



**Meeting of the City Council
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Monday, December 1, 2025**

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, Business Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Joe Stremcha, Fire Chief Mark Dickinson, Assistant Fire Chief Joe Libor, Deputy Chief Casey Neumann; Police Chief David Kuhnly, Building Official Mark Pistulka, Building Permit Technician Ellen Krueger; Human Resources Manager Lauren Wipper, Finance Manager Lori Stich, IT Manager Seth Calvin, IT Specialist Carl Munzke; Environmental Services and Projects Specialist Joe Hale, Front Desk Receptionist Joan Shea; Public Works Supervisor Mitch Litfin; Liquor Operations Manager Joe Audette; Liquor Store Manager-Northbound Megan Knopik, Cannabound Store Manager Jaquara Jackson, and Records Specialist Dawn Robertson.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 6:30 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. CONSIDER AGENDA

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

4. CONSENT AGENDA

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

4.1 November 03, 2025, Meeting Minutes

4.2 November 17, 2025 Minutes

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- 4.3 Check Register
 - 4.4 Resolution 25-73: Revoking Tobacco License for Elk River Tobacco LLC
 - 4.5 Resolution 25-74 Levying Special Assessments for Abatement of Ordinance Violations
 - 4.6 Resolution 25-75 Levying Special Assessments for Unpaid Garbage Service Fees
 - 4.7 Agreement 25-35: Sherburne County Assessment Services
 - 4.8 2026 - 2030 Capital Improvement Plan
 - 4.9 Housing and Redevelopment Authority Appointment
 - 4.10 Project Closeout: Rivers Edge Commons Park Renovations
 - 4.11 Agreement 25-36: Waste Management Services
 - 4.12 Authorize Grant Agreement 25-37 for Intensive Comprehensive Peace Officer Education and Training 2026
5. OPEN FORUM
- Mel Beaudry**, 21333 York St, stated that he is morally against the city being involved in the sale of marijuana products.
6. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION
- 6.1 Introduction of New Employees
- The Council welcomed various staff to the city.
- 6.2 Community Event Center Commission Candidate Interview
- The Council interviewed Brian Balabon for the Community Event Center Commission. Mr. Balabon stated that he was part of Hockey Day Minnesota and was inspired to join the Elk River Ice Arena Commission, which he served from 2014 until it dissolved. He wants to continue serving the city

through this commission.

When asked what he hopes to add to the commission, Mr. Balabon stated he wants to bring his experience; he helped build what the city has today and wants to continue to make it better for Elk River and the surrounding communities.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Beyer to appoint Brian Balabon to the Community Event Center Commission with the term expiring February 28, 2026. Motion carried 5-0.

6.3 Sister City Meeting Update

Mr. Portner played the recorded video of the declaration of the Sister City signing between Elk River and the Dnipropetrovsk region in Ukraine.

Councilmember Calva shared that he was surprised by some of the public's reaction to the Sister City designation; he wants to assure the public that it costs the city nothing. He explained it's a gesture to another country to encourage them. He feels that their experience operating a city during this time can teach us something.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

7.1 2026 Budget and Tax Levy Resolution 25-76

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz opened the public hearing

Vladmir Petrenko, 13790 196th Ave NW, asked for clarification on what some budgeting terminology meant. The Council explained to Mr. Petrenko that the County Assessor determines property tax increases. Mr. Portner explained the tax levy - tax rate. Mayor Dietz explained the budgeting process and the information on the tax statement that residents received in the mail.

Kathryn Kasper, 330 Norfolk Ave NW, expressed frustration with the tax increase on her rental property.

Mayor Dietz closed the public hearing.

Moved by Councilmember Grupa and seconded by Councilmember Calva to approve the 2026 General, Special Revenue, and Enterprise Fund budgets. Motion carried 5-0.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Beyer to adopt Resolution 25-73 authorizing the property tax levy for collection in 2026. Motion carried 5-0.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

8.1 Discuss Work Session Items

No items were added to the list.

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 Beyer and seconded by Councilmember Calva to adjourn the meeting of City Council. Motion carried 5-0.

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:36 p.m. Mayor Dietz called the work session to order at 7:43 p.m.

11. WORK SESSION

The Council invited Ken Beaudry to express his concerns.

Ken Beaudry 12696 226th Ct NW, shared that he is morally against the City being involved in the sale of marijuana products.

