

**CITY OF NISSWA
MINUTES – REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
TUESDAY, OCTOBER 21, 2025
7:00 P.M. – NISSWA CITY HALL**

Members present: Jennifer Carnahan, Mark Froehle, Joe Hall, Bruce London, Jesse Zahn.

Other Members Present: Bill Westerberg, City Engineer and Dave Reese, City Engineer, Tom Pearson, City Attorney.

Members absent: none.

City staff present: Maggi Wentler, Interim City Administrator; Tom Blomer, Public Works; Todd Szymanski, Police Chief; Amber Moon Peterson, Parks & Rec.

Attendance by Zoom: Brandon Fitzsimmons, Labor Attorney.

Audience members: 15 members of the public were present.

A. Call to Order

Mayor Carnahan called the regular City Council meeting to order at 7:01 PM on Tuesday, October 21, 2025.

1. Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

B. Approve Agenda

Mayor Carnahan requested three additions to the agenda under Old Business: (1) discussion about temporary assignment of duties and responsibilities of the city administrator role on an interim basis, per a memo from the city's labor attorney; (2) hiring process for the deputy clerk position; and (3) employee appreciation event. The current item under Old Business would be moved to item 4.

Council Member Zahn moved to approve the amended agenda as presented. Council Member Joe Hall seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

C. Consent Calendar

1. Fire Department Report – September 2025
2. Parks and Recreation Report – October 2025
3. Pickle Report – September 2025
4. Spirits Report – September 2025
5. Police Report – October 2025
6. Public Works Department Report – October 2025
7. Planning & Zoning Report – October 2025
8. Personnel Updates – October 2025
9. Presentation of Claims – Check register #155908-156031; totaling \$486,959.99
10. Street Use Permit-After the Fact-Big Axe – October 18, 2025
11. Special Event Permit Application - After the Fact – Navigate North Group – October 2, 2025
12. Special Event Permit Application - After the Fact – A&W – October 18, 2025
13. Special Event Permit Application – Grand View Lodge – November 22, 2025
14. LG220 Application – The Outreach Program – May 25, 2026
15. Donation Resolution – Community Center – Nisswa Lions

16. Donation Resolution – Fire – Nisswa Lions

Council Member Zahn moved to approve the consent calendar as presented. Council Member Froehle seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

D. Open Forum

There were no comments from the public.

E. Reports

1. City Attorney

City Attorney Tom Pearson reported that the city's data practices policy needed a small amendment to update the responsible authority position, data practices compliance official section, and designees section on page 4, as these currently referenced former staff.

Council Member Zahn moved to accept the data practice policy changes as presented by the City Attorney. Council Member Mark Froehle seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. City Engineer

City Engineer Dave provided an update on the 2026 street improvements, noting that street plans had been provided to Public Works Director Tom Blomer for review with public works at their next meeting. He also reported good progress on the Gull Lake Trail, with a punch list review conducted at their Monday progress meeting.

F. Public Hearing

Mayor Carnahan requested a motion to open the public hearing.

Council Member Zahn moved to open the public hearing for the ordinance amendment for Chapter 2. Council Member Froehle seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

1. Ordinance Amendment – Chapter 2 – Regular City Council Meeting Start Time

Interim City Administrator Maggi Wentler explained that this ordinance amendment would change the regular council meeting start time from 7:00 PM to 6:00 PM. She noted that while council wanted to implement this in November, the Truth and Taxation meeting in December was already scheduled and published with the county for 6:00 PM, so that meeting time could not be changed.

Council Member Zahn moved to adopt the ordinance amendment to Chapter 2 regarding the amendment to the regular start time of the regular city council meetings within the city of Nisswa, with implementation to begin in January 2026. Council Member London seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Zahn moved to publish the summary of the ordinance amendment to Chapter 2. Council Member Hall seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Ordinance Amendment – Chapter 28 – Regarding Mandatory Sewer Connections

Interim City Administrator Wentler explained that this amendment would adjust the connection distance for commercial structures for mandatory sewer hookups.

Council Member Zahn clarified that this amendment was discussed at the last Public Works meeting, noting that the current distance for commercial properties was 1,000 feet while residential was 500 feet. The Public Works committee recommended reducing the commercial distance to match residential at 500 feet.

Council Member London asked how many businesses this might affect. Council Member Zahn explained it would only apply to future applications, not existing properties. Council Member London further clarified that commercial properties on septic within the 500-foot distance would need to hook up to city sewer once their existing septic system failed.

