Meeting of the City Council
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Monday, July 20, 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, Senior Planner Chris Leeseberg, Business Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Joe Stremcha, Fire Chief Mark Dickinson, Fire Chief Jeff Smith, and Records Specialist Dawn Robertson

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER
Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 6:07 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 Grupa and seconded by Councilmember Calva to approve the following consent items as outlined in their respective staff reports. Motion carried 5-0.

4.1 Check Register

4.2 City and ISD 728 Ice Facility Use Agreement for ERHS

4.3 Resolution 26-49: Plat of Oakwater Ridge Yale Street, Capstone Homes - PID 75-00959-0111

4.4 Turnout Gear Dryer Award

4.5 Northbound Liquor Special Inspections and Testing Services Agreement with Braun Intertec

4.6 Post Employment Health Care Savings Plan

4.7 Remodel of Front Reception Area of Police Department

4.8 Greater MN Business Development Public Infrastructure Grant Agreement 2026-24

4.9 Fabulous Armadillos

4.10 Northbound Liquor - Call for Sale of Bonds

5. OPEN FORUM

Toya Akinde, 230 Xenia Ave, requested that the Council consider amending the city's current zoning ordinance regarding the keeping of chickens.

6. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

6.1 City of Elk River Volunteer of the Month

Mayor Dietz presented the Volunteer of the Month award to Jim Wood. He highlighted the following:

- Member of the Three Rivers Soccer Association Board
- Served as a soccer referee for 33 years
- Field Coordinator for Three Rivers Soccer Association
- Announcer for girls' hockey games since 1993
- Announcer for boys' hockey games since 2005
- Announced over 1,300 Elk River varsity games
- Usher at church for more than 40 years

6.2 Recognize Jeff Smith for his 38 years of employment with Elk River

Chief Dickinson spoke of Jeff Smith's service to the city. He stated that Mr. Smith has been positive and professional in his roles as Fire Prevention Specialist, Fire Educator, Inspector, Fire Permitting, and countless other responsibilities. The Council wished Jeff the best in his retirement.

6.3 Retirement Recognition: Mark Dickinson

Mr. Portner commended Fire Chief Mark Dickinson for his eight years of impactful service to the city. He shared notable accomplishments, including implementing an officer training program, cultivating a strong leadership team, assisting with upgrades to Fire Station #2, and leading planning efforts for Fire Station #3 and the new Fire Station #1.

6.4 Promotion of Chad Yess to Lieutenant

Mr. Yess was sworn in as Lieutenant by Mayor Dietz.

6.5 Introduce Park and Recreation Framework Plan - ISG Consultants

Mr. Stremcha introduced the ISG consultants that will be helping to facilitate the Park and Recreation Framework Plan. Clare Roth, one of the planners for ISG, shared that they are excited to help with the planning for Elk River.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

7.1 Conditional Use Permit: Bluff Impacts, Randall Tesdahl - 16892 Yale St NW

The staff report was presented.

Mayor Dietz opened the Public Hearing.

Kari Ziebell, 16864 Yale St NW, had questions about the proposed pathway width allowance. She stated she would like a soil study completed to be sure there won't be more erosion.

There was discussion about previous grievances between several neighbors and Mr. Tesdahl about his use of a motor vehicle on neighboring properties. Mr. Tesdahl stated he wants to use his own property for recreation and that is why he is requesting this Conditional Use Permit.

Mayor Dietz believes that with a professional engineer designing the pathway, no further erosion is expected. The Council agreed this pathway will not affect other properties and Mr. Tesdahl will use his own property.

