Meeting of the City Council
Held at the Elk River Fire Station #2
Monday, June 22, 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, Economic Development Director Brent O'Neil, Business Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Joe Stremcha, Public Works Director/Chief Engineer Justin Femrite, Community Development Director Zack Carlton, Police Chief David Kuhnly, City Clerk Justin Dunford, Records Specialist Dawn Robertson.

1. CALL MEETING TO ORDER

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, the meeting was called to order at 01:05 p.m.

2. CONSENT AGENDA

2.1 Review and Discuss Mission, Vision, and Goals

Mr. Portner reviewed the current values, vision, mission statement, and goals.

Councilmember Wagner suggested revising the Elk River Vision text to incorporate the terms 'innovative,' 'thoughtful,' and 'forward-thinking.'

Mr. Portner requested Councilmember Wagner bring her ideas for a new vision statement to a future meeting.

Elk River Municipal Mission Components:

- Opportunity to live, work, and play
- Responsibly grow
- Meet changing needs - Agile
- Timeless
- Ethical, efficient, and responsible
- Work with citizens to achieve goals
- Responsible for every dollar – good stewards
- Help improve resident's quality of life
- Reflect the culture of citizens and what is important
- Together we win

Elk River City Council Mission Statement

Where council and staff work with citizens to develop a sustainable and prosperous community for all to live, work, and play and to appropriately govern in an ever-changing environment.

Mr. Portner asked for suggestions from the Council and staff for their ideas on updating the mission statement, noting a change to live, work, and play could be a possibility.

Councilmember Wagner mentioned that updates to the mission statement should be mindful of trends without being trendy, ensuring social media does not guide decisions, but that the council is listening and leading based on facts.

Mr. Dunford suggested including the statement "a sustainable community where everyone feels at home and can connect with their neighbors," pointing to the shared city spaces.

Mr. Femrite emphasized the need to create awareness and foster a sense of collective ownership, where the residents view public spaces as 'ours.'

Councilmember Calva shared his rewritten mission statement: "An innovative and welcoming community striving for inclusive engagement and exceptional service to provide connection, restoration, and the most positive life possible."

The updated mission statement will be finalized at a future meeting.

Mr. Portner reviewed the goals set in 2025.

Short Term: (2026-29)

- Commercial Development
- Budget and sinking fund for building repair
    - Transition PW facility bond to general levy
- Draft cost participation policy for trail/street improvement projects.

Suggested Items to add to Short Term Goals:

- Traffic-control measures for the School Street exit during high-volume travel periods.
- Industrial/Business Park property
- updates to parks, including neighborhood, community, and athletics

Mr. Femrite shared comments from residents about the gravel roads. The council and staff discussed researching costs to mitigate dust, pave the roads, hire or train experienced employees, and replace grading machinery. Mr. Femrite will bring cost estimates to a future meeting.

Mid-term: 2030

- Acquire business park land

  - Assist with private development as needed

- Commercial development

  - Commercial Reserve Transition Zoning District
  - Hotel/Hospitality Growth

- Oak Knoll/Hale's Field improvement (ISD 728)
- Community-Wide Strategic Planning Implementation (downtown district)
- Identify city actions required after Elk River Landfill closure (groundwater)
- Gravel mining closure (transmission line placement)
- Fire Station #1 replacement/improvements
- Implementation of Parks Master Plan
- Implementation of new Housing Study recommendations (workforce housing)

Suggested Items to Add to Mid-Term Goals:

- Rural MnDOT Transportation (Northstar Bus Route)
- Acquisition of the park and ride property, MnDOT/Met Council
- Babcock Park Improvement

Long-term (2035-Beyond)

- Urban Service Area expansion
- Commercial/Industrial development
- Trail connections
- Pedestrian Trail Connection downtown over the railroad and TH10.
- More retail development in western Elk River
- Riverwalk from Orono Park to the City of Ramsey
- Highway 10 safety and mobility improvements, 165th Ave to Jarvis St.
- Trunk Highway 169 and 225th Avenue Safety Improvements
- Implementation of Downtown Small Area Study recommendations
- County Fairgrounds Redevelopment
- CRT Zoning review/update
- Wapiti Park Campground
- Athletic Field Improvements
- Public Works/ Engineering

Mr. Femrite shared updates on recent state-level efforts and wins. He noted that the state has made positive changes to local obligations for road and infrastructure improvements. To help reduce the financial impact on local governments, he has been working with the city and county engineers' associations to create better standards. He plans to share these new concepts with the council soon. Finally, he pointed out that Municipal State Aid funding is becoming tighter as more cities qualify for the

program.

