

**City of Fairmont
100 Downtown Plaza
Fairmont, MN 56031**

City Council Minutes
Regular Meeting

February 24, 2025
City Hall, 5:30 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The Fairmont City Council met in regular session at the City Hall Council Chambers. Mayor Baarts called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Council present: Lee Baarts, Mayor
 James Kotewa, Councilmember
 Randy Lubenow, Councilmember
 Jay Maynard, Councilmember

Absent: Wayne Hasek, Councilmember
 Britney Kawecki, Councilmember

Staff present: Jeff O’Neill, Interim City Administrator
 Matthew York, Director of Public Works/Utilities
 Paul Hoye, Finance Director
 Michael Hunter, Chief of Police
 Pat Oman, Community Development Director
 Betsy Steuber, City Clerk
 Troy Nemmers, Bolton & Menk (contracted services)
 Cara Brown, City Attorney, via telephone
 (Flaherty & Hood)

**PLEDGE OF
ALLEGIANCE**

The City Council and all present stood for the Pledge of Allegiance.

**APPROVAL OF
AGENDA**

Prior to seeking a motion to approve the agenda, Mayor Baarts stated due to the lack of Councilmembers present to conduct a vote requiring four-fifths, agenda item 7.1 - Public Hearing on the 2025 Improvement Program and Consideration to Approve Resolution 2025-11: Ordering Improvement, Preparation of Plans and Advertising of Bids, would be removed. Mayor Baarts stated the public hearing will be re-held on March 10, 2025, at 5:30 pm in the Fairmont City Hall Council Chambers.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Kotewa to approve the agenda as presented, with the removal of agenda item # 7.1. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

ROTATING VOTES

Please note that votes taken by roll call are called by the City Clerk on a rotating basis; however, the written minutes list the Councilmembers in alphabetical order.

**RECOGNITION/
PRESENTATIONS
Item 4.1**

Chief Hunter introduced Cass Davis, a newly hired Fairmont Police Officer, to the Council and the community prior to Officer Davis ceremonially sworn in by City Clerk Steuber.

Item 4.2

Chief Hunter presented the 2024 Fairmont Police Department Annual Report.

**PUBLIC DISCUSSION/
COMMENT**

No public comments were heard.

CONSENT AGENDA

Mayor Baarts introduced the consent agenda items as listed for consideration to be enacted by one motion unless requested that an item be removed and included under new business. Mayor Baarts reviewed the consent items, as follows:

- City Council Meeting Minutes from the Regular Meeting held February 10, 2025
- February 2025 Accounts Payable List
- Event Permit for the Kids Just Want to Have Fun Organization to Host a Community Easter Egg Hunt on April 19, 2025
- Event Permit for the Interlaken Heritage Days Festival on June 13 and June 14, 2025

Motion was made by Councilmember Kotewa, seconded by Councilmember Maynard to approve the consent agenda as presented. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

**PUBLIC HEARING
Item 7.1**

Council will re-hold the public hearing on the 2025 Improvement program on March 10, 2025 at 5:30 pm in the Fairmont City Hall Council Chambers.

**OLD BUSINESS
ORDINANCE 2025-01
Item 8.1**

Director Oman stated under Minnesota Statute § 462.16 the City of Fairmont may establish a local housing trust fund, and Ordinance 2025-01 allows for such. Under this ordinance, funds cover administrative costs, grants, and loans for housing development while allowing for various funding sources such as donations, grants and investments.

Director Oman noted meetings have been held with the Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) to ensure an understanding of how the funds will be used, while aiming for support and collaboration on community housing projects.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Lubenow to Approve the Second and Final Consideration for Proposed Ordinance 2025-01: An Ordinance Establishing a Local Housing Trust Fund in the City of Fairmont. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

**NEW BUSINESS
MOTION
Item 9.A.1**

Marlys Brummond, an Interlaken Heritage Days (IHD) Committee member, addressed Council on the preparations and events currently scheduled for the June 13 and June 14, 2025 festival. Ms. Brummond noted rising costs over the years with last year's expenses reaching over \$21,000.

