

EAST BETHEL CITY COUNCIL MEETING

September 8, 2025

The East Bethel City Council met on September 8, 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
 Jacob Saufley, City Attorney
 Jeff Cielocha, Fire Chief
 Grace Gerard, City Planner
 Mike Jeziorski, Deputy City Administrator/Finance Director

1.0 Call to Order

The September 8, 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. Erkel 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 Adoption of 2026 Preliminary Levy and Budget

4.0 A.1 Preliminary 2026 Budget

Look stated on July 14, 2025, City Staff and Contracted Personnel from the Administration, Finance, Fire, Police, and Public Works Departments presented their budget proposals to the entire City Council for comment and review. Based on input from the City Council, Department Heads, and Union Contract, the preliminary budget was prepared for the City Council to review and consider its approval at tonight's meeting.

Look stated that the preliminary 2026 general fund expenditure budget is projected to increase by 7% or \$479,400. This expenditure increase would then result in a corresponding levy increase (general tax levy and debt service levy) of 3.8% or \$246,100 to balance the 2026 budget. Overall, the general tax levy, debt service levy, EDA levy, and HRA levy would increase by 3.7% or \$246,100. Look presented the primary drivers of the overall increase.

Mundle asked if there had been an increase since they last discussed it. Jeziorski stated that it has stayed the same since they discussed it in July.

4.0 A.2 Resolution No. 2025-48, Set Final 2026 Levy & Budget Date

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to adopt Resolution 2025-48, Set Final Levy & Budget Date. Erkel Gstated 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 A.3 Resolution No. 2025-49, Set the Preliminary 2026 Levy & Budget

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to adopt Resolution 2025-49, Set the Preliminary 2026 Levy & Budget. Erkel 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 A.4 Resolution No. 2025-50, Set the Preliminary 2026 EDA Levy & Budget

Anderson stated I'll make a motion to adopt Resolution 2025-50, Set the Preliminary 2026 EDA Levy & Budget. 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.**

4.0 A.5 Resolution No. 2025-51, Set the Preliminary 2026 HRA Levy & Budget

Anderson stated I'll make a motion to adopt Resolution 2025-51, Set the Preliminary 2026 HRA Levy & Budget. 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.**

5.0 Public Forum

None.

6.0 Consent Agenda

Item A: Approve Bill List

Item B: Approve Tabled Meeting Minutes August 11, 2025 City Council Meeting

Item C: Approve Meeting Minutes, August 25, 2025 City Council Work Meeting

Item D: Approve Meeting Minutes, August 25, 2025 City Council Meeting

Item E: Successful Completion of Probationary Period: City Planner

Item F: 2026 Anoka County Municipal Waste Abatement Grant Funding Award/Recycle Contract

Item G: Siento Peer Support Program

Mundle requested to pull Item G. Erkel requested to pull Item E. Miller requested to pull Item A.

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to approve Consent Agenda as amended. Erkel 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

Miller asked about the rental of portable bathrooms and if they had just expanded that number. Mundle stated that it could have been for Booster Day.

Jeziorski stated that it is a recurring charge, but an additional one was rented for Booster Day, and the City will be reimbursed for that cost.

Miller stated I'll make a motion to approve Item A of the Consent Agenda. Erkel 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 Successful Completion of Probationary Period: City Planner

Erkel stated that she thinks the City Planner's probationary period should be 6 months without assistance from Landform. Erkel requested that Gerard's probationary period be extended by 6 months from the last time Landform was used.

Look stated that they are still utilizing Landform on an as-needed basis for some of the more complicated needs in Planning and Zoning, so he is unsure if there will be a last usage of their services.

Look stated that they are about 80% down from what Landform was originally billing them for versus what they are currently needing. Look noted that these 6 months are customary for new employees; Kendra Lindahl with Landform did the analysis on the probationary paperwork since she has worked closely with Gerard, and she had nothing but positive comments on the work Gerard has done.

Jeziorski stated that, historically, they have never extended a probationary period like this. Jeziorski stated that she is performing in an exemplary manner, and anything that extends past the typical City Planner duties is the only thing Lindahl has been doing.

Smith stated that they need to see her for 6 months on her own without people explaining the process. Erkel stated that she needs to be able to do it on her own.

Erkel asked what an example of something that Landform has to do, that the City Planner cannot do on her own. Jeziorski stated that anything related to TIF or that does not happen on a routine basis, they would like an extra eye on.