The Council recessed at 3:02 p.m. The meeting reconvened at 3:09 p.m.

Chief Kuhnly presented the 2027–2028 supervision proposal and department attrition plan. He discussed the hiring process and stated he has been deliberate in hiring Community Service Officers who intend to transition into full-time police officers. To mitigate the operational impacts of six upcoming retirements and avoid the negative effects of understaffing, he proposed hiring two officers ahead of schedule, followed by two additional officers in both 2027 and 2028. Additionally, Chief Kuhnly introduced the Officer in Charge program and outlined a multi-year staffing timeline: hiring two officers and a fifth night-shift sergeant in 2027; hiring two officers in 2028; and hiring one officer, adding a sixth sergeant, and pausing the grant-funded Traffic Safety Officer (TSO) position in 2029.

Mr. Carlton presented information on future residential community growth. He stated that growth potential on the north side of the city depends on the expansion of utilities and the gravel mines. He also mentioned the need for affordable "middle housing," such as duplexes and multifamily housing. Additionally, he shared the importance of promoting economic development and supporting a strong business community to encourage community investment and tourism.

Mayor Dietz asked about adding signs along the highways for businesses to let people know when to exit. It was explained that there are certain standards, rules, and policies that make the signs eligible.

Mr. Carlton shared a map and images of possible business opportunities in the city, highlighting large parking lot areas such as Ashley Furniture.

Mr. Femrite shared with the Council that with the amount of infrastructure the city has added with the Miske Meadows, Bradford Park, Meadowsweet Bend and Oakwater Ridge Developments, the Public Works Department will need to add staff and machinery to accommodate maintaining the addition of the streets and trails.

The Council recessed at 5:16 p.m. for dinner. The meeting reconvened at 5:51 p.m.

Brent O’Neil shared the Economic Development outlook and brand recruitment strategies vs. local businesses.

Councilmember Wagner expressed concerns that national brand-name stores do not contribute to the community to the same extent as local small businesses. She noted that small businesses frequently provide local support, such as student sports fundraisers, team sponsorships, and active participation in the Downtown Elk River Business Association (DERBA).

Councilmember Calva asked if stores such as Sam's Club or Dick's Sporting Goods would be an opportunity for Elk River. Mr. O'Neil mentioned several redevelopment opportunities like these. The challenges to recruiting those businesses are where they could be established.

Mr. O'Neil shared several potential properties for large industrial buildings. He stated that the current industrial build sites are limited and would like to engage outside help in locating lots and planning for what the investment would look like from the Economic Development Authority to make these properties available.

Mr. Stremcha shared overall budget factors, revenue reductions, expense increase estimates, and potential revenue sources. Mr. Stremcha showed a breakdown of the Park facilities Framework Plan and the breakdown and cost of the 6 phases. Mr. Portner and Mr. Stremcha spoke about a second option for a fire station, to include a fall referendum and including athletic facility improvements to collaborate with ISD 728.

The Council consensus was not in favor of adding a referendum to the upcoming election. It was believed that the local sales tax amendment would pay for the fire station, and that is no longer an option. Staff will give notice to the architect group involved in designing the fire station that the city is postponing the plan for now.

Mayor Dietz suggested transferring $650,000 from the Building Reserve Fund to the 2027 General Fund Budget to offset lost revenue from the Liquor Operations Fund and LGA.

Mr. Portner mentioned several notable repairs that will be needed to city buildings in the near future, which are scheduled to be funded by the Building Reserve Fund.

Council directed staff to inquire regarding the availability of the Nystrom property located at 19232 Proctor Road NW, for future city use.

Councilmember Wagner requested a review of City Council pay, as the rate of pay has not changed during her tenure.

Due to time constraints, Mr Portner recommended moving the follow-up to the goal-setting portion of the meeting to a Work Session in July.

3. MOTION TO ADJOURN

The meeting adjourned at 07:34 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Dawn Robertson.

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John J. Dietz, Mayor

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Justin Dunford, City Clerk