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

1. **The applicant shall have the pathway professionally engineered and designed to ensure long-term slope stability and minimize erosion potential.**
2. **The pathway width shall accommodate safe access without encumbering ADA mobility requirements and shall not exceed 8 feet in width.**
3. **The pathway shall be designed with the flattest practical grade to reduce erosion and improve accessibility.**
4. **Existing vegetation shall be preserved to the greatest extent practicable, with only selective removal permitted as necessary for construction.**
5. **Appropriate erosion and sediment control measures shall be installed and maintained during construction.**
6. **Any plans, once finalized, shall be reviewed and approved by the City Environmental Department.**
7. **A grading permit shall be obtained prior to commencement of any land-disturbing activities.**
8. **Any retaining wall exceeding four (4) feet in height shall require a separate building permit and shall be designed by a Minnesota-licensed structural engineer.**
9. **The applicant shall comply with all recommendations and requirements of the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources, if applicable.**

10. **The Conditional Use Permit shall remain subject to all applicable City Code requirements and permit conditions.**

Motion carried 5-0.

7.2 Conditional Use Permit: Motor Vehicle Repair, Uval Butuc - 18332 Joplin St NW

The staff report was presented. Mr. Leeseberg noted that business had not started, but they were storing vehicles at the proposed business site. They cleaned it up when notified they were not allowed to do so without a Conditional Use Permit.

Councilmember Grupa stated he was concerned there would be more work happening than what they were asking for in their CUP; Mayor Dietz agreed.

The business owner stated they are working with the landlord and the management group to follow restrictions and reiterated that no work has been done within the building.

Councilmember Wagner expressed the importance that they understand the CUP could be revoked if they don't abide by the conditions.

The Council was in favor of approving the CUP with a 12th condition: **Landlord must assign 8 parking spots, one vehicle per spot.**

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Beyer 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 authorize only vehicle body work and no mechanical repair work, including engine, transmission, drivetrain, exhaust, or similar vehicle repairs, shall be conducted on the property.**
2. **All repair activities shall occur entirely within the enclosed building, and all openings in the building envelope shall be closed when repair activities are occurring.**
3. **The north side of the back parking lot shall be screened, as shown on the Staff Exhibit 7-20-2026, by a factory-finished six-foot high, 100 percent opaque fence.**
4. **The outdoor storage of operable vehicles shall be allowed only in the designated parking stalls leased to the applicant, one vehicle deep, and shall not be within any drive lanes.**
5. **No outdoor storage of inoperable (non-roadworthy vehicles), abandoned vehicles, vehicle parts, equipment, materials, or repair-related items shall be permitted.**
6. **This approval does not authorize motor vehicle sales, vehicle display for sale, or any other use not specifically approved herein.**
7. **All parking stalls on the property shall be striped in accordance with City Ordinance, Section 30-892.**
8. **The applicant and/or property owner shall ensure that any vehicle stored outside does not leak fuels or other hazardous materials onto the ground.**
9. **Paints, chemicals, or other hazardous materials shall be handled and disposed of in accordance with the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency (MPCA).**
10. **Schedule a site visit with the city building official and fire marshal to inspect the building for compliance with all state and local building codes.**

11. **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.**

Motion carried 4-1 with Mayor Dietz voting No.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

There were no General Business items.

9. MOTION TO ADJOURN REGULAR MEETING

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

10. WORK SESSION

The regular meeting adjourned at 7:01 p.m. Mayor Dietz called the work session to order at 7:06 p.m.

10.1 Joint Session With Parks & Recreation Commission - PIF CIP Discussion and Framework Plan Kickoff

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, Commissioner Stewart called the Special Parks and Recreation Meeting to order at 7:06 p.m.

Mr. Stremcha presented the updated Capital Improvement Plans (CIP) and distributed a handout detailing the park framework improvement fund, revenues, expenditures, and proposed project lists.

The Commission recommended prioritizing current financial obligations and replacing neighborhood park equipment that has reached its end of life. The Commission proposed conducting an inventory of parks and facilities to analyze usage rates and structural conditions, with the goal of deferring non-urgent maintenance. Commissioner Stewart noted that current park conditions do not meet Commission standards and emphasized the critical need for funding.

