



**Meeting of the City Council
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Tuesday, February 17, 2026**

Members Present: Mayor John Dietz, Councilmember Cory Grupa, Councilmember J. Brian Calva, Councilmember Jennifer Wagner

Members Absent: Councilmember Mike Beyer

Staff Present: City Administrator Cal Portner, City Attorney Jared Shepherd, Community Development Director Zack Carlton, Senior Planner Chris Leeseberg, Business Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Joe Stremcha, Senior Communications Coordinator Starr Sorheim, Liquor Operations Manager Joe Audette, Liquor Store Manager - Northbound Megan Knopik, and Sr. Administrative Assistant Katie Porath

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 6:25 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. CONSIDER AGENDA

Moved by Councilmember Calva and seconded by Councilmember Wagner to approve the agenda. Motion carried 4-0.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Councilmember Grupa and seconded by Councilmember Wagner to approve the following consent items as outlined in their respective staff reports. Motion carried 4-0.

4.1 February 2, 2026 Minutes

4.2 January 28, 2026 Special Council Meeting Minutes

4.3 Check Register

4.4 Falcon Patch Trailer

4.5 Resolution 26-12 Commitment of Local Match to Northstar Business Park Infrastructure Project

4.6 Resolution 26-11 Support a Business Application for the Minnesota Job Creation Fund (CDI)

4.7 Resolution 26-10: Administration of the Wetland Conservation Act (WCA), Floodplain, Shoreland, and Buffer Programs

4.8 Release of Easements: Chambers Investment Company — 12785 Elk Lake Road NW

5. OPEN FORUM

No one appeared for Open Forum.

6. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

6.1 City of Elk River Volunteer of the Month

Mayor Dietz presented the February Volunteer of the Month award to Rhea Beaudry. He highlighted the following:

- Facilitates a volunteer group called Crafters for Christ
- Volunteers for Second Harvest Food Ministry
- Distributes clothing and household goods for The Storehouse
- Serves as a monitor at Alliance Christian Academy

6.2 Advisory Board Candidate Interviews

Council interviewed the applicants for various advisory board reappointments.

Mayor Dietz stated that Item 7.6 on the agenda would be continued to the March 16, 2026, City Council meeting if anyone was present to speak about this item.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

7.1 Conditional Use Permit: Private Kennel, Ruth Dutchak - 11799 191st Ave NW

The staff report was presented.

Councilmember Wagner asked to strike Condition 3, which stated, "No more than two (2) animals per supervisor shall be allowed outside the fenced area."

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Grupa to approve a Conditional Use Permit for a private kennel with the following conditions to satisfy the standards set forth in Section 30-654:

- I. The Conditional Use Permit is for a maximum of 5 dogs over 20 pounds each (10 Animal Units).**

-
2. **All animals shall be properly licensed and maintained in accordance with city regulations.**
 3. **The removal of animal waste shall comply with Section 10-5.**
 4. **Outdoor kennel structures or runs are not permitted.**
 5. **No dog designated as dangerous or potentially dangerous is allowed to be kept on site, and the keeping of such a dog shall be grounds for revocation of the permit.**
 6. **The existing fence shall be maintained in good working condition. Supplemental containment measures may be used as needed.**
 7. **Failure to comply with the conditions of approval or applicable city code requirements may result in enforcement action, including revocation of the Conditional Use Permit.**
 8. **The Conditional Use Permit is for the five (5) existing dogs at the time of the application, and not future dogs totaling more than six (6) animal units.**

Motion carried 4-0.

7.2 Interim Use Permit: Three-Unit Rental in a Single-Family District (extension), Sogdiana - 732 Vernon Ave. NW

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz asked if there are any rules about how long an Interim Use Permit (IUP) should last. He asked if limiting the length of time for this IUP would set a precedent. City Attorney Shepherd responded that an IUP, conceptually, has an end date, and the end date is dependent on the conditions.

Mayor Dietz opened the public hearing. There being no one to speak on this matter, Mayor Dietz closed the public hearing.