Council Member Zahn moved to amend ordinance Chapter 28 in regards to the mandatory sewer connection hookup for commercial properties within the city of Nisswa as presented. Council Member London seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Zahn moved to publish the summary of the amendment. Council Member Hall seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Zahn moved to close the public hearing. Council Member Hall seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

G. Old Business

1. Temporary Assignment of Duties and Responsibilities of the Administrator

Labor Attorney Brandon joined via Zoom and explained that at the October 8th meeting, the council had approved a motion to "assign Maggi some of the duties of the city administrator role on an interim basis effective September 4th." The motion lacked clarity about which specific duties Finance Specialist Wentler would perform.

Brandon recommended that council rescind the prior motion and approve a new motion that clearly specifies the duties and responsibilities that Finance Specialist Wentler would perform in an interim basis. He noted that the council supervises anyone performing city administrator duties.

Council Member Hall clarified that due to union negotiations and talks, they could not assign all administrator duties to Wentler. Council Member Zahn noted that hiring and firing of staff should remain at the council level.

Council Member Zahn moved to rescind the motion made on October 8th, 2025 regarding the duties assigned to Financial Specialist Maggi Wentler. Council Member London seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

Council Member Zahn moved to assign the interim city administrator duties to Financial Specialist Maggi Wentler as presented with the currently adopted city administrator/treasurer position with the duties with the exception as follows: representing the city in labor negotiations as well as hiring

and firing of city staff. Council Member London seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

2. Hiring Process for the Deputy Clerk Position

Brandon explained that according to city policy, while the hiring process may be coordinated by staff, the city council is responsible for the final hiring decision and must approve all hires. With the current administrative vacancy, council needed to decide who would manage the application review process.

After discussion, council determined that the personnel liaisons (Mayor Carnahan and Council Member Hall) along with Maggi Wentler would review applications and present the top three candidates to the full council for interviews. All council members would have access to see all applications upon request.

Council Member London moved that the personnel liaisons, Mayor Carnahan and Council Member Hall, along with Maggi Wentler, will do the filtering of the applications and bring forth the best three applicants to the full council for interviews, with all council members having access to see all applicants at their request. Council Member Zahn seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

3. Employee Appreciation Event

Mayor Carnahan explained that she and Council Member Hall, as personnel liaisons, had investigated venues for the annual employee appreciation event as directed at the last meeting. She expressed concern about using \$5,000 in taxpayer funds allocated in the budget for the event, suggesting council members might personally donate toward the costs.

The three venue options presented were: Catalyst at NatureLink on Clark Lake (approximately \$45-50 per person plus a \$500 venue fee), Grand View (around \$32 per person, inclusive), and the Legion (about \$22 per person with no venue fee).

Council Member Zahn noted that he had created this event last year and personally funded it to get it off the ground so it could be budgeted this year. He felt it was appropriate to use the budgeted funds to recognize employees for one night out of the year.

After discussion, council agreed to accept donations from council members who wished to contribute, with any remaining costs covered from the budgeted funds.

4. Review Special Event & Street Use Permits

Interim City Administrator Wentler presented staff recommendations to combine the special event and street use permit applications into one form with a \$50 fee and a requirement that applications be submitted 60 days prior to the event.

Mayor Carnahan felt that creating a 60-day timeline was too restrictive and would add unnecessary bureaucracy. She cited examples like the Lions' pork-on-a-stick booth and A&W fundraisers for the fire department that had faced difficulties with the current permit process.

Council Member Hall explained that the permits originated about 15 years ago primarily to keep a food truck out of town, but had evolved over time. He noted that some businesses had received permits that were intended to be lifetime permits rather than annual.

Council Member Zahn and Council Member Froehle both acknowledged that certain events that close down streets would need more advance notice, but agreed that smaller events should have a streamlined process.

The council decided to table the discussion to allow for more community input and staff collaboration. They planned to revisit the issue in early 2026 after gathering feedback from community partners.

H. New Business

1. Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities Presentation

Elizabeth Wefel from Flaherty and Hood presented an update on the Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities. She highlighted three key issues affecting Nisswa from the past legislative session:

1. The state budget - While not currently in deficit, projections show a potential deficit in two years, which limited new spending initiatives.
2. The bonding bill - This finally passed, providing funds for drinking water and wastewater projects, as well as money for local roads, bridges, and economic development.
3. Housing and zoning mandates - The Coalition successfully stopped legislation that would have limited local control of zoning.

