WILLMAR CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS
BOARD ROOM HEALTH AND HUMAN SERVICES BUILDING
2200 – 23rd STREET NE, WILLMAR MINNESOTA

January 5, 2026
6:30 PM

The regular meeting of the Willmar City Council was called to order by Mayor Douglas Reese. Members present on a roll call were Mayor Douglas Reese, Council Members Justin Ask, Tom Gilbertson, Steve Gardner, Rick Fagerlie, Vicki Davis, and Carl Shuldes, Excused: Audrey Nelsen and Tom Butterfield. Present 7, Absent 2.

Also present were City Administrator Leslie Valiant, City Operations Director Kyle Box, Police Chief Michael Holme, Fire Chief Frank Hanson, Finance Director Tom Odens, Planning and Development Director Christopher Corbett, Human Resource Director Alissa Gambrel, Public Works Director Shane Stefanick, City Engineer Jared Voge, Environmental Specialist Sara Sietsema, Director of Community Growth Pablo Obregon, City Clerk Vernae Larsen, and City Attorney Robert Scott.

Mayor Reese welcomed new Public Works Director Shane Stefanick to the City of Willmar Staff.

There were no additions or deletions to the agenda. A motion was made by Council Member Ask to **Approve the Agenda as Presented.** Council Member Shuldes seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes	Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes	None

CONSENT AGENDA

City Clerk Vernae Larsen reviewed the consent agenda.

Approve:

A. City Council Minutes of December 15, 2025
B. Special City Council Meeting Minutes of December 29, 2025
C. Planning Commission Minutes of December 17, 2025_DRAFT
D. Willmar Municipal Utilities Commission Minutes of December 22, 2025
E. **Resolution No. 2026-001** 2026-2027 Humane Society Agreement
F. Municipal Utilities Commission Applicants
G. Accounts Payable Report, 12/11/2025 - 12/31/2025

Information:

H. Review Rice Memorial Hospital Board Applicant

I. Monthly Building Report December 2025

Council Member Ask moved to **Approve Consent Agenda Items**. Council Member Gardner seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

OPEN FORUM

Don Pearce - 913 Rice Ave - Says the ordinance that was written regarding the sewer line inspections is very confusing and the realtors do not understand how to interpret what is required.

Justin Pearce - 1301 11th St SW - concerned about the lateral sewer line inspections. He stated that he doesn't think its right to give licensed plumbers, who need to do the inspections, the ability to dictate what needs to be done, and that there's no option to what they say you need to do to fix the line. Also, Section 5 states that the line is unacceptable as directed by the PW Director, such as clay, cast iron - according to this, a line made of cast iron will automatically fail solely due to the line being cast iron. His last point is #7 – It states that Director of Public Works shall determine the extent of the work required to pass, may require a full lateral repair and is at his sole discretion instead of the licensed plumber. He doesn't agree with these standards. He also doesn't see how this makes housing affordable in Willmar.

Cory Weigman 1318 6th St SW - here to discuss confusion regarding the sewer inspection. He states that he has received mixed messages regarding his sewer line inspection, one letter said it passed, the next one said it didn't pass. Bids are from $10,000 to $17,000 to do the work. He is frustrated that the letters state all kinds of mixed messages. He's trying to get clear answers as to what is needed for his property to pass inspection.

PUBLIC HEARING

A. **Consideration to Amend Section 4.02, Subdivision 4 of the City Charter**

Planning and Development Director Christopher Corbett and City Attorney Robert Scott provided an overview of the proposed Ordinance calling for changes to the City Charter Section 4.02 subdivision 4. Mayor Reese opened the public hearing at 6:47 PM. No one from the public spoke for or against the proposed ordinance. With 2 council members not in attendance, Attorney Scott recommended a motion to continue the hearing until all council members are present. Council Member Ask made a **motion to continue the public hearing until January 20, 2026.** Council Member Gilbertson seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

B. **Consideration to Amend Section 4.02, Subdivision 8 of the City Charter**

Planning and Development Director Christopher Corbett and City Attorney Robert Scott provided an overview of the proposed Ordinance calling for changes to the City Charter Section 4.02 subdivision 8. Mayor Reese opened the public hearing at 6:54 p.m. No one from the public spoke for or against the proposed ordinance. With 2 council members not in attendance, Attorney Scott recommended a motion to continue the hearing until all council members are present. Council Member Gilbertson made a **motion to continue the public hearing until January 20, 2026.** Council Member Gardner seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

C. **Consideration to Amend Section 4.06 of the City Charter**

Planning and Development Director Christopher Corbett and City Attorney Robert Scott provided an overview of the proposed Ordinance calling for changes to the City Charter Section 4.06. Mayor Reese opened the public hearing at 6:58 p.m. No one from the public spoke for or against the proposed ordinance. With 2 council members not in attendance, Attorney Scott recommended a motion to continue the hearing until all council members are present. Council Member Gilbertson **made a motion to continue the public hearing until January 20, 2026.** Council Member Davis seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

D. **Consideration to Codify the City of Willmar Zoning Ordinance No. 1060**

Planning and Development Director Christopher Corbett requested approval to codify current zoning ordinance, Ordinance No. 1060. Mayor Reese opened the public hearing at 7:02 p.m. Having no one from the public to speak for or against the proposed ordinance, Mayor Reese closed the public hearing at 7:04 p.m. Council Member Fagerlie made a motion to **Adopt Ordinance No. 1540, codifying the Willmar Zoning Ordinance (Ordinance No. 1060), along with all subsequent amendments, into Chapter 14, Article I of the City Code.** Council Member Gilbertson seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

A motion was made by Council Member Fagerlie to publish by summary of publication. Council Member Shuldes seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner,

Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes

Noes None

REGULAR BUSINESS

A. **4th Street Reconstruction Considerations**

City Engineer Jared Voge provided a brief overview of the proposed options for the 4th Street reconstruction project and detailed the survey that was sent to affected property owners. The survey results showed that affected property owners favored alternative A that allowed for a standard width street with sidewalks on both sides of the street with no bike path. Following discussion, a motion was made by Council Member Shuldes to **proceed with the 4th Street Reconstruction design documents following alternative A**. Council Member Gardner seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes

Noes None

B. **Review of Sanitary Sewer Ordinance**

Environmental Specialist Sara Sietsema reviewed the City Sewer Ordinance and discussed the importance of sealing the leaks in lateral lines, thereby protecting City infrastructure and taxpayer dollars. She also provided an in-depth explanation of the difference between a functioning system and a sealed system and explained how a sealed system saves the city and the taxpayers in the long run.

C. **Consideration to Approve a Job Position for the Planning and Development Department**

Planning and Development Director Christopher Corbett provided an overview of the proposed changes to the vacant position in his department, shifting that position to have a broader outreach to the community rather than focusing on only one district. He asked council to approve the position change. Following discussion, Council Member Gilbertson moved **to approve the Economic and Community Development Specialist position within the Planning and Development Department**. Council Member Davis seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 4, Noes 2.

Ayes Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes

Noes Council Member Ask, Council Member Fagerlie

D. **Review of the Outside Employment Policy**

Human Resource Director Alissa Gambrel **Reviewed the Outside Employment Policy.** Discussion focused on city employees that held leadership and director roles. No action was taken.

E. **Sunday Liquor License Renewal for 2026**

City Clerk Vernae Larsen requested approval for the 2026 Sunday Liquor License Renewal for Tapatio LLC d/b/a El Tapatio. Council Member Ask moved to **Approve the Sunday Liquor License Renewal for 2026**. Council Member Gilbertson seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

F. **Consideration of P & S Stores, LLC Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License**

City Clerk Vernae Larsen requested approval for the P & S Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License through the Fiscal Year Ending April 25, 2026. A motion was made by Council Member Fagerlie to approve the **Off-Sale Intoxicating Liquor License for P & S Stores, LLC d/b/a Westside Market.** Council Member Gilbertson seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

G. **Resolution to Acknowledge Donations for the Fourth Quarter of 2025**

City Clerk Vernae Larsen read the 4th quarter donations and requested approval of a resolution approving and acknowledging the donations. Council Member Fagerlie moved to **Adopt Resolution No. 2026-002 Acknowledging and Accepting the Donations for the 4th Quarter of 2025.** Council Member Gilbertson seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

With no further business to discuss, Council Member Shuldes moved to **Adjourn at 8:21 p.m.** Council Member Fagerlie seconded the motion, which carried on a roll call vote of Ayes 6, Noes 0.

Ayes Council Member Ask, Council Member Gilbertson, Council Member Gardner, Council Member Fagerlie, Council Member Davis, Council Member Shuldes
Noes None

MAYOR

Attest:

CITY CLERK

Resolution No. 2026-001

A RESOLUTION APPROVING THE HUMANE SOCIETY AGREEMENT FOR 2026 AND 2027

Motion By: Ask Second By: Gardner

BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of the City of Willmar, a Municipal Corporation of the State of Minnesota, that the terms with The Humane Society of Kandiyohi and Meeker Counties is accepted, and be it further resolved that the Mayor and City Administrator of the City of Willmar are hereby authorized to enter into an agreement with the Society for the terms and considerations of the contract in the amount of $48,034 for 2026 and $49,234 for 2027.

Dates this 5th day of January, 2026

/S/ Douglas E. Reese
Mayor

Attest:

/S/Vernae Larsen
City Clerk

RSOLUTION NO. 2026-002

ACKNOWLEDGEMENT OF DONATIONS

Motion By: Fagerlie Second By: Gilbertson

WHEREAS, the City of Willmar has received donations which have been acknowledged by the City Administrator expressing the community's appreciation for the period of October 1, 2025, through December 31, 2025.

Amount	From	For/Purpose
$296.00	New London American Legion	Willmar Police Explorers
$165.00	Sara's Sole Care LLC	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$100.00	Pest Pro II	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$100.00	Kari Visser (The Kleaning Lady)	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$100.00	Elmquist Jewelers	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$100.00	Insurance Center	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$50.00	Don's Building Center	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$50.00	Hair We Are	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center

$250.00	Liveedge Construction LLC	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$250.00	Casey's General Stores	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$800.00	Charter Communications	Taylor Swift Event at the Community Center
$750.00	Julie Havoy with OSAIC Wealth Inc.	Willmar Community Center Programs
$1,500.00	Walmart	Shop With a Cop
$2,500.00	Jennie-O/Hormel Financial Services	2026 Community Growth Programs
$20,000.00	BlueCross BlueShield Minnesota	2026 Community Growth Programs
$250.00	American Legion Post No. 167	Veteran's Coffee Social at the Community Center
$100.00	Voiture 1413	Veteran's Coffee Social at the Community Center
$250.00	Legion of St Michael LEMC	Willmar Police Explorers
$300.00	Iron Warrior Motorcycle Club	Willmar Fire Explorers
$250.00	Legion of St Michael LEMC	Willmar Fire Explorers
$500.00	Beverly Falk on behalf of Edward Jones	Willmar Fire Department for discretionary use
$300.00	Iron Warrior Motorcycle Club	Willmar Police Explorers

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT RESOLVED by the City Council of Willmar, Minnesota that the City formally accepts the donations as listed.

Dated this 5 day of January, 2026

/S/ Douglas E. Reese
MAYOR

Attest:

/S/Vernae Larsen
CITY CLERK