Moved by Councilmember Calva and seconded by Councilmember Grupa to approve the Interim Use Permit with the following conditions:

1. **The Interim Use Permit shall terminate February 17, 2029, or when the property changes ownership, whichever occurs first.**
2. **The building shall be inspected by the city's Building Official and Fire Marshal to verify compliance with all building and fire codes.**
3. **The Interim Use Permit will be recorded against the property to put any future buyers on notice that the Interim Use Permit will not run with the property.**
4. **The structure shall be returned to a single-family home prior to sale or when the Interim Use Permit terminates.**
5. **The applicant shall submit a deposit in the amount of \$5,000 to ensure compliance with the Interim Use Permit conditions.**
6. **The applicant shall provide documentation that each tenant received a letter indicating the Interim Use Permit will expire on February 17, 2029, and the structure will be converted back to a single-family residential district.**
7. **No additional Interim Use Permits (extensions) will be granted for a similar use on this property extending beyond February 17, 2029.**

Motion carried 4-0.

7.3 Conditional Use Permit: Automobile Sales, Highway 10 Auto Sales - 17323 Highway 10

The staff report was presented.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Calva to approve the Conditional Use Permit with the following conditions to satisfy the standards set forth in Section 30-654:

1. **The Conditional Use Permit shall not be recorded until all conditions have been completed.**
2. **The applicant and/or property owner must apply for all required commercial building, electrical, plumbing, and/or mechanical permits before any associated activities can occur.**
3. **The building shall be inspected by the city's Building Official and Fire Marshal to verify compliance with all building and fire codes.**
4. **The number of motor vehicle dealers shall be limited to one (1).**
5. **An amendment to this Conditional Use Permit will be required for additional dealers.**
6. **A minimum of eight (8) off-street parking stalls shall be maintained on-site and always remain available for customer and employee use.**
7. **No outdoor storage of vehicles not for sale (except employees and customers), parts, equipment, or materials is permitted.**
8. **Motor vehicle repairs and/or body work are prohibited.**
9. **The applicant and/or property owner shall ensure that any vehicle stored outside does not leak fuels or other hazardous materials onto the ground.**
10. **All regulations related to storage, disposal, and spill control for automobile fluids need to be followed.**

Motion carried 4-0.

7.4 Ordinance Amendment and Conditional Use Permit: Educational Use, Good Shepherd Lutheran High School — 630 Freeport Ave NW

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz stated that, due to the absence of Councilmember Beyer, the public hearing would be continued to the March 2, 2026, City Council meeting.

Mayor Dietz opened the public hearing.

Melissa Lamkin, 16797 County Rd 83, Director at Good Shepherd High School, stated the school is operating as a 501(c)(3), Category A. She commented that, besides the space the school is proposing to occupy, there is currently 60,000 square feet of available retail space sitting available in Elk River. She emphasized that the students help in the community. She stated the school proposes to have a gym, which may increase youth opportunities in the community.

Elijah Wilson, 19663 Elgin Cir NW, is a student at Good Shepherd Lutheran High School and stated that it has changed his life.

Laura Vollkommer, 9165 185th Ave SE, Becker, commented that the school will draw people to Elk River and plans to send her children there in the future.

Ken Beaudry, 12696 223rd Ct NW, was in support of bringing the school to Elk River.

Kelly Matthews, 11820 196th Ave NW, asked why the school couldn't expand if there was open commercial real estate available. She commented that the former movie theater had limited employees, and the school would be employing more. She stated that her brother could have used a school like Good Shepherd Lutheran High School in the past.

Josh Burdick, 14655 89th St NE, Otsego, stated that people will drive a distance to attend a school. He stated that Spectrum School was not a comparison to Good Shepherd Lutheran High School.

Kelly Lamkin, 7495 269th Ave NW, St. Francis, Board of Director Chair and Director of Academics, clarified that their status as a 501(c)(3), Category A, classified their school as a "church or church-affiliated school." She stated that the school will exist somewhere, and it should exist in Elk River.

Shawn Logan, 14247 37th St, Clear Lake, has two daughters who have graduated from or attend Good Shepherd Lutheran High School.

Mayor Dietz restated that the item would return to the March 2, 2026, City Council meeting, and the public hearing would remain open for further comments. Councilmember Calva thanked the group for their attendance.

Moved by Councilmember Grupa and seconded by Councilmember Calva to continue the public hearing to the March 2, 2026, City Council meeting. Motion carried 4-0.

7.5 Ordinance Amendment 26-04: One-Year Moratorium on Permitting Multifamily Structures

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz clarified that the moratorium did not just apply to apartments. Mr. Carlton confirmed that it applied to all multifamily housing.

Councilmember Wagner commented that the Planning Commission meeting included discussion of the FAST study and the removal of the light rail trail from the area. She commented that Elk River needs housing for all levels of workers in the city and that multifamily housing has a place in the city.

