



**Meeting of the City Council
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Monday, March 2, 2026**

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

Members Absent: None

Staff Present: City Administrator Cal Portner, City Attorney Richard Hansen, Senior Planner Chris Leeseberg, Business Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Joe Stremcha, Engineering Project Manager Ryan Sandhoefner, and Deputy Clerk Jolene Richter.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 6:54 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. CONSIDER AGENDA

Mayor Dietz added Item 8.3 State Flag and Item 8.4 Student Athlete Recognition.

Councilmember Beyer added that he will be abstaining from Item 7.2 due to conflict of interest and direction from the City Attorney.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Grupa to approve the amended agenda. Motion carried 5-0.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

Moved by Councilmember Beyer and seconded by Councilmember Calva to approve the following consent items as outlined in their respective staff reports. Motion carried 5-0.

4.1 February 17, 2026, Meeting Minutes

4.2 Check Register

4.3 Approve Collective Bargaining Agreement 26-07 with LELS #231 Police Officers

4.4 Yale Street Sanitary Sewer Backup Depreciation Claims, Resolution 26-17

4.5 Resolutions 26-13 and 26-14 Amending Purchase Agreements Related to Coborn's Land Acquisition

4.6 ECT Agreement 26-08

4.7 Hire Food and Beverage Supervisor/Lead Cook

4.8 Hire Deputy Chief of Training

5. OPEN FORUM

Gary Tonsager, 11156 193rd Ave NW, is advocating to fly the old state flag for several reasons, as stated in his handout, and would like Elk River to consider a similar resolution.

5.1 Open Forum Handout Added to the Council Packet

6. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

6.1 City and County Prosecutor Annual Update

Prosecuting Attorney Scott Baumgartner and County Attorney Dawn Nyhus gave their annual update.

Councilmember Wagner asked if the DWI numbers distinguish a difference between alcohol and cannabis consumption. Mr. Baumgartner stated that the specific number does not, but he can get them a more detailed breakdown of the numbers.

Councilmember Calva asked what the field test is for marijuana, and how to tell if they are drunk or high. Mr. Baumgartner stated that DRE testing (Drug Recognition Expert testing) is conducted by trained personnel who observe, acknowledge, or identify certain patterns of substance use, but at this time, there are no roadside tests available.

6.2 Heritage Preservation Commission Candidate Interview

The Council interviewed Elizabeth Balmanno.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Calva to appoint Elizabeth Balmanno to the Heritage Preservation Commission with a term ending 2/29/28. Motion carried 5-0.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

7.1 Ordinance 26-05: Amending the 2026 Master Fee Schedule
Resolution 26-15: Summary Publication of Ordinance

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

Moved by Councilmember Grupa and seconded by Councilmember Beyer to adopt Ordinance 26-05 approving the amended 2026 Master Fee Schedule. Motion carried 5-0.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Grupa to adopt Resolution 26-15 for summary publication of the ordinance. Motion carried 5-0.

7.2 Ordinance Amendment 26-06 and Conditional Use Permit: Educational Use, Good Shepherd Lutheran High School - 630 Freeport Ave NW

Councilmember Beyer excused himself from the meeting for the duration of Item 7.2 due to a conflict of interest.

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz opened the public hearing.

Melissa Lamkin, 16797 County Rd 83, Director at Good Shepherd Lutheran (GSL) High School, is hoping to fill the theater space with life and build their character in Christ. She stated it is important to understand that they do not receive state funding; therefore, the families pay tuition, and with that said, they will not grow as fast as a public school. She thanked the Council for the opportunity to grow and said that they are ready to be part of the Elk River community.

Cory Whiting, 26400 25th St W, Zimmerman, gave the Council a handout on why GSL is different than Spectrum and went through those differences.

Laura Vollkommer, 9165 185th Ave, Becker, would like their kids to attend a Christian School. Her kids currently attend a different school in Elk River. She stated that since her kids go to school in Elk River, she spends a lot of her time in Elk River, she spends her money in Elk River, and she really hopes GSL will be in Elk River because she really likes this town. She stated that wherever this school ends up, she will drive to.

Elijah Wilson, 19663 Elgin Cir NW, compared his experiences between Spectrum and GSL. Spectrum taught him what deception looks like, and GSL taught him what integrity looks like.

Chelsea Weaver, 7465 269th St, St. Francis, Associate Principal at Crown Christian School, explained reasons why GSL would be a good fit for the location.

Selena Fischer, 21440 South Lake George Dr NW, Cedar, explained why GSL would be a benefit for the Elk River community.

Adam Price, 29390 100th St, Zimmerman, building owner, stated that he talked to the other tenants and stated that the other tenants do not have any issues with the Christian school being in the building. He also stated that GSL is recognized as a religious institute by the state, and a religious institute should be an allowed use in the building.

Councilmember Grupa asked if they would need to show proof of being a religious institute. He asked

about the difference between religious institutes and schools.

Attorney Richard Hansen stated that, looking at the situation, it would be considered a school.

Councilmember Calva asked what if they had a church service, then they were dismissed, and the students went into classrooms, how would that be viewed? Attorney Richard Hansen stated that there is no clear answer on that, but for the purpose of a land use situation, the school would not be considered a religious institution.

Mayor Dietz closed the public hearing.

Mayor Dietz stated he commended them for the group's respect for the Council and the way they went about the situation.

