Meeting of the City Council
Held at the Elk River City Hall
Monday, March 3, 2025

Members Present:	Mayor John Dietz, Councilmember Jennifer Wagner, Councilmember Mike Beyer, Councilmember Cory Grupa, Councilmember J. Brian Calva
Members Absent:	None
Staff Present:	City Administrator Cal Portner, Public Works Director/Chief Engineer Justin Femrite, Fire Chief Mark Dickinson, Police Chief David Kuhnly, Economic Development Director Brent O'Neil, Community Development Director Zack Carlton, Business Services Director/Assistant City Administrator Joe Stremcha, Community Event Center Manager Katie Harstad, Environmental Services and Projects Specialist Joe Hale, Public Works Supervisor Mitch Litfin, Officer Allison Libor, Officer Elizabeth Norberg, Officer Nic Albert, Fire Captain Joseph Evenson, and Records Specialist Katie Porath.

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 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 February 18, 2025 Minutes

   4.2 Check Register

   4.3 Hire Custodian

   4.4 Resolution 25-08: Updated Final Plat of Bradford Park Second Addition

4.5 Update to Park Steward Policy

5. OPEN FORUM

No one appeared for Open Forum.

6. PRESENTATIONS, AWARDS, AND RECOGNITION

6.1 Oath of Office: Police Officers

Councilmember Wagner and Councilmember Beyer administered the oath of office to Officers Allison Libor and Elizabeth Norberg.

6.2 Citizen Award for Action Taken During River Rescue

Councilmember Calva presented Citizen Awards to Riley Deitrich and Ragen McKernan.

6.3 Recognition of First Responders

Chief Kuhnly stated Officer Albert was awarded the Medal of Valor, Medal of Courage, and Chief's Award due to his work on the drug taskforce and the event that took place in Glendorado Township on October 12, 2023.

Councilmembers provided a standing ovation for Officer Albert and Councilmember Grupa thanked him for his sevice.

6.4 Retirement Recognition: Proclaim Joseph Evenson Day

Mayor Dietz presented a plaque and declared March 5, 2025, as Joseph Evenson Day in the City of Elk River.

6.5 Introduction of New Employees

Mr. Femrite introduced new employees Joe Hale and Mitch Litfin.

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS

There were no public hearings.

8. GENERAL BUSINESS

8.1 Safety Action Plan

Fire Chief Mark Dickinson introduced Molly Stewart, SRF Consulting Group, who gave an update on the Safety Action Plan.

Ms. Stewart stated the goal of the plan was zero fatal or serious injury accidents by 2035.

Councilmember Calva asked for more information on the changes proposed for School Street. Ms.

Stewart stated potential changes include a road diet (reducing four lanes to two and adding a center turn lane), shortening the crosswalk distance, or adding more crosswalk markings. Fire Chief Dickinson added that some of the proposed improvements build off each other.

Councilmember Beyer asked if Fire Chief Dickinson had already applied for available grants. He responded that he had been waiting for the study to be completed.

Councilmember Beyer confirmed that the city engineering department had been involved in reviewing the proposed changes. Ms. Stewart stated she had met with Justin Femrite as well as the Sherburne County engineer.

Councilmember Grupa asked about proposed changes 1 and 5 and if they were the same. Ms. Stewart responded they were two different segments of Jackson Avenue. Councilmember Wagner asked if there was any way to combat distracted driving. Ms. Stewart stated that most accidents are tagged if they are caused by impairment or distraction which helps determine if education or engineering may help the problems in that area.

Councilmember Beyer asked why the study did not look at Hwy 10 heading toward Ramsey as he felt it was one of the most dangerous in the city. Ms. Stewart stated a study of that area was completed a couple of years ago.

Moved by Councilmember Wagner and seconded by Councilmember Beyer to approve the Safety Action Plan in accordance with the federal Safe Streets For All Program. Motion carried 5-0.

8.2 Discuss Work Session Items

Mayor Dietz asked if a discussion of Fire Station #1 would happen in April. Mr. Portner stated it would be a topic of the council retreat on April 28, 2025.

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 Wagner to adjourn the meeting of City Council. Motion Carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 7:35 p.m.

Mayor Dietz called the work session to order at 7:39 p.m.

11. WORK SESSION

11.1 Oakwater Ridge Subdivision: Capstone Proposal for Specht Farm

Mr. Carlton presented the staff report. Parks and Recreation Commissioner Dave Anderson, Steve Bona, and Matt Barker of Capstone Homes were in attendance.