Mayor Dietz added that the last housing study revealed a need for 55+ housing that has not yet been met.

Moved by Councilmember Calva and seconded by Councilmember Grupa to adopt Ordinance 26-04 establishing a one-year moratorium on the issuance of building and land use permits for multifamily buildings. Motion carried 4-0.

7.6 Plat of Heinen Estates, April Heinen - 21446 Brook Rd NW

Mayor Dietz opened the public hearing.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Calva to open the public hearing, receive comments, and continue the public hearing until March 16, 2026. Motion carried 4-0.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

8.1 Amend the Park Improvement Fund CIP

The staff report was presented.

Moved by Councilmember Grupa and seconded by Councilmember Calva to amend the Park Improvement Fund Capital Improvement Plan to remove the Ridgewood East basketball court and replace it with sod in 2026. Motion carried 4-0.

8.2 Advisory Board Appointments

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Calva to reappoint Brian Balabon and Michael Westgaard to the Community Event Center Commission, Lance Lindberg and Gavin Tuckey to the Heritage Preservation Commission, Joy Goodwin and Michael Niziolek to the Parks and Recreation Commission, Dennis Booth to the Planning Commission, and Nick Zerwas to the Utilities Commission, for terms expiring February 28, 2029. Motion carried 4-0.

9. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Councilmember Calva and seconded by Councilmember Wagner to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 4-0.

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:26 p.m. Mayor Dietz called the work session to order at 7:32 p.m.

10. WORK SESSION

10.1 Powered by Nature Brand

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz asked if the Powered by Nature brand logo appeared on any billboards. Councilmember Wagner responded that it can be found on wayfinding signage and a water tower.

Mayor Dietz asked Mr. Portner to find out when the water tower was due for repainting. Ms. Sorheim stated that the city would go through its stock of envelopes containing the old logo.

Councilmember Calva asked Ms. Sorheim for her perspective on Elk River. She stated at conferences that she finds that people mention the "where city and country meet" concept rather than the Powered by Nature branding.

10.2 Northbound Liquor Store Design Update

The staff report was presented. Mr. Stremcha gave an overview of the store layout, exterior, and interior design elements.

Mayor Dietz asked about landscaping. Mr. Stremcha responded that landscaping would primarily occur in high-visibility areas around the pond. Councilmember Wagner asked if a fountain could be added to the retaining pond.

Mr. Stremcha explained that, with the new storage areas, a larger supply could be ordered and potentially receive a bulk rate discount.

Councilmember Calva asked if a patio could be added to the rented portion of the building in case a higher-end restaurant wanted to use the space. Mr. Stremcha stated it was possible, as long as the utility crews could access the utility box located near the area.

Mayor Dietz asked who was responsible for finding someone to lease the spot. Mr. Portner stated that various staff would work together once the project was closer to completion.

Councilmember Wagner did not feel that the mid-century design elements were a good fit for Elk River. She felt there were too many colors, did not like the arches in the interior of the store, and, overall, felt the design would become dated quickly.

Councilmember Grupa asked that Councilmember Beyer have an opportunity to comment on the design decisions.

Mayor Dietz asked for a timeline of construction. Mr. Stremcha said the goal was to break ground in early summer.

Mr. Stremcha stated the design plan would be refined and come back to the Council.

10.3 Universal Changing Table Initiative

Councilmember Calva presented information on Universal changing tables, which provide an inclusive option for older children through adults. He commented that the city could consider adding a Universal changing table to future bathrooms, and grant funding is available.

11. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Mr. Portner stated that the aerial fire truck is nearing final inspection, and the city is considering an interfund loan from the Fewer or Building Reserve Fund. This loan will come to the Council as a resolution. Mayor Dietz asked what would happen to the current aerial fire truck. Mr. Portner responded that the current fire truck will be auctioned.

Councilmember Wagner asked about progress on the King Ave parking lot. She added that the plan should consider adding more trees to the interior of the lot. Councilmember Calva commented that additional trees were difficult for plow drivers to navigate in winter.

Councilmember Grupa asked about adding a drop box for abandoned children to the new fire station design. This item still needs legislative approval.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Grupa to adjourn the meeting of City Council. Motion carried 4-0.

The meeting adjourned at 8:21 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Katie Porath.

12. INFORMATION

12.1 January Financials



John J. Dietz, Mayor



Calvin P. Portner, Interim Deputy City Clerk