She noted that the legislative session would begin on February 17th and encouraged council members to contact their legislators about issues important to the city.

2. Fire - Relief Benefit Increase

Andy from the Fire Department explained they were requesting an increase to \$6,900 per year served for the fire relief benefit, which would still maintain over 110% vested as discussed in previous years.

Council Member Froehle moved to increase the fire relief benefit as presented. Council Member Zahn seconded the motion. Motion carried by majority, with Council Member Froehle temporarily away during the vote.

3. Fire - Approve Hire of Fire Fighter Matthew Krueger

Andy explained that all three firefighter applicants had gone through the review process with four members plus the interviewee, and all three were recommended for hire.

Council Member London moved to approve to hire firefighter Matthew Krueger. Council Member Zahn seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

4. Fire - Approve Hire of Fire Fighter Taylor Morris

Joe Hall noted that both Taylor Morris and Tyler Bailey were sons of current firefighters on the department, and both had come through the department's explorer program.

Council Member London moved to approve to hire firefighter Taylor Morris. Council Member Zahn seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

5. Fire - Approve Hire of Fire Fighter Tyler Bailey

Council Member London moved to approve the hire of firefighter Tyler Bailey. Council Member Zahn seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

6. Gull Lake Trail Fencing

Amber explained that they were seeking direction from council regarding fencing along the Gull Lake Trail. Due to a shortage of materials and increased costs, staff presented two options: either grade out the land adjacent to the trail or continue with installing approximately 140 linear feet of fencing at a cost of about \$5,700.

Mayor Carnahan recalled that during an on-site visit, the understanding was that the fence would not be extended beyond where it currently stopped. Council Member Hall confirmed this and noted that since this was part of a fixed-price contract, any increase in material costs should be the responsibility of the contractor.

The council directed staff to proceed with the fencing as originally planned in the contract with Landwehr.

7. Pay Application No. 5 for the Gull Lake Trail

City Engineer Dave presented pay application number 5 for the Gull Lake Trail in the amount of \$20,208.69 for progress made on the trail. Council Member Hall expressed concerns about the quality of the fence installation and asked whether enough retainage was being held back to address these issues. The Engineer confirmed that sufficient retainage was being held.

Council Member Zahn moved to approve pay application number 5 for the Gull Lake Trail in the amount of \$20,208.69. Council Member London seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

8. Change Order No. 6 for the Gull Lake Trail

City Engineer Dave explained this was a time extension change order, with no dollar amount being changed, to extend the substantial completion date from October 15th to November 15th. He explained that delays were due to issues with curb replacement that was too flat, base density issues that had to be resolved, and paving schedule and concrete work that was weather-dependent.

Council Member Zahn questioned why the city should grant an extension when the delays weren't caused by the city, noting that contractors should be held to their commitments. No motion was made to approve the change order, with council members expressing that they wanted to hold the contractor to the original timeline.

9. Parks – Local Option Sales Tax Next Steps

Amber provided an update on the potential Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) for funding park improvements. She explained that the Parks Commission had recommended pursuing this funding

mechanism, and at the September 18th workshop, a majority of council members had directed her to continue researching this option.

Amber shared that according to a University of Minnesota analysis, the 0.5% sales tax would generate about \$655,000 annually, with approximately 65% coming from non-residents. She also noted that Ehlers Financial had provided bonding scenarios based on this revenue estimate.

Mayor Carnahan stated her opposition to imposing additional taxes on residents, suggesting that fundraising, phased implementation, and use of existing funds would be preferable. She also expressed concern that the local legislators might not support carrying the legislation forward.

Council Member Hall suggested holding more public information sessions to address misconceptions about the proposed tax. Council Member Zahn argued that the tax would be a way to leverage the high tourist traffic to fund an important community asset that benefits visitors more than residents.

Council Member London opposed the sales tax, while Council Member Froehle supported it, noting the park's deteriorating condition and limited fundraising success to date.

Despite differing opinions, Mayor Carnahan suggested Amber continue her work and bring back a formal proposal in November after the upcoming business community feedback session.

10. Pay Application No. 6 for City Hall Remodel

Tom presented the final pay application for the city hall remodel in the amount of \$33,732.03 for work completed through September 3rd. He noted that everything was substantially complete and the payment would also release the retainage on the building.

