

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

City Council Minutes
Regular Meeting

April 28, 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
 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
 Paul Hoyer, Finance Director
 Michael Hunter, Chief of Police
 Pat Oman, Community Development Director
 Lee Steinkamp, Municipal Airport Manager
 Hannah Neusch, Water Resources Coordinator
 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**

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.

**RECOGNITION/
PRESENTATIONS
Item 4.1**

Hannah Neusch, Water Resources Coordinator, discussed the potential removal of the George Lake Dam, built in 1939. Staff are considering repairs or removal, with rock rapids as an alternative. Neusch noted that dams hurt species migration and water quality, while rock rapids improve ecosystems and aesthetics. The DNR confirmed the site is suitable for rock rapids, with potential grant funding available.

Motion was made by Councilmember Kawecki to support staff in continuing to investigate and prepare an RFP for consultants to work with staff and evaluate grant opportunities for the dam project.

In continued discussion, Councilmember Hasek asked about the last inspection; it was in April 2023. Councilmember Hasek voiced support of keeping the dam as-is if it passes inspection (underwater/updated inspection).

Councilmember Lubenow expressed concern about low water levels/no flow over the rock rapids, which could harm the creek and fish, as seen at the Amber Lake Dam. Neusch explained that high water levels can cover the dam, stopping spillage and reducing oxygen, leading to fish mortalities. Additionally, Neusch expressed while low flow may occur at rock rapids, rock rapids create small pools that assist fish in returning to the lake, lowering mortality rates.

Councilmember Maynard expressed support of replacing the dam with rock rapids, especially if funding opportunities are available, as the benefits seem to be many. Councilmember Maynard expressed his belief that it is premature to pursue an RFP and engage with consultants, suggesting staff prioritize evaluation and research. Councilmember Kotewa agreed.

Councilmember Kawecki withdrew her motion (to support staff in continuing to investigate and prepare an RFP for consultants to work with staff and evaluate grant opportunities for the dam project) due to lack of council support.

Director York noted that two firms, JF Brennan and AMI Engineers, will be contacted for underwater inspection proposals.

**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 Special Meeting held April 10, 2025
- City Council Meeting Minutes from the Regular Meeting held April 14, 2025
- April 2025 Accounts Payable List
- Resolution 2025 – 16: Resolution Approving the State of Minnesota Joint Powers Agreements with the City of Fairmont on behalf of its City Attorney and Police Department, the State of Minnesota Joint Powers Agreement for SWIFT Contract #264339 and the Court Data Subscriber Amendment to CJDN Subscriber Agreement with the MN Department of Public Safety/Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) for the City of Fairmont Prosecution Attorney
- Declaring the listed Fairmont Police Department Property as Excess and Approving the Disposal Method (by Sale or Donation) as Staff Recommends
- Calling for a Public Hearing on May 12, 2025 at 5:30 pm in the Fairmont City Hall Council Chambers on the City of Fairmont Departmental Fee Schedule for City Services

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

NEW BUSINESS MOTION Item 9.A.1

Interim O'Neill introduced agenda item 9.A.1; Consideration to Direct Staff to Prepare a Request for Proposal to Sell the Southern Minnesota Educational Campus (SMEC) Building. Due to potential tenant vacancies and developer interest, O'Neill suggested discussing other uses for the building as outlined in the agenda memo.

In discussion, Councilmember Maynard expressed support for the sale of the building with it being converted into multifamily housing and the numerous opportunities it could offer Fairmont. Councilmember Kawecky recommended assessing other city-owned properties for possible sale, such as unused lift stations, green spaces, and the former Public Works Building, which would also serve the interests of the citizens.

Motion was made by Councilmember Kotewa, seconded by Councilmember Kawecky to Direct Staff to Proceed with the Preparation of a Request for Proposal for the Purpose of Identifying a Developer

Interested in the Purchase of the SMEC Building. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.A.2

Mayor Baarts introduced item 9.A.2; Consideration of Appointments to City Boards and Commissions.