11.1 Cannabound Business Plan

Mr. Stremcha provided an overview of the initial state laws regarding cannabis licensing. The Council had questions about municipal ownership and private ownership of cannabis stores. Mr. Stremcha was able to clarify the Council's questions regarding the amount and types of licensing the city would be allowed. He reiterated that the sale of cannabis can occur whether it's private or municipal. He went on to share that with a municipal cannabis store, there can be high safety standards, strict identification for age requirement compliance, refusal of sale to intoxicated people, etc.

The Council acknowledged the work that has been put into planning and designing the cannabis store and is appreciative.

Councilmember Grupa shared that he is not comfortable with a city-owned cannabis store.

Councilmember Calva stated that he feels it's not about the money the city could potentially make, but it's about the soul of the city. The city should not have its hands on it, and constituents do not want a municipal cannabis store.

Councilmember Wagner noted she would like more education on the terms THC, CBD, Marijuana, cannabis, plant, and flower, etc. She would like education on the differences in types, chemicals, and

uses. Is a joint the same as cannabis? Is a gummy the same? Are there different types? How are they used? She stated that more education and knowledge would be beneficial in making an informed decision. She continued until there is more education and data, she is against a municipal cannabis store.

Councilmember Beyer stated he has never been for it 100% but didn't make it a personal decision. He explained that after talking with residents via phone calls, texts, and emails, he wants to represent the residents and step back from the municipal cannabis store and the liquor store.

Mayor Dietz praised the staff, stating his excitement at first was based on thoughts of revenue. He stated he feels Elk River residents do not want a municipal cannabis store and believes this process will take years to sort out at the state level, and does not want to be a part of it.

The Council directed staff to schedule a tour of the current Northbound Liquor Store.

11.2 Elk River Landfill Expansion EAW/EIS Comment Period

Mr. Hale shared with the Council that this is the first of three comment periods about the landfill expansion. This size of expansion triggers an Environmental Impact Statement outlining any additional studies that may need to be conducted. He shared the comments for consideration by the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency. Mr. Hale's comments cover concerns related to groundwater contamination, leachate, and traffic.

The Council agreed with the requirements suggested by the MPCA.

11.3 Vehicle Acquisition and Replacement Policy Manual

Mr. Litfin did not have a staff report to present to the Council.

The Council directed Mr. Litfin to add the replacement policy to the December 15 Council Meeting.

11.4 On-Call Fire Department Staff Compensation Plan Changes

Chief Mark Dickinson, Chief Libor, and Deputy Chief Neumann requested increased pay for Fire Captains and academy instructors. They explained the increases would not affect the budget; there have been recent leaves and a few fire academy drop-outs. The wages that were going to those positions would go to cover the cost of giving the Captains a raise.

Chief Libor stated that all wages for Fire Instructor pay are reimbursed by the State. The city can ask for a raise to reflect the cost of living, and that will be reimbursed as well. Chief Neumann shared with the Council that they want to be comparable to other fire academies and offer similar pay when recruiting instructors.

The Council is in favor of the proposed compensation increases.

11.5 Personnel Policy Manual Update

The staff report was presented.

Ms. Wipper noted some of the biggest changes to the policy manual are to the Paid Family Medical Leave. She continued and explained the following: "Top-off" is allowed, and employees can opt to use accrued time to get 100% pay, leave requests run concurrently, employment type definitions were modified, deadline for time sheet submissions, a section was added called staffing inventory, exempt employees are to request time off and get it approved before leave is taken, earned sick safety time and sick time have been combined, and added language on accrual for ESST for part-time and full-time employees.

The Council will review the changes, and the policy will be added to a consent agenda for approval.

12. CLOSED MEETING - LELS #589 COLLECTIVE BARGAINING AGREEMENT

Council Present: Mayor John Dietz, Councilmembers Cory Grupa, J. Brian Calva, Mike Beyer, and Jennifer Wagner

Staff Present: Police Chief David Kuhnly, City Administrator Cal Portner, and Records Specialist Dawn Robertson

Mayor Dietz read the following statement:

12.1 Statement to be read by the Mayor:

"The City Council will be closing the meeting pursuant to MN Statute Section 13D.03, Subdivision 1(b). The Council will discuss the city's labor negotiation strategy related to the city's negotiations with the Collective Bargaining Agreement, LELS 589."

12.2 Motion Calling Closed Meeting

Mayor Dietz called the closed meeting to order at 9:44 p.m.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Beyer to open the closed meeting. Motion carried 5-0.

12.3 Hold Closed Meeting

The closed meeting was held.

13. MOTION TO ADJOURN

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Calva to adjourn the closed meeting of City Council. Motion carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 10:03 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dawn Robertson.



John J. Dietz, Mayor



Justin Dunford, City Clerk