Jeziorski stated that even the staff have to tap into different sources based on expertise, and it is always good to go to an expert in the field.

Look stated that as relationships are built with other City Planners, more collaboration and communication can become a reality, which is why having Lindahl is invaluable, especially for the very complex cases.

Look noted that Landform does have a weekly check-in with the City Planner, but Gerard is doing her day-to-day work on her own.

Mundle stated that as Look and Jeziorski work with Gerard daily, he trusts their opinion on the wonderful job she is doing, so he does not think there is a need to extend her probationary period.

Anderson stated that she is doing more than just the City Planner job, but is also filling in in the absence of a Community Development Director, so some of the assistance from Lindahl is coming from the other job duties.

Erkel stated that she thinks they are using Landform too much, and Gerard needs an additional 6 months of probationary period, or at least 3 more months.

Look stated that even with their firefighters, they undergo extensive training even after their probationary period ends. Look stated that they can extend the probationary period, but he would caution against setting a precedent on that.

Erkel stated that if a person is not meeting a criterion but has the potential, it should be a reason to extend the probationary period.

Look stated that Gerard is meeting expectations.

Miller stated that he agrees with Erkel's comments, but Gerard is working behind the scenes with staff daily. Miller stated that 6 months may be too long, but 3 months might be a good way to be careful to ensure they are putting a ready person in a crucial position for the City.

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to approve Item E of the Consent Agenda. Anderson stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **Mundle, Anderson - Aye.** Anderson asked any opposed? **Erkel, Miller, Smith - Nay.** That motion fails. **Motion fails.**

Smith stated I'll make a motion to extend the Probationary Period of the City Planner for 3 months. Erkel stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion? To the motion, all in favor say aye. **Erkel,**

Miller, Smith - Aye. Anderson asked any opposed? **Mundle, Anderson - Nay.** That motion passes. **Motion passes.**

6.0 G Siento Peer Support Program

Mundle stated there was no information about this in the packet and asked if the Fire Chief could give a quick overview of the program.

Fire Chief Cielocha stated that they had a long discussion with this company, and they have technology and an app that can be used to connect to 14,000 other peer supporters across the country. Cielocha stated that this gives their members the chance to talk with people who can listen and provide support in times of emotional need.

Cielocha stated that Siento has offered to help them construct an internal peer support team and guide them. Cielocha stated that it would be a one-time subscription at approximately \$5,400, but Siento is funding it for them, so there is no financial impact.

Anderson asked if the Anoka County Fire Protection Department has free peer counseling. Cielocha stated that he believes it is still an option, so this service would be in addition to that, and Siento has various teams that can come in free of charge.

Erkel asked for an example of what the peer support would help with. Cielocha stated that it is a newer, start-up company. Cielocha noted that the peer support could be used after a significant car accident or a house fire that had multiple fatalities, and one of their members needed someone to talk to after that call for their own mental health.

Cielocha stated that his firefighters should have access to this if they need it.

Cielocha stated that it is a year-by-year subscription, so they can reevaluate next year depending on how much it was used or not, and if they would like to continue with the services even if they have to pay for the cost of it.

Anderson noted that he can remember many painful sights in his 41 years as a firefighter, and it only takes one time, and it is stuck in your head for many years, so it is helpful to have those services, especially right after an incident.

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to approve Item G of the Consent 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.**

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

7.0 A Planning Commission

7.0 A.1 Variances: Size and Number of Accessory Buildings, 22206 Durant Street NE

Gerard stated that the City received an application from Troy and Laurie Slater for property at 22206 Durant Street NE to allow for the construction of a 60 x 150 foot (9,000 square foot) accessory structure for agricultural use.

Gerard stated that this property is 29.82 acres. It is zoned A - Agriculture and guided RR – Rural Residential. The property to the west is zoned and guided A – Agriculture, and the properties to the north, south, and east are guided and zoned RR – Rural Residential.

Gerard noted that the City Council approved a rezoning from RR – Rural Residential to A – Agriculture on March 10, 2025.

Gerard stated that this would be the 5th accessory structure on this property. The 4 other accessory structures on the property total 1,652 square feet. The addition of this structure would bring the

property to a total accessory structure square footage of 10,652 square feet. Based on acreage, this property is limited to a total accessory structure square footage of 8,760 square feet, requiring a variance from Section 14-4 Subdivision 4A of the Zoning Ordinance. Additionally, Section 14-4 Subdivision 4A of the Zoning Ordinance limits properties of this size to 4 accessory structures, requiring a variance for the construction of a 5th structure.