Mayor Dietz stated that this was a hard situation, but one of his jobs is to be fair and consistent with his decisions. He explained that two years ago someone approached him about putting in a Christian Elementary school and was told no per the zoning ordinance. Therefore, he will be voting no.

Councilmember Grupa appreciated the group as well and stated that this was a difficult decision. He continued to say he also told the school two years ago no, and he will need to say no to this as well.

Councilmember Calva explained that he is a yes vote and sees the opportunity for a faith-based high school that would shine. He respects the other council members for being in the position they were two years ago; however, he feels like there is an opportunity to go a different direction than two years ago, and an opportunity to take a look at it again and say what they could do differently.

Councilmember Wagner reiterated that they went through the process correctly and respected that. She explained that she talked to the owner of the chiropractic office about the situation to see their thoughts. She continued to explain that when she looks at this in its own merit and thinks about what it could mean for the area, the area currently is missing the spark, the people, and the energy. She is in favor of the school because she thinks it would bring spark back to that area, and would be voting yes. She thinks it would be good for the economic development of the area.

Attorney Richard Hansen explained that the statute states that, with a tie vote, a motion to approve would fail.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Calva to adopt Ordinance 26-06 adding Educational Institutions as a Conditional Use in the MU-ERP zoning district, Sec. 30-1583.

Motion failed 2-2, with Councilmember Beyer abstaining and Mayor Dietz and Councilmember Grupa voting nay.

Moved by Mayor Dietz and seconded by Councilmember Grupa to bring back the facts of findings for denial of the CUP at the next meeting. Motion carried 4-0.

Councilmember Grupa asked the group if they had looked all over and found nothing. **Clarie Roberts, 5311 South Park Circle, Savage - Colliers International**, stated that this is the only location that fits for the school. She stated that she has been in commercial real estate for over 30 years, and it is ever-changing, and cities need to adapt in order to keep up with the everchanging just like the mission

statement states. She stated that she thinks the other group that was denied in the past would understand and agree to the change.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

8.1 Intergovernmental Fund Loan Resolution 26-16 - Aerial Fire Truck

The staff report was presented.

The Council agreed to the 20-year loan.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Calva to approve Resolution 26-16, an interfund loan (Building Reserve to Fire) for an aerial apparatus for \$2,058,746 with a amortization schedule at 4% interest. Motion carried 5-0.

8.2 Discuss Work Session Items

There were no items added to the work session topics.

8.3 State Flag

Moved by Councilmember Calva and seconded by Councilmember Beyer to bring Item 8.3 State Flag to the March 16, 2026, Council meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

8.4 Student Athlete Recognition

Mayor Dietz explained that a girl from Zimmerman scored 1,000 points in basketball and received a certificate and recognition, and recently, a girl from Elk River scored 1,000 points in basketball as well, but was not recognized by the Council. He thinks every sport should be recognized for the equivalent of scoring 1,000 points in basketball for its specific sport. He would like to talk to the coaches to figure out what the equivalent would be for the various sports and have a recognition at the end of the school year, in either late June or early July, to recognize those individuals. The Council agreed that it would be a good idea.

9. COUNCIL LIAISON UPDATES

9.1 Council Liaison Updates

The Councilmembers provided updates as outlined in the respective advisory board's minutes.

10. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING

Moved by Councilmember Grupa and seconded by Councilmember Wagner to adjourn the meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

The regular meeting adjourned at 8:13 p.m. Mayor Dietz called the work session to order at 8:22 p.m.

11. WORK SESSION

11.1 Northbound Liquor Store Design Update

The staff report was presented.

Mr. Stremcha proposed a city restaurant next to the liquor store. The Council discussed the restaurant option and agreed that they did not want to get into the business of a restaurant.

The Council agreed to move forward with the Monolithic Approach Rendering - C.

11.2 Downtown Parking Lot Final Design

This item was moved from 11.4 to 11.2

The staff report was presented.

The Council directed staff to move forward with what was proposed.

Councilmember Wagner left at 8:42 p.m.

11.3 FT Center West Parking Lot Expansion

This item was moved from 11.5 to 11.3.

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz asked what the contributions of ISD 728 would be. Mr. Stremcha explained that they would be asking ISD 728 for 25% of the project if ISD 728 wants the project to stop at the concrete plaza, but if they do include the whole area, it would be about 33% cost share of the project.

Mr. Stremcha asked the Council if the school said no, would the Council want to move forward with the project? Mayor Dietz asked at what cost. Mr. Stremcha stated that they would need to go through the bidding process.

Councilmember Calva asked how they would pay for it. Mr. Stremcha stated that the Building Reserve Fund over 10 years.

The Council agreed to direct staff to go for the full parking lot and still move forward if the school says no.

11.4 Truck Use of Engine Brakes

This item was moved from 11.2 to 11.4.

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz asked if the police department would enforce no engine braking.

Mr. Portner stated that we would need to change the ordinance in order to enforce it and explained

that the challenge is that it is an MnDOT highway.

Councilmember Calva stated that he is not interested in enforcing it, but rather lowering the frequency with which it would happen by putting up signs.

The Council directed staff to bring back a formal resolution for signs that say No Jake Braking.

11.5 Street/Signal Light Utility

This item was moved from 11.3 to 11.5.

The staff report was presented.

The Council directed staff to raise the franchise fee by \$1 and bring it back to the Council for approval.

12. MOTION TO ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 9:05 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Jolene Richter.



John J. Dietz, Mayor



Jolene Richter, Deputy City Clerk