



Heritage Preservation Commission

Thursday, March 19, 2026

5:00 PM

Elk River City Hall

Regular Meeting Agenda

Uppertown Conference Room

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
3. CONSIDER AGENDA
4. CONSIDER MINUTES
 - 4.1 DRAFT Minutes - January 15, 2026
5. GENERAL BUSINESS

Items in which the information is presented by city staff or consultants, then deliberation and action occur. General Business items are not opportunities to receive or provide public input. However, the presiding officer may, at its sole discretion, solicit public feedback.

 - 5.1 Jackson Street Water Tower Historic Site and Walking Tour
 - 5.2 Vernon Cemetery 150th Celebration
6. STAFF UPDATES
7. MOTION TO ADJOURN



**Meeting of the Heritage Preservation
Commission
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Thursday, January 15, 2026**

Members Present: Commissioner Linda Campbell, Commissioner Gavin Tuckey, Commissioner Zachary Griffiths, Commissioner Jayne Dietz, Commissioner Lance Lindberg

Members Absent: None.

Staff Present: Community Development Director Zack Carlton, Recording Secretary Katie Porath

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 6:02 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. CONSIDER AGENDA

Moved by Commissioner Tuckey and seconded by Commissioner Dietz to approve the agenda. Motion carried 5-0.

4. CONSIDER MINUTES

Moved by Commissioner Griffiths and seconded by Commissioner Dietz to approve the following consent items as outlined in their respective staff reports. Motion carried 5-0.

4.1 DRAFT Minutes - November 20, 2025

5. GENERAL BUSINESS

5.1 Annual Election of Officers

Commissioner Campbell asked if the current Chair and Vice-Chair were willing to continue to serve.

Moved by Commissioner Campbell and seconded by Commissioner Dietz to nominate and elect Lance Lindberg as the Heritage Preservation Commission Chair for 2026. Motion carried 5-0.

Moved by Commissioner Tuckey and seconded by Commissioner Campbell to nominate and elect Zachary Griffiths as the Heritage Preservation Commission Vice Chair for 2026. Motion carried 5-0.

5.2 Annual Bylaw Review

Moved by Commissioner Dietz and seconded by Commissioner Campbell to amend the bylaws to move the meeting time from 6:00 p.m. to 5:00 p.m. Motion carried 5-0.

Moved by Commissioner Campbell and seconded by Commissioner Griffiths to approve the bylaws as amended. Motion carried 5-0.

5.3 Annual Scheduled Meeting Calendar

The Commission asked that the board and commission calendar be updated with the new meeting time.

Moved by Commissioner Dietz and seconded by Commissioner Griffiths to set the regular meeting schedule of the Heritage Preservation Commission for 2026 as amended. Motion carried 5-0.

5.4 Jackson Street Historic Water Tower Site

Mr. Carlton reviewed the signage for the Water Tower Site as well as three or four additional signs on the Historic Trail to potentially include the Downtown kiosk, Bailey Point Nature Preserve, William H. Houlton Conservation Area, and the Elk River Municipal Utilities (ERMU) site.

Commissioner Dietz asked if any of the content on the Water Tower Site signs could be interchangeable. Mr. Carlton stated one sign could rotate content.

The Commissioners brainstormed ideas for the park signs, timeline, and historic trail signs by writing on post-it notes and grouping the ideas by theme on the wall.

The Commission arrived at four themes for the signs including early history, industry, notable people, and history of the water tower. In addition, William H. Houlton Conservation Area signage could include information on agriculture and native plants, the ERMU sign could include the history of power and the atomic plant, and a sign at Bailey Point Nature Preserve could discuss Native American presence.

Councilmember Calva liked the idea of interviewing Elk River residents and featuring their story on the site sign. Commissioner Campbell suggested adding a QR code linked to an audio interview. Commissioner Tuckey commented that some people find QR codes gimmicky and difficult to use, however, in this case, it could be valuable to link to past interview content. Chair Lindberg agreed that not everyone knows how to use a QR code.

Councilmember Calva discussed the ferry that used to go across the river and the stories surrounding that time in history. Chair Lindberg shared some of the history of the ferry in Elk River and added that there used to be two ferries.

Mr. Carlton asked the Commission to continue to consider the content for the signs before the March HPC meeting and add any details.

Mr. Carlton reminded the Commission of the Forum 2026: Preservation Currents event held by the National Alliance of Preservation Commissions on July 24-26, 2026 in Minneapolis. He encouraged the Commissioners to consider attending and stated registrations would be shared when officially launched.

Commissioner Dietz added that the Vernon Cemetery is celebrating their 150th Anniversary this year and asked if the HPC would like to help.

Chair Lindberg asked if a historic walking trail sign should be included at Handke Center. Mr. Carlton suggested athletics for content.

Commissioner Campbell asked if there would be information on the historic walking trail located at the Water Tower Site. Mr. Carlton suggested a separate component in the park.

6. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Moved by Commissioner Campbell and seconded by Commissioner Dietz to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 6:59 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Katie Porath.

Lance Lindberg, Chair

Jolene Richter, Deputy City Clerk



Request for Action

To
Heritage Preservation Commission

Item Number
5.1

Meeting Date
March 19, 2026

Prepared By
Zack Carlton, Community Development Director

Item Description
Jackson Street Water Tower Historic Site and Walking Tour

Reviewed by
Katie Porath

Action Requested
Continue to discuss sign content and further refine the scope of each location.

