MINUTES
CITY COUNCIL MEETING

OCTOBER 13, 2025

Mayor Shawn Reinke called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Council members present were Neil Herzberg, Paul Thielen, Donna Potter, and Megan Brick. 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; Mike Stern, Fire Chief; Brad Mehlhop, Firefighter; Andrew Nienaber, Firefighter; Joe Voss, Cynthia Spear, and Brad Spear.

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Council members gave verbal activity reports.

Gens reported the following:

- They need new tires for the payloader; Gens is obtaining quotes for such
- Leaf pickup will be Friday, October 31st
- Reapplied to be a Tree City with the National Arbor Day Foundation
- Cleared most of the surplus items from the new snowplow garage
- The new garage door for the snowplow garage will be installed on October 27th
- They'll be taking the snowplow trucks to Albany on October 20th for DOT certification
- Park bathrooms are closed for the season
- They'll pull the docks from Veteran's Park at the end of the month
- Gens is working with the City Treasurer on the Public Works budget

Reinke asked if they have heard back from AMPI regarding the amendment to their agreement. Gens said it was sent to AMPI a little over a week ago and they haven't heard back yet. Al-Rifai was told that AMPI has not had a chance to discuss the amendment internally yet. If he doesn't hear back from them soon, he'll remind them to get moving on this.

Wegner mentioned the following:

- They've been having issues with a squad car, they're getting a new engine through the warranty, but there's no timeline for when that engine will come in; they are working on a proposal and getting quotes to replace that squad car
- Reviewed upcoming training for members of the department
- Officer Welz is operating on his own now and it's going well
- Wegner will be taking his sabbatical at the end of this month, Sergeant Haakonson will be stepping up during that time

Stern reported the following:

- The Fire Department has had 158 calls year to date
- The Rescue Truck is back after being in the shop
- They raised $10,721.90 from the Backdraft Bash, $5,000.00 of that was set aside for next year's band. The Fire Department made $4,005.33 while the Chamber made $1,716.57, this is down from past years. A change of venue and a later event date are factors that played into decreased attendance.
- Participated in active shooter training at the school in September

- The firefighter supper served 658 people

Herzberg asked where they are on possible repairs for the Fire Hall roof. Stern said they are trying to figure out if they can get by with repairs or if they need to replace the roof. They should have numbers in a month or so.

Al-Rifai mentioned the following:

- Attended the Stearns County Hazard Mitigation meeting to update the Stearns County Hazard Mitigation 5-year plan, they will send out a draft before they meet again to write up a final plan prior to submission
- Attended the Joint Trails, Policies & Procedures, Park & Tree meetings and the employee appreciation event

PUBLIC OPEN FORUM

Joe Voss read the housing study and saw the projective growth of the population, with that growth comes the need for childcare. Other communities are struggling with this as well. They have met with local providers and have gathered their input on how to help increase available childcare. They are having a public meeting to get public input on childcare at Koronis Ministries on Monday, November 3rd at 5:30 p.m. There is a free dinner for all who preregister. Brick added that the link to register was published in the Press and she has shared the link on her own social media accounts. She encouraged people to come and help them come up with a solution that works for Paynesville.

CONSENT AGENDA

Motion to approve the following meeting minutes: September 8, 2025 City Council, August 7, 2025 Park & Tree Board, July 16, 2025 Ad Hoc Downtown Street Improvement Committee, July 10, 2025 Ad Hoc Library Board, July 7, 2025 Trail Board, August 19, 2025 Policies & Procedures Board, September 11, 2025 Park & Tree Board, August 14, 2025 Ad Hoc Library Board, September 15, 2025 Special Joint Planning Board & City Council, and September 22, 2025 City Council.