Motion was made by Councilmember Kotewa, seconded by Councilmember Maynard to Approve the Appointment of Shaina Scheppmann to the Police Commission. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Councilmember Kaweck, seconded by Councilmember Lubenow to Approve the Appointment of Jon Omvig* to the Economic Development Authority. During open discussion, Councilmember Maynard stated he believed Mr. Omvig was not suitable to serve on FEDA as he caused delays in the Whitetail Ridge project. Councilmember Kaweck disagreed, highlighting Mr. Omvig's valuable insights and experience in planning and zoning. On roll call, Councilmembers Kaweck, Kotewa and Lubenow voted in favor; Councilmember Hasek and Maynard voted against. Motion carried.

*Mr. Omvig will be stepping down from his current position on the Charter Commission to serve on the FEDA board.

MOTION
Item 9.A.3

Agenda item 9.A.3; Consideration of a Consent Agreement for Demolition of Property, located at 1524 Albion Avenue, Fairmont was introduced by Community Development Director Oman.

Director Oman indicated staff aims to establish a consent agreement with the property owner to enable the City to arrange for demolition of the site, partially funded by demolition dollars. The objective is to create a marketable vacant lot, with any outstanding liens settled upon the property's sale.

Motion was made by Councilmember Lubenow, seconded by Councilmember Maynard to Authorize a Consent Agreement for Demolition of the House and Commercial Building at 1524 Albion Avenue. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.1

Director York introduced the next item of business, item 9.B.1; Consideration of a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Policy for Federal Grants. To continue to receive federal funds, the City must adopt a Disadvantaged Business Enterprise(DBE) Policy.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Kotewa to Approve the Disadvantaged Business Enterprise (DBE) Policy, as Presented, for Federal Grant Projects. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.2

Municipal Airport Manager Steinkamp provided background on agenda item 9.B.2; Consideration of the FAA Improvement Program Federal Grant Request and State Airport Funding for Replacing Taxiway Lighting at the Fairmont Municipal Airport (Supplemental).

Motion was made by Councilmember Kotewa, seconded by Councilmember Maynard to Approve the 2025 FAA Airport Improvement Grant (Supplemental) AIP #3-27-0029-024-2025, State Airport Grant Request and the Application for Replacing Taxiway Lighting. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.3

Agenda item 9.B.3; Consideration of the FAA Improvement Program Federal Grant Request and State Airport Funding for Replacing Taxiway Lighting at the Fairmont Municipal Airport (Entitlement) was introduced by Manager Steinkamp.

Motion was made by Councilmember Kotewa, seconded by Councilmember Maynard to Approve the 2025 FAA Airport Improvement Grant (Entitlement) AIP #3-27-0029-025-2025, State Airport Grant Request and the Application for Replacing Taxiway Lighting. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.4

Airport Manager Steinkamp introduced agenda item 9.B.4; Consideration of a Contract with KLJ Engineering for Construction Management for the Taxiway Lighting & Signs Replacement and Removal of Non-Standard Hold Bay.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Hasek to Approve the Contract with KLJ Engineering for Construction Management the Fairmont Taxiway Lighting & Signs Replacement and Removal of Non Standard Hold Bay in the Amount of \$133,012.91. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.5

Director York introduced item 9.B.5; Consideration of a Task Order with Bolton & Menk for Construction Administrator for the Gomsrud Park Project, as tabled from an April 2025 Council meeting. Bolton & Menk refined the task order scope and cost from the original \$70,000 to \$65,672.

York noted an improved project timeline, which reduced the time spent in the field and overall project cost.

Councilmember Kawecki inquired about utilizing existing staff for construction management. York replied that may not be feasible due to limitations in staffing, time constraints, and material issues; however, if the Council wished to explore this option, they would need to prioritize projects for the staff, as the Lake Avenue and Gomsrud Park projects may overlap, and staff is also handling routine daily responsibilities.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Kotewa to Approve Task Order #11A with Bolton & Menk for Construction Administrator for the Gomsrud Park Project in the amount of \$65,672. All present voted in favor.

MOTION
Item 9.B.6

The next item of business, agenda item 9.B.6; Consideration of a Master Agreement with Bolton & Menk for City Engineering Services was introduced by Director York.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Kotewa to Approve a Master Agreement with Bolton & Menk for City Engineering Services. In discussion, Councilmember Kawecki stated she would be voting “no” as to stand with the so-called majority who endorsed ISG for Engineering Services. Councilmembers Hasek, Kotewa, Lubenow and Maynard voted in favor; Councilmember Kawecki voted against. Motion carried.

