

EAST BETHEL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

January 27, 2025

The East Bethel City Council met on January 27, 2025, at 7:00 p.m. for the regular City Council meeting at City Hall.

MEMBERS PRESENT: Ardie Anderson Suzanne Erkel Brian Mundle
 Tim Miller Jim Smith

ALSO PRESENT: Matt Look, City Administrator
 Eric Larson, City Attorney
 Rodney Sanow, Fire Chief
 Nate Ayshford, Public Works Manager

1.0 Call to Order

The January 27, 2025, City Council meeting was called to order by Mayor Anderson at 7:00 p.m.

2.0 Pledge of Allegiance

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3.0 Adopt Agenda

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to adopt tonight's agenda. Miller stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

4.0 Presentations and Public Hearings

4.0 A Anoka County Sheriff Office Monthly Report

Lieutenant Derek Peters presented the December 2024, Sheriff's Report, stating the Sheriff's Department has responded to 393 calls for service, 7 thefts, 3 damage to property, 37 traffic crashes, 25 arrests, 114 traffic stops, and 25 traffic citations.

Erkel asked for statistics on specific communities in the area. Peters stated he can do a comparative analysis based on population.

Informational; no action required.

4.0 B Fire Department Monthly Report

Fire Chief Sanow presented the December 2024 report and noted that they responded to 86 calls, of which 66 were medical, 6 accidents, and 6 alarms. He stated that for 2024, the Fire Department responded to 1,031 calls for service, compared to 962 for 2023. Of the 1,031 calls for service in 2024, 169 duty officers, 473 day calls for stations 1 and 3, 467 day calls for station 2, 298 night calls for stations 1 and 3, 252 night calls for station 2. Of the 1,031 calls for service, 752 were medical, 14 mutual aid, 26 fires, 66 accidents, 46 alarms, 44 smoke in the area, and 83 others.

Sanow recognized top responder firefighters and highlighted their hard work.

Mundle asked if the top responders would get any awards or recognition. Sanow stated that they got recognized at the staff meeting and would get recognized again at the appreciation dinner.

Erkel asked how there are multiple calls to the same location for the same reason. Sanow explained the reasons why they may get called back to the same house multiple times during the day for certain alarms or medical calls.

Erkel asked if they have a phone triage system so a person could take themselves to the hospital. Sanow stated that when a person calls 911 the call goes to the Anoka County Dispatch, then the calls get transferred to Allina, and the Fire Department gets paged out based on the information given to the dispatch center and will get updated as Allina gets more information.

Mundle asked how the breakfast this past weekend went. Sanow stated that the turnout was around 240 compared to around 300 last year, but it went fairly well.

Informational; no action required.

5.0 Public Forum

Tammy Gimpl's comments:

Good evening, mayor and Council, I read the ABC newspaper and Mayor Anderson you quoted saying that Jim Smith was toxic to the fire department, and I truly believe that you owe Jim Smith an apology. Jim Smith as far as I can see has been one of the only people that has been a liaison with the department even when I was on, that has been trying to do things to resolve some of the issues with the fire department. You were also quoted as saying that Smith was, Jim Smith, Councilmember Smith was 'listening to a few individuals,' and here is the 42-page report, the report that was done from Capstone, and in it...did you read this? Mayor responded that yes, he had the whole document. Gimpl asked did you guys all read it? In it, I mean 84% felt bullied. Council Member Mundle interjected, that's not what the question was. Gimpl asked, "excuse me" and Council Member Mundle repeated, that's not what the question was. Gimpl asked what question? Council Member Mundle stated the question you are referring to; the question was 'do you know, or do you feel that is a bully in the fire department.' Ms. Gimpl: okay, 84% felt bullied. CM Mundle: no, 84% recognized that they felt there was a bully in the fire department.

Ms. Gimpl: we will skip that one then.

71% felt that department is not working as a team. That's not a few individuals. 67% say that they are concerned about the future of the fire department, that again is not a few individuals. And the council before you had the report done, paid \$10,000 to have it done for a reason, not because everything was great on the fire department. So, again it wasn't just a few individuals. The report was done because there were issues, are still issues, and Jim Smith has been one of the only individuals that I can see that has been trying to resolve some of the issues. So, to call him toxic is disgusting. Honestly think you owe him an apology... a public apology.