Motion to approve the following vouchers:

9/22/2025	Vouchers Spec Run	110295-110296	$ 261.25
10/2/2025	Payroll Direct Deposit		$ 42,948.51
10/2/2025	Payroll Taxes	110297-110300	$ 5,896.08
10/2/2025	Payroll - Fed		$ 13,512.53
10/2/2025	Payroll - State		$ 2,638.62
10/2/2025	Payroll - TASC		$ 229.41
10/2/2025	Payroll - PERA		$ 12,166.19
10/2/2025	Payroll - Health Equity		$ 2,843.52
10/2/2025	Payroll - Health Partners		$ 10,512.03
10/2/2025	Payroll - AFLAC		$ 219.13
10/2/2025	Payroll - Met Life Dental		$ 296.56
10/13/2025	Vouchers	110301-110375	$ 1,035,887.21
		Total	$ 1,127,411.04

Motion to accept the resignation from Jason Ruhoff, Public Works Technician Water/Wastewater Operator III; effective October 24, 2025.

Item C - Public Works Board Member Resignation – Loven and Item D – Park & Tree Board Member Appointment – Spaulding were pulled and moved to New Business.

Motion was made by Brick to approve Items A, B, and E of the Consent Agenda. Seconded by Herzberg and unanimously carried.

FIRE DEPARTMENT – SALE OF FIRE TRUCK #11 – ADVERTISE ON MINNBID

Stern reported that to date the Fire Department has been unsuccessful in selling Fire Truck #11 on the Fire Truck Resource (FTR) sale site. The Department would like to advertise the truck on MinnBid, with notice of such on the City's website and Facebook. They plan to post it with no minimum bid and leave the auction open until October 31st. Wegner noted that MinnBid usually only allows a 7 to 10 day window for bids, so depending on what day they open bids for the Fire Truck they may need to close the auction earlier than October 31st.

Motion was made by Brick to authorize the sale of Fire Truck #11 on MinnBid with notice of such on the City's website and Facebook. Seconded by Potter and unanimously carried.

FIRE RELIEF ASSOCIATION – INCREASE IN BENEFIT

Mehlhop requested a benefit increase from $2,500.00 per year of service to $3,000.00 per year of service, effective January 1, 2026. Council reviewed Resolution 2025-30 Opting To Increase The Benefit Level For Firefighters Who Are Vested In The Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Plan. After reviewing their analysis from PERA, Mehlhop said they are currently overfunded and even with the increase they are projected to stay that way. The Board had a considerable discussion on this and feels the account will still be able to survive a hit and that the members have earned this.

Motion was made by Herzberg to approve Resolution 2025-30 Opting To Increase The Benefit Level For Firefighters Who Are Vested In The Statewide Volunteer Firefighter Plan. Seconded by Brick and unanimously carried.

AIRPORT FBO HANGAR – STATE OF MN STATE AIRPORTS FUND GRANT AGREEMENT & RESOLUTION

DeWolf presented the State of MN State Airports Fund Grant Agreement between the City of Paynesville and the MN Department of Transportation and Resolution 2025-31 Authorizing To Execute MN Department of Transportation Grant Agreement For Airport Improvement Excluding Land Acquisition for the FBO Airport hangar project. For this project, 95% will be covered the Federal grant, 2.5% covered by State grant, and the last 2.5% will be covered by local funds. This is the State portion of one of two grants awarded to the airport, the second grant will be presented at the next Council meeting. Reinke asked if there will be an issue with receiving the Federal funding with the government shut down. DeWolf said the Federal funding has already been secured, they must submit for reimbursement, but the money has already been earmarked for the project.

Motion was made by Brick to approve the State of MN State Airports Fund Grant Agreement between the City of Paynesville and the MN Department of Transportation and Resolution 2025-31 Authorizing To Execute MN Department of Transportation Grant Agreement For Airport Improvement Excluding Land Acquisition. Seconded by Herzberg and unanimously carried.

LIQUOR STORE – PAYMENT ESTIMATE NO. 4

DeWolf presented Payment Estimate No. 4 in the amount of $187,102.50; payable to Project One Construction, Inc. for work completed through September 30, 2025. He said construction of the Liquor Store is going well. Reinke noted that Bill Ludwig reported the project has been coming in on budget and on schedule so far at their working session.