Gerard noted that both variances would be necessary for the applicant to construct a 9,000 square foot building. The first variance could be approved without approval of the second, though the applicant would be limited to the 8,760 square footage total.

Gerard presented the sketch of the proposed structure.

Consideration of a variance requires the following three-factor test for practical difficulties. Economic considerations alone do not constitute a practical difficulty. All three standards must be met to grant the variance: reasonableness, uniqueness, and character.

Gerard added that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on this item on August 26, 2025. The property owner was present to explain the purpose of the proposed building and provide information about the existing buildings on the site. No one else was present to comment during the public hearing. The Planning Commission voted 3-1 to recommend approval of the variances. Commissioner Downie voted to recommend denial of these variances over concerns of setting a precedent and suggested that an existing building be removed from the site. Chair Johnson abstained due to a conflict of interest.

Erkel stated I'll make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2025-52, granting variances from Appendix A, Section 14-4, subdivision 4A of the City Code for the construction of a 5th accessory structure and a total of 10,652 square feet of accessory structure on property located at 22206 Durant Street NE. 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 A.2 Rezoning, PUD Preliminary Plan, Preliminary Plat for Cliffs Anderson Acres: PIN# 12-33-23-14-0002, 217th Avenue NE

Gerard stated that Sherco Construction has applied for a Rezoning, PUD Preliminary Plan, and Preliminary Plat of a three-lot subdivision named "Cliffs Anderson Acres."

Gerard noted that the total area of the existing parcel is approximately 20.35 acres. The parcel is guided Rural Residential and zoned RR- Rural Residential within the Special Natural Environmental Overlay District. The properties to the south and west of this parcel are all guided and zoned the same. The properties to the north of this parcel are guided and zoned Park/Natural Area within the Gordie Mikkelson Wildlife Management Area. The properties to the east are within Linwood Township's "Dellwood County Estates" subdivision.

Gerard stated that the Rezoning, PUD, and Preliminary Plat request meets the standards in the Code and matches the concept plan previously reviewed by the City. The requests are consistent with the comprehensive plan and density allowed for these parcels. Staff recommends approval of the Rezoning, Preliminary PUD Plan, and Preliminary Plat. Staff has provided findings of fact for approval within the approval resolution. These findings may be modified to reflect the findings of the Council.

Gerard stated that the Planning Commission held a public hearing on this item on August 26, 2025. The Developer was present to speak on the item. No one else was present to comment during the public hearing. The Planning Commission voted 5-0 to recommend approval of the Ordinance to

rezone the property to PUD overlay and 5-0 to recommend approval of the Resolution approving the Preliminary PUD Plan and Preliminary Plat.

Gerard noted that staff recommends the City Council move to adopt the Ordinance to rezone the property to PUD Overlay and the Resolution approving the Preliminary PUD Plan and Preliminary Plat for Cliffs Anderson Acres, a 3-lot single-family subdivision north of 217th Avenue NE.

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to adopt Ordinance No. 2025-04, rezoning the property as identified as PID #12-33-23-14-0002 to Planned Unit Development Overlay. 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.**

Mundle stated I'll make a motion to adopt Resolution No. 2025-53, approving the Preliminary PUD Plan and Preliminary Plat for 'Cliffs Anderson Acres.' Erkel stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion?

Erkel asked about the acreage. Gerard stated that the Comprehensive Plan sets an overall density standard for the Rural Residential district throughout the City as 1 unit for every 10 acres. Gerard stated that the City Code establishes a different standard for lot area, allowing for denser subdivisions on a case-by-case basis.

Erkel asked about tree removal. Gerard stated they will remove a very small number of trees for driveway access.

Erkel asked for an example of what stipulations a City Council could place on the developer. Gerard stated that an example would be requiring a certain amount of native plantings in the drainage basins.

To the motion, all in favor say aye. **All in favor.** Anderson asked any opposed? That motion passes. **Motion passes unanimously.**

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

None.

8.0 F Fire Department

None.

8.0 G City Administrator Report

None.

9.0 – Other Items**9.0 A Staff Report**

Look stated that they have been busy today and will be again tomorrow, giving tours to the agencies that are interested in participating in the RFP for the facility study.