Mr. Bona discussed the options for park dedication, including giving the city a portion in cash. He stated the development could create a private park or extend some of the lots toward the river.

Mr. Anderson was concerned about the loss of trail if the lot lines got extended. Councilmember Wagner stated that residents could use the sidewalk if the trail connection goes away. Mr. Anderson stated that people would likely ride their bikes in the street due to the number of driveway crossings.

Mr. Carlton stated that the current ordinance uses a percentage to calculate park dedication which equates to 24%. Capstone said that the statewide standard is 10%. Mr. Bona stated if Capstone needed to find land to equal 24% for park dedication, they could not make the development profitable.

Mr. Anderson stated, at the last Parks and Recreation meeting, the Commission agreed to deviate from the ordinance and recommended a compromise of 15% park dedication. He stated the percentage should be determined by the Council, not the Commission.

Mr. Bona stated that the development had to set aside 26 acres for a berm and 6 acres for a gas line easement. Mayor Dietz reminded him that the creation of the berm was Capstone's choice and not the Council's requirement. Mr. Bona stated that sound-proofing may be required by other entities if not the city.

Mr. Carlton addressed the Capstone request to have 50-foot-wide lots. Mr. Bona stated that their other developments with similar products had 40-foot-wide lots.

Councilmember Beyer stated that he had viewed a Capstone development in St. Michael. Mr. Bona stated the majority of the lots in that development were 40-feet-wide. Councilmember Beyer said that they looked nice, but was concerned about setting a precedent in Elk River by lowering the lot width requirement.

Mayor Dietz was not in favor of the smaller lot sizes. Councilmember Calva did not have a problem with the 50-foot-wide lots.

Capstone will be bringing their revised presentation to the Parks and Recreation Commission meeting on March 12, the March 17 City Council meeting, the March 25 Planning Commission meeting, and the April 7 City Council meeting.

11.2 Athletic Facilities Framework Plan

Mr. Stremcha reviewed the Athletic Facilities Framework Plan.

Mayor Dietz asked where the funds would come from. Mr. Stremcha responded that this meeting was an introduction to the plan and discussions of financing would come at a later date. Some options were park dedication, sales tax, or a referendum.

Councilmember Calva confirmed that Items 2 and 4 on the map shown may never be part of the plan as they are contingent on what happens with Ivan Sand Community Middle/High School. He asked which had come first, the discussion to move the school or the desire for a ballfield? Mr. Portner gave a brief background on the history of the field and school and stated the city approached the school.

Mayor Dietz added that he had a conversation with the ISD 278 superintendent, who stated that Oak Knoll was a top priority as well as improving Hale's Field. The mayor felt that the city should be part of the discussion as there is no sense updating one field without improving all of them.

Mayor Dietz stated that the Dave Anderson Complex (Item 6 on the map shown) should be low on the priority list as it is unknown what will happen to the County Fairgrounds property.

Councilmember Wagner asked if an economic impact study could be performed to determine the economic impact of athletic field improvements and relocation.

Mayor Dietz agreed that it made sense to combine similar sports fields in one area and would improve the user experience for tournaments, youth organizations, and parents.

Mr. Anderson stated that the Parks and Recreation Commission had concerns with calling this plan a "master plan" but renaming it as a "framework" helped. Key components of the Commission's concerns include cost as well as the future of Ivan Sand school.

The Council reiterated that this plan would take 15–20 years to implement and would be done in stages.

Katie Harstad was in attendance and the Council commended her on her work for the recent section tournaments.

11.3 Multi-Purpose Facility Advisory Commission Powers and Duties

Mr. Stremcha presented the staff report.

Ms. Harstad stated that she has begun having check-in meetings with each user group after their season or tournament to change and adapt to customer feedback.

The Council discussed that the current Multipurpose Facility Advisory Commission is comprised of users who have a conflict of interest.

Councilmember Wagner stated that in the first two years of the Commission, while she was a liaison, there were decisions to be made and the Commission was kept busy. They had poor communication with staff and the time between meetings was too long for urgent issues. At times the Commission just "rubber-stamped" decisions already made by staff. She stated that the current Commission seems to be running more smoothly.

Councilmember Calva asked Ms. Harstad's opinion. Ms. Harstad stated she gets more value out of one-on-one meetings with user groups than the Multipurpose Facility Advisory Commission meetings. She stated that preparing for meetings is a lengthy process.