Motion was made by Brick to approve Payment Estimate No. 4 in the amount of $187,102.50; payable to Project One Construction, Inc. Seconded by Potter and unanimously carried.

DISCUSS APARTMENT BUILDING NEEDING A CONDITIONAL USE PERMIT IN THE C-1 CENTRAL BUSINESS DISTRICT

A Special Joint Planning Board and City Council meeting was held on September 15, 2025, at which time members heard input from the Downtown Committee members, business owners, Council and Planning Board members regarding apartment buildings in the C1-Central Business District.

The Planning Board made the following motion:

Motion was made by Bertram to recommend to Council that apartment buildings in the C-1 district require a Conditional Use Permit as recommended by the Downtown Street Improvement Committee. Seconded by Thielen and passed 3:2 (Thielen, yes; Bertram, yes; Fuchs, no; Christman, yes; Hellermann, no).

At that same meeting the Board confirmed that all of (b) of Permitted Use in Section 36-46 (apartment buildings and apartments within a retail business building) would be moved to (d) Conditional Uses in Section 36-46. However, it is believed that the intent is only exclusive apartment buildings would need a Conditional Use Permit and not apartments that are allowed above, behind, or below the retail business. City staff is seeking Council's input on this prior to an ordinance amendment being drafted and public hearing being held.

Al-Rifai noted the Downtown Committee's recommendation was for only apartment buildings to need a Conditional Use Permit (CUP).

Motion was made by Thielen to move exclusive apartment buildings from allowable use to conditional use in the C-1 district, as recommended by the Downtown Committee. Seconded by Herzberg.

Brick confirmed that office spaces and other businesses are included in the definition of retail business building. Reinke said retail business is not defined in the ordinance, and he would like the Planning Board to look at either changing that language or providing a definition for

retail business and make a recommendation to Council. Thielen thought the City Attorney was working on that. Reinke would like to see it come back to Council either way.

Reinke thought the conversation at the public hearing was heading towards requiring a CUP for any exclusive housing in the C-1, this would include exclusive apartment buildings, single- and two-family dwellings, and row houses. Voss said the intent of the Downtown Committee was to keep the businesses space downtown as business space. If there is an attempt to turn current business space into an apartment, that should require a CUP. Reinke asked if they want to keep family housing and row houses as allowable use. If they do, someone would be allowed to tear down a business building and build housing in the C-1 district. He suggests requiring a CUP for all exclusive housing in the C-1 district. Any exclusive housing already in that district will be grandfathered in and apartments in the same building as a business would still be allowed without a CUP.

Motion was made by Reinke to amend the previous motion to also include line 68, multiple-family dwellings, line 86, single- and two-family dwellings, and line 87, row houses, under conditional use in the C-1 district. Seconded by Brick and unanimously carried.

Brick noted that without a rental ordinance, it does not hurt to have some way of regulating it. If someone comes in and wants to build an apartment downtown and it's a good spot for it then the Council will allow it.

The previous motion (including the amendment language/motion) unanimously carried.

SNOW REMOVAL OPERATOR JOB DESCRIPTION & HIRING

Gens presented the Part-Time Seasonal (On-Call) Snow Removal Operator Job Description. This would be a new position to help with the City's snow removal. The job description was reviewed and pointed by DDA. The position was given 120 points; therefore, being a Grade 1 position with a pay range of $18.39 - $23.74 per hour. This is a 67-day position and is non-union eligible. Benefits would include ESST and MN Paid Family and Medical Leave (new, effective 1-1-26). Dan Gens, Public Works Director would like to hire up to 4 persons for this position. The Policies & Procedures Board has reviewed this and recommends approval.

Herzberg said the description might scare away some people who just want to drive truck to haul snow. They don't want to discourage someone who just wants to haul snow from applying because they'll need one or two to do that. Brick suggested posting it as is, and if there's not enough interest they can look at reworking the description. Gens agreed with Brick's suggestion. Thielen added that they do want people willing to do more than just drive truck. Reinke said if they do need to rework the job description then they should bring it straight to Council instead of going through Policies & Procedures first.