Look noted that they will have a Senate Bonding Tour where the State comes out and does bonding tours for projects that are seeking State bonding. Look noted that they will present the bonding needs of East Bethel when the Senate comes to town.

Look stated that they transitioned over to MidCo TV and stated that if anyone needs technical support, they can call 1-800-888-1300. People can also go to [YouTube.com](https://www.youtube.com) and search for East Bethel to find live and previous meetings.

Erkel asked if this is effective immediately, so people cannot watch this meeting on their cable TV. Look noted that he thinks that is the case unless there was some crossover.

9.0 B Council Reports

Miller stated that they have been in negotiations with BDM Construction and Firebird Land LLC to end the City's tax dollars from going to funding a private business. They had a meeting where they thought they came to an agreement and shook hands, only to have the deal changed at the last minute.

Miller stated that the owner of BDM Construction has stated that he has put away \$100,000 to legally fight the City in court over this contract. Miller stated it is perplexing that a commercial business is threatening legal action and using \$100,000 against a City that has never charged this business a dime for operating out of a City-owned building, and is a threat that needs to be taken seriously.

Miller noted that even though they offered a more than fair offer and had an agreement, it is apparent that this deal will not happen. The City Council has an agenda to be fair when it comes to all businesses in this City; they want all businesses to have a level playing field, tax dollars to be spent properly, and not violate any State Statutes.

Miller noted that they would start an eviction process if an agreement was not signed by BDM or Firebird LLC by August 19, 2025. Miller stated that, from his understanding, they have not begun any eviction process yet.

Miller noted that the City Administrator has reached out one last time to gain some cooperation in this matter, and as a result of a failure to act by BDM or Firebird Land LLC, I further motion to evict from Rooms 106 and 107 within 30 days, allowing only one access to Room 108 as the office.

Miller stated that this agreement does not address any electrical or internet usage and directed staff to isolate the office's electrical usage and calculate the monthly cost. Failure to pay by BDM will result in shutting the power off to that office, as it would be with any other place.

Miller added to include that the WIFI password be changed, preventing unauthorized usage of the City-owned and paid-for internet. Miller also added that rooms 106 and 107 are to be cleaned, and repairs to the walls or cabinets have been made at the expense of BDM, and any damages will be assessed to BDM and a small claims filing in Anoka County. The sign placed on City-owned property must be removed within 24 hours; the sign on Highway 65 can remain, but a permit must be applied for within 48 hours.

Miller stated that this cannot go on any longer, and this is what needs to be done.

Miller stated I'll make a motion to evict BDM Construction from rooms 106 and 107 within 30 days, allowing only one access to Room 108 as office, direct staff to isolate that office electrical usage and calculate monthly cost, the WIFI password be changed, preventing unauthorized usage of the City-owned and paid for internet, rooms 106 and 107 are to be cleaned and repairs done to the walls or cabinets have been installed at the expense of BDM and any damages will be assessed to BDM and small claims filing in Anoka County, the sign place on City-owned property must be removed within 24 hours, and the sign on Highway 65 can remain but a permit must be applied for within 48 hours. Smith stated I'll second. Anderson asked any discussion?

Anderson asked the City Attorney if they would be in litigation trying to push for this without a formal lease agreement. Saufley stated that this interpretation of the contract could be construed by BDM as several different things and could cause legal action from BDM.

Saufley noted that the act of eviction is a civil legal action, so if the City were to enforce its rights under eviction or ejection, it would be utilizing the court system.

Erkel asked if giving BDM a different space was a form of eviction or if it was honoring the contract in a different method. Saufley stated that it is the matter that is up for interpretation.

Saufley stated that the City's position is that there is not an expansive ability to use all the offices in the facility; there is the right to use an office in the facility.

Anderson stated that he cannot support this motion because it will cost the City more than just the \$300 per month. Anderson stated that he realizes what it has cost the City in the past, but to put them further into litigation and cost, he would like to resolve this in some other way.

Miller stated that they made a fair offer of \$300 per month, and it was rejected. Miller stated that they have 3 offices there. Miller noted that they cannot keep going back and forth; they have to put the contract back where it was.

To the motion, all in favor say aye. **Erkel, Miller, Smith - Aye.** Anderson asked any opposed?
Anderson - Nay. Mundle - Abstain. That motion passes. **Motion passes.**

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 8:01 p.m.

Submitted by:

Lilian Rokosz

TimeSaver Off Site Secretarial, Inc.