither, Social Media Specialist; Dan Gens, Public Works Director; Chuck DeWolf, Bolton & Menk, Inc.; Paul Wegner, Police Chief; Bradley Spear, and Igor Lenzner.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Council members gave verbal activity reports.

Gens reported the following:

- Ampe Park playground equipment is ready for use, soccer starts today at that park, the grass will be fixed in the fall
- The focus this week for the Public Works Department is spraying weeds around town and sweeping streets
- The City was awarded a grant for airport snow removal equipment; hopefully the equipment will arrive in time for the first snowfall

Reinke asked how the Safe Routes to School project is progressing. DeWolf reported most of the concrete and paving is done. They are still waiting on some of the signs to arrive, including signs for the enhanced crossing.

Wegner reported the following:

- The Department has been dealing with public nuisance enforcement, the officer in charge will hopefully be able to finish with the last few properties once the new nuisance ordinance is in place
- They have been addressing complaints about campers, boats, trailers, and etc. parking on the streets, the City's parking ordinance does not allow vehicles to be parked on the street longer than 24 hours
- There have been some issues with low-powered vehicles, specifically e-bikes, the state passed new legislation regarding e-bikes this year regarding what is and is not allowed and children using e-bikes, as well as defining what counts as a street legal e-bike
- They have one candidate that staff is working through the hiring process on, the individual has passed the physical and psychological evaluations, and the background check is in progress; Wegner is hoping to have a recommendation to Council at the next meeting

Al-Rifai reported the following:

- Attended Election Judge training; early voting started at City Hall last week and has been going well, with tomorrow being Primary Election Day
- The City and Township annexation meeting went well; draft documents are being developed for both the City and Township attorneys to review
- Night to Unite had a little lower attendance than last year, but still had a good turnout

- Attended the Park & Tree Board and Budget & Finance meetings, Budget & Finance have been working on tightening the budget

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

No one was in attendance to address the Council.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve the minutes from the following meetings: April 20, 2026 Special Planning Board and July 7, 2026 Budget & Finance Board.

Motion to approve the following vouchers:

8/6/2026	Payroll Direct Deposit		$ 43,270.63
8/6/2026	Payroll Withholdings	111627-111630	$ 4,982.16
8/6/2026	Payroll - Fed		$ 12,328.78
8/6/2026	Payroll - State		$ 2,463.15
8/6/2026	Payroll - TASC		$ 69.65
8/6/2026	Payroll - PERA		$ 11,098.52
8/6/2026	Payroll - Health Equity		$ 2,788.95
8/6/2026	Payroll - Health Partners		$ 10,209.01
8/6/2026	Payroll - AFLAC		$ 208.48
8/6/2026	Payroll - Met Life Dental		$ 286.56
8/6/2026	Paid Leave		$ 552.73
8/10/2026	Vouchers	111631-111694	$ 303,415.09
		Total	$ 391,673.71

Motion to accept the donation of $500 from Magnifi Financial Credit Union for Night To Unite.

Motion was made by Brick to approve the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Herzberg and unanimously carried.

Old Business Item A – Fire Relief Association & Chamber of Commerce – Backdraft Bash was pulled due to the Fire Relief Association receiving approval from the FAA to hold the event at the airport.

TIF 1-17 – NELSA PROPERTIES – CERTIFICATE OF COMPLETION, NOTE & RESOLUTION 2026-22

Al-Rifai presented the Certificate of Completion which certifies that the developer has constructed the project in accordance with the Development & Loan Agreement and construction plans.

Council also reviewed the Taxable Tax Increment Revenue Note and Resolution 2026-22 Approving Resolution Approving The Issuance Of, And Providing The Form, Terms, Covenants And Directions For The Issuance Of Its Taxable Tax Increment Revenue Note, Series 2026A In An Aggregate Principal Amount Not To Exceed $395,798.

Wayne Nelson has also signed the Investment Letter. Al-Rifai noted this is the standard process for a completed TIF.

Motion was made by Herzberg to approve the Certificate of Completion, Taxable Tax Increment Revenue Note and Resolution 2026-22 Approving Resolution Approving The Issuance Of, And Providing The Form, Terms, Covenants And Directions For The Issuance Of Its Taxable Tax Increment Revenue Note, Series 2026A In An Aggregate Principal Amount Not To Exceed $395,798. Seconded by Thielen and unanimously carried.

LIQUOR STORE PAYMENT ESTIMATE NO, 8 – PROJECT ONE CONSTRUCTION

DeWolf presented Payment Estimate No. 8 in the amount of $9,698.55; payable to Project One Construction for work completed through July, 2026. He reported this is the second to last payment, they are withholding the last $1,000 to make sure the grass is well established.

Motion was made by Brick to approve Payment Estimate No. 8 in the amount of $9,698.55; payable to Project One Construction. Seconded by Allee and unanimously carried.

ORDINANCE NO. 63, 3RD SERIES – NUISANCES

Council reviewed Ordinance No. 63, 3rd Series repealing and replacing Chapter 18 titled Nuisances. The Council has held a public hearing and the ordinance has been posted for the necessary 10-day posting.

Motion was made by Thiele to approve Ordinance No. 63, 3rd Series repealing and replacing Chapter 18 titled Nuisances. Seconded by Reinke.

Brick is still opposed to the use of the word morals used in the ordinance. She understands the arguments for it, but feels that if something isn't already covered under the law of the ordinance, then there is a better way they can word it than trying to govern someone's morals.

Motion carried 4:1 (Allee, yes; Herzberg, yes; Reinke, yes; Brick, no; Thielen, yes).