Council also did a policy to keep some security and certain individuals from getting free reign in the fire department and chief (sorry, I wanted to call you chief), Mayor Anderson, you are too close to the fire department, I think you know that, and that policy was done because of people like you. And I just really hope that you recuse yourself from any matters involving the fire department. You have a lot of knowledge, and your opinion very much counts and should be said, but I really do hope that you recuse yourself from some of the fire department, from all of the fire department matters. That's all.

6.0 Consent Agenda

~~Item A: Approve Bill List~~

~~Item B: Approve Meeting Minutes, January 13, 2025 City Council Meeting~~

~~Item C: Landform Contract Approval Affirmation~~

~~Item D: Re-appointment of Park Commission Members~~

~~Item E: Re-appointment of EDA Member~~

~~Item F: Re-appointment of Planning Commission Members~~

~~Item G: Declaration of Vacancies and Authorization to Accept Applications for EDA and Planning Commission~~

Item H: Authorization to Post Vacancy for Community Development Director position

Item I: Resolution No. 2025-07, Arbor Day Declaration April 25, 2025

~~Item J: Resolution No. 2025-08, Declaring Surplus Property~~

~~Item K: Purchase of Toro Wide Area Mower~~

~~Item L: Hidden Prairie Preliminary Plat Extension~~

Mundle requested to pull Items B and K. Smith requested to pull Items B, E, G. Miller requested to pull Item D. Erkel requested to pull Items A, E, F, G, J, K, L.

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to approve Consent Agenda as amended. Miller stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 A Approve Bill List

Erkel stated that she thinks that ACE is overcharging them and is wondering when the last time the City has done a price comparison with other garbage companies. Look stated that they could look into it but added that the \$1,200 is not a common charge, but it is that high because they had a theft of a dumpster from the ice arena which costs \$1,200.

Erkel stated I'll make a motion to approve Item A of the Consent Agenda. Mundle stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 B Approve Meeting Minutes, January 13, 2025 City Council Meeting

Mundle requested a change to page 29 of the packet on line 31, to add that Mundle voted "nay". Smith requested a change to page 28, line 11, to change "Miller asked..." to "Smith asked..."

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to approve Item B of the Consent Agenda. Smith stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 D Re-appointment of Park Commission Members

Miller stated that he is happy and wholehearted for the support of the dedicated Park Commission members and it has been a pleasure to work alongside them.

Miller stated I'll make a motion to approve Item D of the Consent Agenda. Mundle stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 E Re-appointment of EDA Member

Erkel asked about the procedure behind transferring the EDA membership over to elected officials.

Larson stated that with HRA and EDA all commissioners are appointed by the Mayor, with the blessing and vote of the City Council. Larson stated that with their enabling resolution, the Council is the board of the HRA and the EDA is composed of 7 members, 2 of which have to be Councilmembers.

Erkel stated I'll make a motion to table Item E of the Consent Agenda until after their next Work Session. Mundle stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 F Re-appointment of Planning Commission Members

Erkel asked about the wording in the packet regarding this item and why the Park Commission members were listed. Look stated that it was a typo and he will follow up on getting it corrected.

Smith asked if they could just vote on Sharon Johnson and Brian Downie to be voted in.

Smith stated I'll make a motion to approve the Planning Commissioners Sharon Johnson and Brian Downie for their next term. Mundle stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

Smith stated I'll make a motion to table the appointment of any remaining Planning Commission members. Miller stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 G Declaration of Vacancies and Authorization to Accept Applications for EDA and Planning Commission

Erkel stated I'll make a motion to approve the advertisement of the Planning Commission vacancy and to table the appointment of the EDA. Mundle stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 J Resolution No. 2025-08, Declaring Surplus Property

Erkel stated that she has an issue with the City when something reaches a certain age, they automatically consider it a surplus and buy a new one. Erkel asked if there is something wrong with the mower that is beyond repair.