Council Member Froehle moved to approve the final pay application number 6 for Hi Tech Guardian for work complete through 9/3/2025 in the amount of \$33,732.03 as presented. Council Member Hall seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

11. Public Works – Street Lighting at County Rd 18 & Middle Cullen

Tom explained that a citizen had requested a street light at the intersection of County Road 18 and Middle Cullen Road. Installation would cost \$1,500, with a monthly lease of \$12 if installed on the east side near the transformer, or \$26 if placed on the west side. He recommended installation on the east side.

Council Member Hall moved to approve installing the new street light on the east side of the street on Middle Cullen Road as presented. Council Member Froehle seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council Member Froehle voting "nay."

Council Member Zahn explained his opposition was based on concern about setting a precedent for adding street lights to more corners in the city.

12. Public Works – Approve Hire of Maintenance Technician

Tom reported that after interviewing several applicants for the maintenance technician position, they had selected Cole Johnson. He recommended starting Cole at grade 9, step 2, which would be \$26.56 per hour.

Council Member Zahn moved to approve the hire of Cole Johnson as presented. Council Member Froehle seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

13. Public Works – Consider State Hwy Noise Barrier

Tom explained that the state periodically approaches the city about installing noise barriers along Highway 371, typically in business areas close to downtown. While funding is available, there would be a 10% match required from the city, which has not been budgeted. He noted that previous councils had rejected such proposals due to aesthetic concerns.

Council members unanimously agreed not to pursue the noise barriers, with Council Member Zahn calling them "preposterous" and Council Member Froehle expressing concerns they could become targets for vandalism.

14. Public Works – 2027 Street Improvements Survey Proposal

Tom presented a proposal to authorize WSN to perform survey work before snow arrives to advance planning for the 2027 road bond. Council Member Zahn noted this had been approved by the Public Works Committee.

Council Member Zahn moved to approve the survey proposal for the 2027 road bond as presented. Council Member Hall seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously.

15. Public Works – Septic Easement and Maintenance Agreement 21844 Tall Timbers

Tom explained that due to changes in how the state Department of Labor and Industry inspects STEP station installations, the city now requests new sewer connections provide a clear easement for the STEP station and line going out to the street. This provides a workaround that has helped at least one applicant avoid a more expensive installation.

Council Member Hall moved to approve the septic easement as presented by Tom. Council Member London seconded the motion. Motion carried with Council Member Zahn abstaining.

16. Public Access – Brett Cote

Brett Cote, a resident at 4426 East Linden Boulevard, expressed concerns about changes at the Grandview Lodge waterfront that he believed impeded public access and rights-of-way to the water. He noted that East and West Linden are old residential communities with public streets and platted public water easements. Cote requested that the council work with Grandview to ensure year-round public access, particularly off of Woodward Street.

17. Planning & Zoning Assistance Discussion

Interim City Administrator Wentler reported that, following council direction, she had contacted Crow Wing County about possible planning and zoning assistance, but the county does not currently have capacity to support the city. Sourcewell indicated they could help with ordinances, but not until late 2026. Scott Saehr, who has worked with the city in the past, expressed interest in helping with ordinances, processes, and policies if given clear direction from the council.

18. Economic Development Authority Discussion

Mayor Carnahan suggested scheduling a workshop to learn more about Economic Development Authorities from experts like Tyler Glynn, who heads such organizations in other cities. Council agreed to find a date in December for the workshop, with Council Member Froehle noting he would be unavailable for all of January.

19. Performance Evaluations Discussion

Mayor Carnahan explained that the city's labor attorney had advised that performance evaluations are a best practice even without a full-time administrator. The proposal was to have the full council conduct evaluations with department heads, with department heads then evaluating their own staff. The evaluations would be scheduled for November and December in closed sessions.

I. Council/Liaison Reports

There were no reports from Mayor Carnahan or council members.

J. Announcements & Upcoming Meeting Dates

The upcoming meeting dates were noted as listed on the agenda.

K. Adjourn

Council Member Zahn moved to adjourn the meeting. Council Member Froehle seconded the motion. Motion carried unanimously. The meeting adjourned at approximately 9:02 PM.

Respectfully Submitted,


Jennifer Carnahan, Mayor


Maggi Wentler, Interim City Administrator