Motion was made by Thielen to approve the Part-Time Seasonal On-Call (67-day) Snow Removal Operator Job Description and start the hiring process and continue until a hiring recommendation can be made to Council. Seconded by Brick and unanimously carried.

ESST POLICY AMENDMENT & AFSCME LOA

Council reviewed the revisions that Kennedy & Graven made according to the changes Legislature made to ESST during their last legislative session and the signed LOA Agreement between the City of Paynesville and AFSCME. The Policies and Procedures Board has reviewed this and recommends approval.

Motion was made by Herzberg to approve the ESST Policy Amendment and Letter of Agreement Between the City of Paynesville and AFSCME Council 65. Seconded by Thielen and unanimously carried.

DOCTOR CERTIFICATE POLICY AMENDMENT

Due to the changes in the ESST law regarding doctor's certificates we want to make the City's Policy related to doctor certifications match the ESST language. Council reviewed the current and proposed policy with the only change being the number of days absence requiring a doctor's certificate from 3 to 2 days. The Policies & Procedures Board has reviewed this and recommend approval. Reinke noted that a doctor's certificate is not mandatory.

Motion was made by Brick to approve the Doctor's Certificate Policy Amendment. Seconded by Potter and unanimously carried.

MEAL BREAKS AND REST PERIODS POLICY AMENDMENT

The Legislature changed the law regarding meal breaks; effective January 1, 2026; changing the number of hours needed to work from 8 to 6 before an unpaid lunch is given. Council reviewed the current policy and revised policy. The Policies & Procedures Board has reviewed this and recommend approval.

Motion was made by Brick to approve the Meal Breaks And Rest Periods Policy Amendment. Seconded by Thielen and unanimously carried.

PUBLIC WORKS – PURCHASE OF DEBRIS BLOWER

Gens reported that the Public Works Board is still working out the details of the shared use agreement with the Township. This item was tabled.

PUBLIC WORKS – HIRING OF PUBLIC WORKS TECHNICIAN WATER/WASTEWATER OPERATOR

Gens reported with the recent resignation of an Operator there is an immediate need to fill this full-time position. The Public Works Technician Water/Wastewater Operator receives level I, II, or III depending on licensures the individual holds. This position is a Grade 5 according to the new DDA Scale at $26.92 - $34.76 per hour; plus licensure stipends, if applicable.

Motion was made by Herzberg to start the hiring process for a Full-Time Public Works Technician Water/Wastewater Operator and continue with the hiring process until a recommendation can be made to Council. Seconded by Brick and unanimously carried.

PUBLIC WORKS BOARD MEMBER RESIGNATION – LOVEN

John Loven has submitted his resignation from the Public Works Board, effective immediately. Gens added that he is also on the Airport Zoning Board and would like to resign from that Board as well.

Motion was made by Brick to approve the resignation of John Loven from the Public Works Board along with any other boards in which he serves, effective immediately. Seconded by Potter and unanimously carried.

PARK & TREE BOARD MEMBER APPOINTMENT – SPAULDING

Jordan Spaulding has submitted a letter of interest in serving on the City's Park & Tree Board. Reinke said there has been talk about combining the Park & Tree and Environmental Boards. If they combine them, he feels they should ask Bev Aas first to fill the empty spot, since she has dutifully served on the Environmental Board for many years. Herzberg said if they combine the boards, it makes sense to add one or two people to the board. Reinke said one would be fine, since the more people on a board, the harder it seems to be to have a quorum. Council agreed to appoint Spaulding, if they decide to consolidate the two boards then they can discuss adding another person.

Motion was made by Brick to appoint Jordan Spaulding to the Park & Tree Board, effective immediately. Seconded by Thielen and unanimously carried.

INFORMATIONAL

Mayor Reinke reviewed the following: July Lodging Tax Advisory Committee Meeting Minutes and August Month End Reports – all reports can be found on the City's website.

There being no further business, Mayor Reinke adjourned the meeting at 6:56 p.m.

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Tariq Al-Rifai, City Administrator