For the past several years, IHD received \$6,000 in funding from the City. Council discussed providing additional funding to IHD for 2025 and moving forward.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Lubenow to Approve \$7,000 in Funding to the Interlaken Heritage Days Committee for the 2025 Interlaken Heritage Days Festival. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

**MOTION
Item 9.A.2**

Clerk Steuber introduced agenda item 9.A.2: Consideration of Reinstating the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization (LBAE). Due to lack of a quorum at the 2023 LBAE meeting, the local board lost their powers for two years. Steuber noted to regain those powers by 2026, at least three council members must attend the open book meeting on April 9, 2025 at 9:00 am and a resolution must be adopted at a future meeting. Steuber also discussed the training requirements to ensure compliance.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Lubenow to Appoint Councilmembers Maynard, Lubenow and Kotewa to attend the April 9, 2025 Local Board of Appeal and Equalization Meeting and Authorize Staff to Continue the Process to Reinstatate the City of Fairmont Local Board of Appeal and Equalization beginning for 2026. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

**MOTION
Item 9.B.1**

Director York introduced agenda item 9.B.1: Consideration of Bolton & Menk, Inc. Task Order #9 – Lead Service Line Replacement Project – Design Services. York noted the project will be funded by a \$5.3 million grant from the State of Minnesota.

Council discussion focused on the number of lead segments in the City, whether enough funding was awarded to cover replacement of all line segments and whether residents will want to replace their lead pipes. York said the State plans to eliminate all lead pipes by 2033, with ample

funding awarded to the City to cover the identified known lead segments. York noted that the project is significant in improving water quality and minimizing health risks in the City.

Motion was made by Councilmember Kotewa, seconded by Councilmember Maynard to Approve Bolton & Menk, Inc. Task Order #9 – Lead Service Line Replacement Project – Design Services at a Cost of \$75,000. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.2

As part of the Lake Avenue Improvement Project, Director York introduced agenda item 9.B.2 to Council: Consideration to Petition Martin County for City Ownership of County Ditch 56. Director York discussed the key points outlined in the Staff memo, stating that ownership of the ditch would reduce duplicate piping, boost drainage and enhance lake water quality. However, if the City doesn't take ownership, future ditch repairs by the County could damage the new Lake Avenue roadway.

After Council discussion on the benefits to water quality and logistics of the project, York noted that a resolution will be brought back for further consideration, pending initial approval from the county's legal department.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Lubenow Approve the Petition Process to the County of Martin for City Ownership of County Ditch 56. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.3

The last item of new business was item 9.B.3, Consideration of Additional Funding for Work at the Yard Waste Recycling Site. While Council approved \$65,000 for a contractor to burn wood debris at the site, York stated due to the additional amount of debris and logs, the total cost of the project ended up at \$70,455, leading staff to request an additional \$7,000 in funds.

Council expressed concern on how to prevent accumulation of debris in the future. York noted he had some ideas for consideration at a future meeting.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Kotewa to Approve an Additional \$7,000 to BLAC Construction for Burning Operations at the Yard Waste Recycling Site. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

COUNCIL DISCUSSION

Item 10.1

Councilor Maynard presented item 10.1 stating the Council's Conduct Policy does not prohibit harassment or bullying by councilmembers. Discussion centered around the importance of establishing a clear set of behavior among members, with plans for a future workshop on this topic.

Item 10.2

Councilor Maynard expressed concern related to Council/Staff communications and employee morale. Council discussion was held on communications between Council and staff with plans for a future workshop to address communication and clarify council roles to ensure productive dialogue.

**STAFF/LIAISON
REPORT**

Director Oman reported on various Community Development Department initiatives including submission of a federal appropriation request, a status update on the Community Resiliency Plan, an upcoming pre-development meeting for the Habitat for Humanity House and submission of a municipal cannabis retailer license.

Interim O'Neill reported on various ongoing short- and long-term projects noting the following: recodification of the City Code, the code of conduct investigation, ice arena agreements, farm lease agreements, CWG litigation and beautification efforts in downtown Fairmont.

Councilmember Maynard shared the airport master plan project process is still ongoing and a meeting with the stakeholders will occur in April.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Kotewa to adjourn the meeting, as there was no further business to come before the Council. All present voted in favor. Motion carried. The Fairmont City Council adjourned at 7:05 p.m.

ATTEST:



Lee C. Baarts, Mayor



Betsy Steuber, City Clerk