Councilmember Beyer added that he is the current liaison to the Multipurpose Facility Advisory Commission and some of the decisions the commission is asked to make should be decided by staff. Since the commission no longer handles rates, what else is there for the commission to do?

Mr. Portner outlined the origins of the history of the buildings and the Commission.

Councilmember Wagner stated that the process of passing the Active Elk River plan cost her some relationships and not seeing an immediate success was hard. She believes the Furniture and Things Community Event Center and Multipurpose Facility Advisory Commission are now on the right track.

The Council decided to ask the Commission for their opinion during their annual combined meeting with the City Council on April 7, 2025.

The Council requested that Ms. Harstad make a regular report to the council in person or as part of the packet on what is happening at the Furniture and Things Community Event Center.

Councilmember Grupa asked Ms. Harstad if there was anything the commission could help her with. Ms. Harstad stated that her focus is on making the user's experience positive. She suggested maybe there is a place for the commission but in a different format.

Mayor Dietz added that the worst thing is to put people on a commission and waste their time.

11.4 Discuss Potential Commuter Rail Closure

Mr. Portner asked the Council if they would like him to draft a letter regarding the potential closure of the commuter rail. The Council stated they would be in favor of converting to bus transit and asked Mr. Portner to create a letter on their behalf. Mayor Dietz confirmed that the city would have no financial liability with the closure of the rail line.

12. MOTION TO ADJOURN WORK SESSION

Moved by Councilmember Calva and seconded by Councilmember Beyer to adjourn the work session. Motion carried 5-0.

The meeting adjourned at 9:30 p.m.

13. CLOSED MEETING - PID 75-00134-2200 AND 75-00134-2301

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

Staff Present: Economic Development Director Brent O'Neil, Fire Chief Mark Dickinson, Deputy Chief of Training and Logistics Casey Neumann, Assistant Fire Chief of Operations Joe Libor, Jr, Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Director Joe Stremcha, City Administrator Cal Portner, and Records Specialist Katie Porath

Others Present: Brooke Jacobson and Quinn Hutson from CNH Architects

Mayor Dietz read the following statement:

13.1 Statement to be read by the Mayor:

"The City Council will be holding a closed meeting per MN Statute 13D.05, subd. 3(c)(5) to develop or consider offers relating to the possible purchase of real property at:

809 Jackson Ave NW - PID 75-00134-2200
425 Jackson Ave NW - PID 75-00134-2301

13.2 Motion Calling Closed Meeting

Mayor Dietz called the closed meeting to order at 9:36 p.m.

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

13.3 Hold Closed Meeting

13.4 Motion to Adjourn Closed Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:16 p.m.

14. CLOSED MEETING - POLICE CLERICAL AND TECHNICAL UNION, LELS 589

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

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Director Joe Stremcha, City Administrator Cal Portner, and Records Specialist Katie Porath

Mayor Dietz read the following statement:

14.1 Statement to be read by the Mayor:

"The City Council will be closing the meeting pursuant to MN Statute Section 13D.03, subd. 1(b). The Council will discuss the city's labor negotiation strategy related to the city's negotiations with the Police Clerical and Technical Union, LELS 589."

14.2 Motion Calling Closed Meeting

Mayor Dietz called the closed meeting to order at 10:16 p.m.

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

14.3 Hold Closed Meeting

14.4 Motion to Adjourn Closed Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at 10:41 p.m.

15. CLOSED MEETING - PUBLIC WORKS UNION, IUOE LOCAL 49

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

Staff Present: Assistant City Administrator/Business Services Director Joe Stremcha, City Administrator Cal Portner, and Records Specialist Katie Porath

Mayor Dietz read the following statement:

15.1 Statement to be read by the Mayor:

"The City Council will be closing the meeting pursuant to MN Statute Section 13D.03, subd. 1(b). The Council will discuss the city's labor negotiation strategy related to the city's negotiations with the Public Works Union, IUOE Local 49."

15.2 Motion Calling Closed Meeting

Mayor Dietz called the closed meeting to order at 10:42 p.m.

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

15.3 Hold Closed Meeting

15.4 Motion to Adjourn Closed Meeting

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

The meeting adjourned at 11:02 p.m.

Minutes prepared by Katie Porath.

John J. Dietz

John J. Dietz, Mayor

Tina Allard, City Clerk