Pursuant to the due call and notice thereof, a regular meeting of the North Mankato City Council was held in the Municipal Building Council Chambers on March 16, 2026. Mayor Carlson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m., asking everyone to join in the Pledge of Allegiance. The following were present for roll call: Council Members Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, City Administrator McCann, Finance Director Ryan, Community Development Director Fischer, Public Works Director Arnold, Attorney Kennedy, and Administrative Services Manager-City Clerk Van Genderen.

Approval of Agenda

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Oachs, to approve the agenda as presented. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Approval of Council Minutes from the March 2, 2026, Council Meeting.

Council Member Oachs moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner, to approve the March 2, 2026, Council Meeting Minutes. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Approval of Council Work Session Minutes from the March 2, 2026, Council Work Session

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Whitlock, to approve the March 2, 2026, Council Work Session Meeting Minutes. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Public Comments-Agenda Items

Benton Bakke appeared before the Council and spoke on Agenda Item 10 F: Receive Traffic and Safety Committee Minutes and Approve Recommendations. He agreed with the Sherman Street concerns and requested that Public Works consider a bike lane connecting Spring Lake Park to Monroe Elementary.

Consent Agenda

Council Member Oachs moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner, to approve the Consent Agenda.

A. Bills and Appropriations.
B. Res. No. 32-26 Approving Donations/Contributions/Grants.
C. Approved Event and Parade Permit for Crossview Covenant Church Global 6K on May 16, 2026.
D. Approved Lasting Imprint Event Permit for September 19, 2026, at Spring Lake Park Shelter #2.

Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Business Items

Res. No. 33-26 Accepting Bid 2026 Belgrade Avenue Improvement Project City Project No. 23-02 CEF.

City Engineer Sarff appeared before the City Council and reported that two bids were received for the 2026 Belgrade Avenue Improvement Project. W.W. Blacktopping bid $1,471,457.40, and Dirt Merchant, Inc. bid $1,624,592.26. W.W. Blacktopping was 15% below the engineer's estimate and

10% below the next bid. The total estimated project cost is $1,974,900, which will be funded by federal funds, Municipal State Aid, and City funds. Based on prior performance, W.W. Blacktopping is considered qualified, and staff recommends awarding the contract to the company, subject to approval by the Minnesota Department of Transportation. Council Member Oachs asked if there was an estimated shutdown date. City Engineer Sarff noted that April is the plan, but the City is waiting on additional information from the contractors and MnDOT approval.

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Oachs to Adopt Res. No. 33-26 Accepting Bid 2026 Belgrade Avenue Improvement Project City Project No. 23-02 CEF. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Res. No. 34-26 Declaring Cost to be Assessed, and Ordering Preparation of Proposed Assessment for the 2026 Belgrade Avenue improvement Project.

City Engineer Sarff reviewed the proposed assessments for the Belgrade Avenue Improvement Project. He stated that the staff first used the assessment policy to determine assessments. Using the current formulas and the bid amount, the initial calculation would be $380.00 per linear foot. Using the policy, the calculation for a property with 25 feet of assessable frontage would be $9,500, and for a property with 160 feet of assessable frontage, $61,000. In the past, the City has placed a cap on assessments. Using the same process as on Commerce Drive, the assessment per linear foot decreases to $135.00, a 35% reduction. A property with 25 feet of assessable frontage would be assessed at $3,400, while a property with 160 feet of assessable frontage would be assessed at $22,000. Any private sewer or water service work would be 100% assessable to the property on which it is completed. If the assessments are paid before November 15th, no interest will be paid; the assessment will go at a 6% interest rate spread over 15 years.

Council Member Peterson moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner to Adopt Res. No. 34-26 Declaring Cost to be Assessed, and Ordering Preparation of Proposed Assessment for the 2026 Belgrade Avenue improvement Project. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, Oachs abstain, no nays. Motion carried.

Res. No. 35-26 for Hearing on Proposed Assessment for the 2026 Belgrade Avenue Improvement Project.

City Engineer Sarff reported that the resolution would schedule a public hearing on April 20, 2026, to review the proposed assessments for the City and MnDOT, Belgrade Avenue Improvement projects. Notices of the hearing will be published and mailed to affected property owners, who may provide input.

Council Member Peterson moved, seconded by Council Member Steiner to Adopt Res. No. 35-26 for Hearing on Proposed Assessment for the 2026 Belgrade Avenue Improvement Project. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, Oachs abstain, no nays. Motion carried.

Res. No. 36-26 Accepting Bid 2026 Street and Miscellaneous Paving Improvement Project, City Project No. 26-02 DEF.

Bids for the 2026 Street and Miscellaneous Paving Improvements (mill & overlay) project were opened on March 11 at 11:00 a.m. The project includes mill and overlay work on Lilac Lane, North and South Orchid Drive, Valley View Drive, Cambridge Court, and Valley High Court.

Three bids were received. W.W. Blacktopping, Inc. of Mankato submitted the lowest bid at $313,611, followed by Nielsen Blacktopping, Inc. at $315,151.20, and Northwest Asphalt at $386,076.80. The low bid is about 12% below the engineer's estimate of $356,348 and less than 1% lower than the next lowest bid.

The total estimated project cost, including engineering, is $345,611, which is within the $400,000 budgeted for the project in 2026. Based on past performance, the staff recommends awarding the contract to W.W. Blacktopping, Inc. for $313,611.

City Engineer Sarff noted that the City had considered letting an alternate bid for stripping the Howard Drive roundabout, but due to complications, decided not to include the bid documents.

Council Member Peterson moved, seconded by Council Member Oachs, to adopt Res. Res. No. 36-26 Accepting Bid 2026 Street and Miscellaneous Paving Improvement Project, City Project No. 26-02 DEF. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Res. No. 37-26 Approving the Amendments for the North Mankato Volunteer Fire Department By-Laws.