The Council and the Commission's discussion regarding funding sources included:

- **Municipal Liquor Store Revenue**: Councilmember Wagner inquired about the new liquor store timeline and when it will be operational. Mr. Stremcha is certain the Grand Opening will be before Labor Day, 2027. Councilmember Wagner stated that with that date in mind, the request for fund transfer from the liquor store would not be feasible. Councilmember Calva inquired about the allocation of proceeds from the sale of the current Northbound Liquor store building. Mr. Portner clarified that any proceeds will be added to the Liquor Fund and possibly for bond debt.
- **Budget Allocations:** Mayor Dietz expressed support for the park's large goals but stated they may take the revenue from the sale of the liquor store and apply it to the general fund to help mitigate property taxes. It was discussed that the Pavement Management Fund would pay for the replacement of the Great Northern trail at Woodland Park, freeing up budgeted money for other park improvement projects.
- **Grant Funding:** Councilmember Beyer inquired about alternative grant availability. Mr. Shelby confirmed staff is actively identifying funding gaps to attach to future grant applications.

Councilmember Wagner discussed the Active Elk River Campaign and mentioned it did a lot with the money it received from voters. She asked staff what the current need is now specifically for the Facilities Framework Plan compared to a few years ago when the campaign was active. Mr. Shelby mentioned the anticipated need for upcoming residential developments. Park programs are currently booked 80–100 percent. Staff currently need to be creative, utilizing fields and space and looking to expand hours at the YMCA. Councilmember Wagner wanted to bring attention to the Active Elk River Campaign because it was not too long ago, and asking for more money to fund this improvement plan may upset taxpayers.

Chair Stewart suggested, with community engagement, deciding what programs are in demand and, if possible, repurposing current facilities to meet those demands.

The framework plan shows Ivan Sand School moving. If it does not, the framework plan will need to be redesigned. Mr. Portner stated there would be a plan with the school district for Hale's Field.

Councilmember Beyer questioned if the proposed fields are being built for Elk River residents or is the focus to bring in tournaments for others. He wants to ensure we are planning for capacity.

Commissioner Goodwin recommended seeking contributions and partnerships with local businesses. Mr. Portner stated that selling naming rights to businesses has been a challenge. Mr. Stremcha mentioned opportunities for sponsorships on the ballfield banners. Councilmember Wagner suggested asking the larger companies and stores in Elk River. Councilmember Calva suggested gathering company leaders and presenting the city's needs to them.

Mr. Portner shared with the Council and Commission his experience with the generosity of the businesses in the city.

Commissioner Goodwin reiterated the need to be clear about the mission and vision of the Parks and Recreation Commission and stated the need to be thoughtful and clear to the residents.

Commissioner Loidolt brought to light that the Commission has not asked the Council for an increase in Park Improvement Fund allocations. They have had the same allocation for 18 years. The Commission realizes what they are asking for is a lot and may not be realistic. However, it is necessary to keep up with inflation.

ISG Group staff let the Council know they would be looking for feedback from the City Council, Parks and Recreation Commission, and residents. They will be looking at data, demographics, and trends, and what is right for Elk River when developing the framework plan. The group split in terms to complete a worksheet provided by ISG Group for 15 minutes. The group shared their team's answers and gave their worksheets to ISG Group.

Moved by Commissioner Varty and seconded by Commissioner Goodwin to adjourn the joint session meeting at 8:25 p.m. Motion carried 7-0.

10.2 Craft Updated City Mission and Vision Statements

Mr. Portner shared the proposed Mission and Vision Statement created by Councilmember Wagner.

The Council unanimously agreed to add it to consent for approval at a future meeting.

10.3 Review and Update City Council Goals

Mr. Portner shared the current, mid-term, and future goals, highlighting several that were added to the short-term list and goals that have been crossed off due to completion or no longer relevant.

11. MOTION TO ADJOURN

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

The meeting adjourned at 8:35 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dawn Robertson.

12. INFORMATION

12.1 June Financial Reports

12.2 2nd Quarter Investment Report

John J. Dietz, Mayor

Justin Dunford, City Clerk