Ayshford stated that they have an equivalent replacement scheme to budget for the replacement of these vehicles. Ayshford stated that this mower was originally supposed to be placed in 2022, but they put more money into it to make it last 3 more years, but it still has surplus value at about \$10,000-20,000 if they sell it now.

Erkel stated I'll make a motion to approve Item J of the Consent Agenda. Smith stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 K Purchase of Toro Wide Area Mower

Mundle asked what the bidding process is. Ayshford stated that most of the stuff is purchased on a Statewide contract, but local businesses will usually match and give the Statewide contract price.

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to approve Item K of the Consent Agenda. Smith stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

6.0 L Hidden Prairie Preliminary Plat Extension

Erkel asked if they denied this extension, what process would they have to go back through. Look stated that if it was denied, they would have to start back at ground zero.

Erkel stated I'll make a motion to approve Item L of the Consent Agenda. Mundle stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

7.0 New Business. Commission, Association, and Task Force Reports

No reports given.

7.0 A Planning Commission

None.

7.0 B Economic Development Authority

None.

7.0 C Park Commission

None.

8.0 Department Reports**8.0 A Community Development**

None.

8.0 B Engineer Report

None.

8.0 C City Attorney

None.

8.0 D Finance

None.

8.0 E Public Works**8.0 E.1 2025 JPA Street Maintenance Projects**

Ayshford stated that staff is requesting that the Council consider approving the listed projects to be bid as part of the 2025 North Metro Street Maintenance Program JPA Street Maintenance Projects.

Ayshford added that the only project recommended to be bid as part of the 2025 JPA Street Maintenance program is 260,000 linear feet of pavement markings, which has an estimated cost of \$30,000-35,000. \$105,000 has been budgeted for 2025, so the excess funds would be used towards 2025 asphalt overlay projects.

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to approve the 2025 JPA Street Maintenance Projects. Miller stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion?

Erkel asked what the restriping entails. Ayshford stated that the yellow and white paint has to be redone every 2 years because it wears off. To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

8.0 E.2 2025 Class 5 Gravel Road Resurfacing Projects

Ayshford stated that in 2006 the City began a six-year cycle of gravel road resurfacing for the 14.5 miles of unpaved roads within our system. This cycle allows up to 5 of our 30 gravel roads to be overlaid with new material each year of the rotation sequence.

Ayshford added that \$40,000 was budgeted for gravel road resurfacing for 2025. The costs for these projects are for material and delivery. The Public Works Department conducts the grading, compaction, and finishing of this material. Prior to the placement of any new Class 5 material, public works staff will reclaim the shoulders and reshape the existing road surface.

Ayshford discussed the gravel roads resurfaced in 2024 and presented the recommended roads for 2025 Class 5 resurfacing.

Ayshford also stated that staff is also recommending an application of chloride to Klondike Dr. Based on previous years bid pricing, the estimated project costs of the chloride and Class 5 will be covered in the \$40,000 budget.

Erkel stated I'll make a motion to approve the 2025 Class 5 Gravel Road Resurfacing Projects. Smith stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

8.0 F Fire Department

None.

8.0 G City Administrator Report

8.0 G.1 MN Public Employee Association Union Negotiation Process and Timeline Discussion

Look stated that staff recommends Council consider the following options for the 2026-2028 union negotiation process and determine their preference for moving forward.

1. Continue with past practice and have the City Administrator along with the Finance Director and Public Works Manager initiate/facilitate negotiations between the City and Union. After meeting with the Union, the City Administrator would provide the City Council a summary of the Union proposal—continuing this process until an agreement is reached.
2. Have the City Administrator along with the City's Personnel Committee initiate and facilitate negotiation between the City and Union. After meeting with the Union, the City Administrator would provide the City Council a summary of the Union proposal—continuing this process until an agreement is reached.
3. Outsource the entire negotiation to a third party or the City Attorney.

Smith asked what has been done in the past. Look stated that historically, City staff, including the City Administrator, Finance Director, and Public Works Manager, have met with the Union Steward and Union Agent to facilitate the negotiation process, which is ultimately ratified by both the Union and City Council.

Erkel asked who is on the City's personnel committee. Look stated that he believes it is Anderson and Smith.