Fire Chief Zwaschka appeared before Council and reported that the Fire Department updated its Volunteer Fire Department By-Laws so it stays up to date. The last review occurred in 2011.

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Whitlock, to adopt Res. No. 37-26 Approving the Amendments for the North Mankato Volunteer Fire Department By-Laws. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Accept Traffic and Safety Committee Minutes and Approve Recommendations.

Public Works Director Arnold discussed the Traffic and Safety Committee recommendations for the concerns that were brought before the committee. The committee recommended exploring enhanced lighting at Haughton Avenue and Countryside Drive. The City will need to speak with Benco about adding or updating the lighting. Public Works Director Arnold noted that the staff continues to trim the trees at the corner, as this has been a concern over the years.

The committee also recommended the addition of stop signs on Sherman Street. Stop signs included changing the yield sign at Sherman and McKinley into a stop sign. Create a four-way stop at Sherman & Garfield to improve intersection control. Add a stop sign at Sherman & Belgrade to make a temporary four-way stop as a calming measure during the nearby road construction. A discussion was held concerning the addition of the stop signs. It was determined to move forward with the recommended stop signs, ensuring review of the installations and removal if necessary.

The committee recommended the installation of a "Do Not Block Intersection" sign at Range Street and Webster Avenue while monitoring the conditions during the construction on Belgrade Avenue and Veterans' Bridge.

Council Member Peterson moved, seconded by Council Member Whitlock to Accept Traffic and Safety Committee Minutes and Approve Recommendations. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Res. No. 38-26 Authorizing the Submission of a Department of Natural Resources Grant Application for Walter S. Farm Park Improvements.

Public Works Director Arnold reported the proposed 2027 project at Walter S. Farm Park includes replacing the outdated 1988 playground with modern, safer equipment for children ages 5–12, installing accessible surfacing and minor drainage improvements, constructing a new north–south

walking path connecting Countryside Drive and La Mar Drive, and upgrading the water fountain and portable toilet enclosure to meet ADA standards. These improvements address aging infrastructure, safety concerns, accessibility needs, and community demand while enhancing park connectivity and usability for neighborhood residents. The resolution authorizes the City of North Mankato to submit a Department of Natural Resources Outdoor Recreation Grant application for improvements at Walter S. Farm Park. It designates the City Planner to apply for funding and execute necessary agreements, confirms the City's legal and financial capacity to complete and maintain the project, ensures compliance with conflict of interest policies and grant requirements, and commits the park property to recreation use consistent with the grant program.

Council Member Steiner moved, seconded by Council Member Whitlock to Adopt Res. No. 38-26 Authorizing the Submission of a Department of Natural Resources Grant Application for Walter S. Farm Park Improvements. Vote on the motion: Steiner, Oachs, Peterson, Whitlock, and Carlson aye, no nays. Motion carried.

Public Comments-Other City Matters

Bill Wagner, 1701 Linda Lane, appeared before Council and stated he did not want a data center built in North Mankato and encouraged the Council to say no to data centers and to let the public know if there was a company interested in building in North Mankato.

John Todtleben, 522 Lyndale Street, appeared before Council and stated he lived near a property that recently burned and is uninhabitable. He stated that there has been someone living in the garage, and he would like to change the ordinances that make it possible for him to live there.

Barb Church, 102 Wheeler Avenue, appeared before Council and stated the City should consider not allowing the use of non-disclosure agreements (NDA).

Benton Bakke appeared before the Council and stated he believed the City should create a Climate Action Plan committee.

Tom Hagen, 927 Lake Street, appeared before Council and stated he did not think the City followed the plans that had been created and recommended the development of committees. He also stated he did not agree with the changes to the public comment periods.

Duane Rader, 715 Lyndale Street, appeared before Council and thanked staff for their work on the grant for the improvements at Walter S. Farm.

City Administrator and Staff Comments

Public Works Director Arnold thanked the Public Works crew for their work in clearing the streets and thanked the residents for moving their vehicles off the street to help with the clearing.

Public Works Director Arnold stated that during the reconstruction of Sherman Street, the City considered options for a bike path, but there were space constraints with portions of the street. The City is in the process of completing an active transportation plan with citizen input and will continue to consider options for additional bike and pedestrian access.

City Administrator McCann thanked the Public Works Department and the Police Department for their combined efforts to ensure the roads were cleared during the snow emergency.

City Administrator McCann reminded residents that the Spring Drop-Off will be held April 16-19 at 610 Webster Avenue.

City Administrator McCann encouraged residents to register for spring and summer events and activities.

Mayor and Council Comments

Council Member Whitlock requested that staff look into the issue reported by the gentleman at 522 Lyndale and see if the problem can be resolved. Attorney Kennedy reported that the City is aware of the issue, but the City Code primarily provides for citations with limited action. He indicated he would review the City Code and see what changes could be considered.

Council Member Steiner requested clarification on whether there was a data center request with the City. Community Development Director Fischer reported that there is no data center and no interest from realtors for the past six to eight months.

Council Member Oachs thanked City staff for their work on clearing the streets, and residents and friends for clearing fire hydrants and around post office boxes.

Council Member Oachs noted the library would be hosting an Easter Egg Hunt on March 28, 2026.

Mayor Carlson asked if the City's mill and overlay budget would need to increase due to the winters that have had a lot of freeze and thaw, which creates more potholes. Public Works Director Arnold indicated the mill and overlay budget would probably need to be increased. He also indicated that an updated planning document may be beneficial to review options for maintaining the life of the pavement.

At 8:10 p.m., on a motion by Council Member Steiner, seconded by Council Member Oachs, the Council Meeting adjourned.

_____
Mayor

_____
City Clerk