FORTITUDE ADDITION – CONCEPT PLAN

Al-Rifai presented the Fortitude Addition Concept Plan and letter from Rinke Noonan regarding the proposed plat submitted by Tom Opatz. Mr. Opatz wishes to plat the out lot that the current senior living facility and nursing home reside on, as well as the lot that the extra parking lot sits on. The plat is necessary to split the senior living facility from the nursing home due to a TIF they have received for the senior living facility (which needs to reside on its own parcel).

This is an incredibly unique situation; this is the first step in the platting process. They will also need a variance as the structures (once plated) will not meet the required setbacks.

The Planning Board has reviewed this and recommends approval.

Thielen noted he had asked at the Planning Board meeting to see a building permit and certificate of occupancy for the addition on the nursing home before moving forward, he hasn't seen those yet. There is a procedure the City and property owners must follow to build something in the City. Thielen is not opposed to this project moving forward, but he wants to see the necessary documents.

Reinke clarified that the Council is just approving the start of the process tonight. He noted they dealt with similar requests for the hospital and formerly 700 Stearns (now known as Stearns Place). He would like to see the findings the Council made for those projects so they can adopt similar findings for this project when they get to that point. Reinke said the letter from Mr. Lenzner that was included in the agenda addressed some of the concerns he had. Reinke also read the email from Jacob Bertram, Planning Board Chairman, expressing his and the Board's support for the project.

Reinke asked if staff made a recommendation. Al-Rifai said staff recommend approving the Concept Plan and notes that a variance will be needed after platting.

Thielen is in favor but doesn't want to set a precedent, it would have been a lot easier for everyone if this had been done in the beginning. Brick noted that they have already allowed this for 700 Stearns. Reinke added that is why he wants to look at those findings from this process for 700 Stearns, the findings will likely be the same.

Brick announced she will not be voting due to a conflict of interest, but she sees no reason to deny the Concept Plan. She noted a lot of businesses have been making requests stating they're investing into the community. Brick cautioned the City against allowing businesses to use that statement as a carte blanche to do whatever they want regardless of the City's ordinances and rules.

Reinke added that the Park & Tree Board discussed funding and their depleting budget and a suggestion was made that the Council should stop waiving the park land dedication fees for new developments.

> **Motion was made by Herzberg to approve the Fortitude Addition Concept Plan. Seconded by Allee and carried 4:0 (Allee, yes; Herzberg, yes; Reinke, yes; Brick, abstained; Thielen, yes).**

JOINT POWERS AGREEMENT FOR BUILDING INSPECTION SERVICES – CITY OF WATKINS

Al-Rifai presented the Joint Powers Agreement For Building Inspection Services Between the City of Paynesville and the City of Watkins. Al-Rifai reported Watkins approached the City's Building Inspector, Brad Mehlhop, about doing building inspections for Watkins and Mehlhop is willing to do it. Reinke asked if Mehlhop is sure he can do this without detracting from his current work. Al-Rifai said that Mehlhop feels this will be fine but he definitely can't take on more after this. Herzberg asked about the pay rate. Al-Rifai said the pay rate matches and will increase annually with our fee schedule. Gens added that Mehlhop will be out afternoons this week due to building inspections for Meeker County. The Public Works Department can cover his absence, but it does leave them short a person during those times.

Motion was made by Brick to approve the Joint Powers Agreement For Building Inspection Services Between the City of Paynesville and the City of Watkins. Seconded by Herzberg and unanimously carried.

HIRING OF FULL-TIME PUBLIC WORKS TECHNICIAN WATER/WASTEWATER OPERATOR I – WERTISH

Gens reported the interview team consisting of Tariq Al-Rifai, Dan Gens, Jennifer Welling and Lee Schleper interviewed 13 applicants on July 23rd and 24th. A background and reference check has been completed. The interview team recommends hiring David Wertish at Grade 5, Step 2; $29.05 per hour and place Rebecca Blonigen, Benjamin Veitch and Jon Kotten on an eligibility list in the respective order.

Mr. Wertish has an anticipated start date of August 17, 2026. Gens noted that Wertish doesn't have a CDL and will need to take the classes and tests to obtain one.

Herzberg stated the Public Works Board discussed and recommend hiring Wertish as well as bumping the newest Public Works staff, Stephen Hurley, up a step so that they are at the same pay rate. Reinke is not sure that the Council can bump Hurley up a step tonight. He's not sure what the difference between the two positions is or the difference between their experience, both factor in why one would be hired at a higher grade or step. Brick and Reinke both agree with the Public Works Board's recommendation but do not think the Council can include it in tonight's motion. Reinke suggested approving the motion as stated on the action sheet tonight and have staff discuss whether to bump Hurley up a step and bring a recommendation on that to the next Council meeting.

Motion was made by Brick to hire David Wertish as a Full-Time Public Works Technician Water/Wastewater Operator I at Grade 5, Step 2; $29.05 per hour and place Rebecca Blonigen, Benjamin Veitch and Jon Kotten on an eligibility list in the respective order and to direct City staff to discuss compensation within the department. Seconded by Allee and carried 4:1 (Allee, yes; Herzberg, no; Reinke, yes; Brick, yes; Thielen, yes).

INFORMATIONAL

Mayor Reinke reviewed the following: June & July Police Department Reports.

Wegner added there seems to be an increase in requests for fences in town. In regard to the nuisance ordinance, just because a violation is behind a fence, doesn't mean it's not a violation. The Police Department will still have to address any violations even if the public can't see them.

There being no further business, Mayor Reinke adjourned the meeting at 6:30 p.m.

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Tariq Al-Rifai, City Administrator