MOTION
RESOLUTION 2025-17
Item 9.B.7

As part of the on-going effort to acquire funding for the lead service line project, Director York introduced item 9.B.7; Consideration of a Resolution for Application for Lead Service Line Funding. York stated the approval of resolution is a necessary component of the application process.

Motion was made by Councilmember Hasek, seconded by Councilmember Kotewa to Approve Resolution 2025-17: Supporting the Application for Lead Service Line Funding through the Minnesota Public Funding Authority. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.8

Due to the burning of the yard waste site this winter and the continued increase in yard waste, Director York requested Council consider agenda item 9.B.8; Consideration of a Purchase Order for Shamrock Recycling Inc. for Yardwaste Grinding at the Tree Site. With \$32,000 remaining from the ReLeaf Grant, Director York proposed using these funds, along with an additional request of \$58,000, for a total of \$90,000 to be allocated for material grinding at the site.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Hasek to Approve a Purchase Order for Shamrock Recycling Inc. in the Amount of \$90,000 for Yardwaste Grinding at the Tree Site. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

MOTION
Item 9.B.9

The final item of new business to come before the Council was item 9.B.9; Consideration of a Contract with Brennan Construction of Minneapolis for the Sylvania Park Bandshell Project. Director York said the project is a carryover from last year, as quotes exceeded \$175,000, which was outside of the City's purchase policy. While 3 contractors expressed interest, Brennan Construction of Minneapolis was the only bidder for the project with a bid of \$230,000, plus a \$20,000 owner's contingency.

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Lubenow to Approve a Contract with Brennan Construction of Minneapolis for the Sylvania Park Bandshell Project in the Amount of \$250,000. All present voted in favor. Motion carried.

STAFF/LIAISON
REPORT

Director York reported he is preparing a Request for Proposal (RFP) for the pickleball court project (Veteran's Park). York also submitted an application to classify the site as a "Brownfield", to secure funding for underground site clean-up. York expects to learn about the next round of funding in May, hoping the site will be designated for research to allow further evaluation for brownfield management.

Based on the current DNR report of PFAS found in walleye in George Lake, York assured everyone the City's drinking water meets all current safety standards and is safe to drink. Interim O'Neill stated while George Lake was reportedly the only lake tested, the interconnectedness of lakes (such as in Fairmont) raises questions about other lakes' PFAS levels. O'Neill assured that other fish species are safe to eat, while walleye accumulate higher PFAS levels; and swimming and recreational activities in the lake are safe.

Director Oman reported on the upcoming efforts in relocating the Habitat for Humanity house to the property at 403 E 5th Street, Fairmont with additional information to come before the Council at a future meeting. Oman shared the Community Resilience Plan Committee held their first meeting. Additionally, he discussed preliminary considerations on the potential formation of a Lake Management Committee.

Interim O'Neill reported:

- Several upcoming strategic planning sessions will be held in May for Council to focus on identifying five or six key initiatives to guide staff's work.
- Staff will be meeting with the Fair Board and Hockey Association to continue agreement discussions.
- A Cannabis RFP will be distributed soon.
- The Charter Review Team will be meeting to review the Charter Language relating to the City's Purchase Policy.

Councilmember Hasek reported on his recent attendance at the Public Utilities Commission meeting and reported on the monetary savings of sewer sliplining (slip lining involves a fiberglass interior in the sewer line, reducing inflow and infiltration, aiding with sewer backups).

Councilmember Kotewa stated Region 9 met last week and held discussion on conducting a community survey.

Councilmember Maynard shared the airport master plan steering committee met and continues with revisions.


Councilmember Lubenow reported on the recent Legislative Town Hall Meeting where discussion centered around proposed budget cuts, and their effect, primarily on the disabled and elderly.

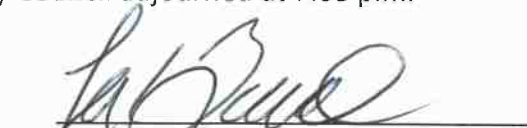
Mayor Baarts shared on his experience representing the City of Fairmont at the State of the State Address on April 23, 2025.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion was made by Councilmember Maynard, seconded by Councilmember Hasek 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 7:08 p.m.

ATTEST:


Betsy Steuber, City Clerk


Lee C. Baarts, Mayor