

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

City Council Minutes
Special Meeting

March 24, 2025
City Hall, 3:00 p.m.

CALL TO ORDER

The Fairmont City Council met in special session at the City Hall Council Chambers. Mayor Baarts called the meeting to order at 3:00 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Council present: Lee Baarts, Mayor
 Wayne Hasek, Councilmember
 Britney Kaweck, Councilmember
 James Kotewa, Councilmember
 Randy Lubenow, Councilmember
 Jay Maynard, Councilmember

Absent: None

Staff present: Jeff O'Neill, Interim City Administrator
 Matthew York, Director of Public Works/Utilities
 Michael Hunter, Chief of Police
 Pat Oman, Community Development Director
 Doug Harstad, Building Official
 Betsy Steuber, City Clerk
 Troy Nemmers, Bolton & Menk (contracted services)

**PLEDGE OF
ALLEGIANCE**

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

**APPROVAL OF
AGENDA**

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Kotewa to approve the agenda as presented. 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.

**NEW BUSINESS
Item 4A**

Director Oman opened the discussion on agenda item 4A, which focused on reviewing updates to the Rental Housing Ordinance. Oman mentioned city staff and legal have worked extensively on improving the ordinance to better enhance its functionality and effectiveness, which has been a key priority for council since many homes are rentals in the community.

The Rental Housing Ordinance was approved the end of 2021 and

became effective in 2022. It updated the previous ordinance, while keeping much of the original content and adding local benchmarks approved by the City Council. While praising the document for its detail, Oman suggested updates in the following areas:

- **Rental housing types:** Oman suggested to clarify the types of rental housing by clearly excluding vacation rentals by owner (VRBO), as this could cause confusion since motels and hotels are already excluded.
- **Fees and penalties:** The existing ordinance does not address fines/penalties for landlords who do not meet rental registration or inspection requirements; the current ordinance allows law enforcement to enforce misdemeanors and steps to vacate the rental unit. Oman suggested Council add a mechanism to implement fines and an escalation structure. For example, sending a reminder letter to those who forget to register and allowing them a chance to comply before imposing escalating fines.

Conversations focused on the difficulties of registration, the need for clear enforcement methods and how penalties would be communicated. Ensuring safe rental housing units and the components of the ordinance were also discussed. Oman emphasized the necessity of reviewing the nuisance ordinance, which is outdated and provides limited definitions of nuisances.

Director Oman shared the City will be utilizing a new software mechanism to improve tracking rental registrations and inspections, improve communication and code enforcement and provide a smooth on-line permitting process, while easing staff workload.

Based on the Council's input, Director Oman plans to allocate more staff time to develop structured inspection standard and establish clear penalty and enforcement mechanisms for better compliance with the rental ordinance. Oman stated the Council could expect an update at a future meeting.

NEW BUSINESS

Item 4b

The next item of business was focused on reviewing design concepts for Blue Earth Avenue Improvements to enhance pedestrian and motorist flow. Director York noted the project also includes beautification efforts and the goals of the discussion session to include outlining the priorities of the project and gathering feedback on preferred design elements of Blue Earth Avenue, from Highway 15 to Downtown Plaza.

For discussion purposes, York stated the project will be split into two sections: Section 1 extending from Highway 15 to approximately 75' east

of Prairie and Section 2 extending from that point to Downtown Plaza. Extensive discussion included whether to incorporate medians or a center turn lane, as the design plan is to convert the roadway from four lanes to three lanes.

There were differing opinions on medians versus turn lanes with concerns raised regarding left-hand turns into businesses along Blue Earth Avenue if medians were added and challenges with snow and ice maintenance and pedestrian crossings. Discussion was also held on parking (south side of the street) and incorporating bike lanes.

In terms of beautification, extending boulevard space on the north side of the roadway was discussed, raising concerns about costs and potential funding as extending curbs and relocating storm sewers is a significant expense. York highlighted streetlights as a simple way to improve the area before discussion was held on traffic control mechanisms. Traffic control discussion focused on two-way and four-way stops, roundabouts, and traffic lights. Councilors recognized the trade-offs of design and cost with each of the options.

Further conversation revolved around finding a balance between beautification with manageable maintenance and accessibility for pedestrians, motorists and businesses along Blue Earth Avenue while being cost effective.

York stated staff will work with Bolton & Menk to design more visual renderings on the various options for citizens and Council to better understand what the area could look like. A meeting will be held in April/May to hold discussion and gather citizen input on the project.

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 4:41 p.m.

ATTEST:


Betsy Steuber, City Clerk


Lee C. Baarts, Mayor