Erkel suggested a combination of option 1 and 2. Look stated that it is done at the County, the elected did not get involved at all, it was negotiated by an attorney then brought forward to them to be ratified by the Board.

Look stated that if they hire a profession who has done this before, they have the leveraging power that they may not have. Erkel asked what the additional cost would be. Look was not sure.

Look stated that it should be established before the budget, but it should not be rushed. Mundle stated they would need a little more information on the cost for option 3.

Larson stated that there are various options to consider and he can talk to the City Administrator to provide additional information so they can make an informed decision. Larson stated that he looks at the collective bargaining agreement at the end and looks at all the contracts before they are approved.

Erkel stated I'll make a motion to table the Union Negotiation Process and Timeline Discussion and direct staff to come back with comparable pricing. Smith stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

9.0 – Other Items

9.0 A Staff Report

Look stated that the Board of Appeals training cuts off this week.

Look stated that the Local Board of Appeals is scheduled for April 28, 2025.

Look added that one property, 455 Forest Road, has been tax condemned by the County and the property will go up for auction.

Erkel asked if the resident of the property has come forward. Look stated that the neighbor has complained because of the bad shape and the dangers it creates.

9.0 B Council Reports

Smith asked Larson to explain the difference between a strong and weak mayor system.

Larson stated that the weak mayor system is a mayor who is more of a propaganda figurehead and their power is at best the same as the City Council. A strong mayor system acts as a city manager, are full-time, appoint, and staff serves at the pleasure of the mayor.

Smith asked what East Bethel is considered. Larson stated that they lean more towards a weak system.

Smith's comments:

I am addressing you, Mr. Mayor, on the comments you made at your first meeting about my role as liaison to our Fire Department. It's crucial that we base our discussions on facts and maintain a respectful dialog that prioritizes the well-being of our community and its dedicated public servants. I feel the comments made by you Mayor fell way short and need correction. You Mr. Mayor claimed that the fire department has been kinda toxic with me as the liaison blaming the toxicity on me? Seriously, where did you get your facts for this comment? I went back through the Jerry Streich report, and I could not find the word 'toxic' anywhere. First, I want to acknowledge the concerns raised in the recent efficiency report. While some firefighters have expressed feeling supported by the city leadership, others have voiced about perceived micromanagement. It is important to note that these concerns highlight a need for improvement communication and collaboration, which I have offered from day one, not toxicity. Nowhere in the report was there an indication of a toxic environment created by the liaison. Nowhere in the report does it ever mention, not once, that the liaison was toxic or created a toxic environment. If find the statement made by you, Mr. Mayor, disrespectful falsified comment like you made that create a toxic environment on council. In my opinion, as your liaison, I have consistently prioritized open communications with the fire department meetings with the fire chief immediately after being assigned to the liaison position and offering 24/7 availability to address any issues or concerns. Which numerous fire fighters have used. I have advocated for increased pay finding to recognize the invaluable contributions of our volunteer fire fighters and told by the Chief the firefighters don't need any more money. I totally disagreed with this statement by the Chief. I have requested more detailed budget proposals to ensure transparency and accountability while looking for options to fund this request. I think it's worth noting that the report mentions some feel they are micromanaged by council, and some say I am less engaged. The role of a liaison is to communicate coordinate, collaborate, with all the parties involved. Even though I have a full-time job, I will not be able to make all the meetings. The fire department meetings fall on Monday nights the same night as most city council meeting nights. I urge you Mr. Mayor to take back your statement because it was not factual. We have some issues that the report clearly identified with the fire department, and it is up to us to ensure that our firefighters have the property resources and support they need from us and the residents to serve our community effectively. Your false statements and reason regarding a change does nothing to help achieve the goal.

Erkel stated that it seemed illegal to make such negative comments to a public news source and asked Larson to address the situation.

Larson stated that the First Amendment allows individuals to say anything they want.

Miller handed in a guideline and instructed staff to put together a barndominium ordinance in East Bethel and get it into the next work meeting to discuss.

9.0 C Other

None.

10.0 Adjourn

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to adjourn. Erkel stated I'll second. To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

Meeting adjourned at 8:10 p.m.

Submitted by:

Lilian Rokosz

TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.