Background/Discussion

During the January 15, 2026, meeting, the commission conducted a brainstorming session to begin planning historical content for the proposed interpretive signs. During this meeting, staff would like to further refine the content beyond a list and begin to formulate a narrative. The commission can discuss the different signs as a group, but there may be an opportunity for commissioners to choose a topic of interest and prepare a draft of the content.

Looking beyond the Jackson Ave site, the content begins to explore topics for other areas in the city. Some of these kiosks are in place (downtown, Bailey Point, and Houlton) and would give the commission an opportunity to complete some of the historical content this year.

The summary from our last meeting is attached.

Financial Impact
None

Mission/Policy/Goal
Timeless.

Attachments
I. Brainstorm Session Signs 01-15-2026

The Elk River Vision

A welcoming community with revolutionary and spirited resourcefulness, exceptional service, and community engagement that encourages and inspires prosperity



Sign 1 Beginning

- History of ER
- Native tribes
- First Settlers
- Year 1 Elk River City
- Transportation Ox Cart, Trails
- Ox Cart Trail
- Orono-Elk River Merge
- Early European Explorers
- Welcome to the Historic Water Tower Park
- First Permanent Residents/Trading Posts
- Role of the River
- Hungarian Farming Community

Sign 2 Industries

- First Industries
- Fur Trade/Trapping
- Fur traders
- The river ferry
- River's role in development
- Highway and Railroad construction – Elk River becomes part of the interconnected web of westward expansion
- Immigrant history French? Hungarian? Businesses owned by these groups
- First railroad Elk River Lowertown
- History of hitching posts
- Local business proximity to downtown spotlight – either currently open (i.e. Sunshine or “Gone but never forgotten”) (Daddy-o’s, ER Meats, Don’s Bakery, Kemper Drug)
- First Mills
- Logging

Sign 3 Notable People

- Notable settlers
- Famous Authors, Politicians, Athletes, Multi Generational Businesses
- Feature notable fire chief/fighters
- Veteran Honor Board – ER Residents, Historic or Current, who were active in a warzone
- Cemeteries (Civil War Veterans)
- Most Early Settlers from New England
- Women in ER
- Rotation/Seasonal Sign Idea – Interview a long-time resident about their time in Elk River and dedicate a section of the signage to their experience

Sign 4 Water Tower

- Why was the water tower built?
- Story of first fire station/dept.
- History/Impact of fire
- History of the water tower – dimensions, height, weight, width
- How many gallons of water does the tower hold? How tall is the water tower?
- The fires, obviously
- Fire Prevention
- Businesses N. of tracks Burn
- Constant Fires
- History of Fires in ER Fire dept developing
- How does a water tower work? Schematic plan of tower
- Role of the water tower How it works
- Water Tower 1920?

Timeline

- 1840s – Government road marker it to ER
- 1850s, steamboat serves regularized
- 1860s – railroad to ER
- Battles of 1772 and 1773
- First telephone lines
- Combination of Village and Town
- City and Township Merge
- 1957 First Lindbergs arrive
- First Electricity
- Arrival and Impact of Rail
- Establishment of town site
- Native American Battle 1770s
- The First Bank Bank of Elk River 1885? (guess)
- E.R. Incorporated as Village 1880
- 1st Church 1870 “Union”
- Elk River Platted 1855
- City Expanded 1978
- Treaty of 1837 opens land from St. Croix to Mississippi for future settlers
- Dakota/Ojibwe boundary line drawn through Sherburne County in 1825
- 1805-'06 Z. Pike travels up the Mississippi and comments on the elk by the river here
- 1853 Benton County Agricultural Society established
- 1848 or '49 Ard Godfrey arrives at St. Paul to assist in mill construction
- 1850 or '51 Oliver Kelley arrives at 'Itasca', his speculative town within future ER
- The Louisiana Purchas of 1803 makes the future site of ER nominally US territory
- Became a city 1974
- 1851 first land patent issued in ER
- 1820s Pine from ER floated down to soldiers building Fort Snelling
- Orono 1855

Other Historic Trail Signs

ERMU

- First Active Plant
- History of Energy – Atomic
- Nuclear History and the phasing-out of the power plant as a result of “Radioactive Mania”
- History of Energy – Water Power
- Atomic Power Plant
- History of the dam, lake, rivers

Houlton

- Agriculture
- Recognize native plants and animals with pictures
- Orono (Uppertown)
- Restoration/Conservation
- Biodiversity

Bailey Point

- Native American Presence – Key events, battles, any ritual/meaning of places

Downtown

- _____

Uncategorized

- Hockey NHL Players
- Schools Handke/Stadium Pit
- Shameless Plug for HPC Contact Info – “Have a Topic we might’ve missed? Let us know!”
- Define a Runnel
- Selection of city name, river name, school mascots – transition to talking about local sports? Star football champs?
- Intersection of roads and rivers
- Explaining the types of native plants Elk River has and the ways in which they benefit the local ecosystem



Request for Action

To
Heritage Preservation Commission

Item Number
5.2

Meeting Date
March 19, 2026

Prepared By
Zack Carlton, Community Development Director

Item Description
Vernon Cemetery 150th Celebration

Reviewed by
Katie Porath

Action Requested
Discuss volunteer opportunities for the Vernon Cemetery Celebration.

Background/Discussion

On June 20, 2026, the Vernon Cemetery Association will be celebrating their 150th year. The event will be held from 1:00 to 3:00 p.m. and the association is looking for volunteers to help with the event. They are looking for help with event operations, directing traffic, and a few more people who are willing to do a living history act about people who are buried in Vernon Cemetery.

Please consider volunteering for this great event.

Financial Impact

None

Mission/Policy/Goal

Reflect the culture of citizens and what is important.
Timeless.

Attachments

None

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