CITY COUNCIL MEETING

City Hall—Council Chambers, 3989 Central Ave NE
Monday, April 27, 2026
6:00 PM

Mayor
Amáda Márquez Simula
Councilmembers
Connie Buesgens
Rachel James
Justice Spriggs
Laurel Deneen
City Manager
Aaron Chirpich

MINUTES

The following are the minutes for the Meeting of the City Council held at 6:00 pm on Monday, April 27, 2026, in the City Council Chambers, City Hall, 3989 Central Avenue NE, Columbia Heights, Minnesota.

WELCOME/CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL
Mayor Márquez Simula called the meeting to order at 6:00 pm.

Present: Mayor Márquez Simula; Councilmember Deneen; Councilmember Spriggs; Councilmember James

Absent: Councilmember Buesgens

Also Present: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager; David Cullen, Public Works Director; Sara Ion, City Clerk; Travis Lutz, Assistant City Attorney; Jesse Davies, Refuse Coordinator; Jesse Hauf, IT Director.

MISSION STATEMENT
Columbia Heights is a vibrant, healthy, and connected City. We are here to actively support the community, deliver equitable services, build and strengthen connections, improve upon our past, and uphold our successes. We strive to be better and ensure Columbia Heights is a great place for everyone, today and in the future.

A. Columbia Heights City Council and Staff Norms.
While we are accountable to each other for these norms, the Mayor and City Manager will help us adhere to them with respectful reminders and reinforcement as needed.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE
"I pledge allegiance to the flag of the United States of America, and to the Republic for which it stands, one Nation under God, indivisible, with liberty and justice for all."

APPROVAL OF AGENDA
Motion by Councilmember Deneen, seconded by Councilmember Spriggs, to approve the Agenda as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 4-0.

PROCLAMATIONS, PRESENTATIONS, RECOGNITION, ANNOUNCEMENTS, GUESTS

A. Arbor Day / Arbor Month Proclamation.
Accepting Proclamation: Columbia Heights Public Works Director David Cullen.

Mayor Márquez Simula proclaimed April 24, 2026, as Arbor Day, and May 2026 as Arbor Month, and read the City's proclamation.

Public Works Director Cullen thanked the Council for the Proclamation and recognition for the hard work the Public Works Department does. Mayor Márquez Simula mentioned that this past Friday, there was an Arbor Day tree planting event where a large tree was planted on the east side of Huset Park.

B. Earth Day Proclamation.
Accepting Proclamation: Kiwanis Keys Club.

Mayor Márquez Simula proclaimed April 22, 2026, as Earth Day, and Councilmember James read the City's proclamation.

The Kiwanis Key Club accepted the Proclamation and introduced themselves as members of the Key Club from Columbia Heights High School. They explained that the Key Club and the Kiwanis Club work on environmental protection, and they expressed gratitude towards the Council. Mayor Márquez Simula explained that the clubs clean University Avenue, and help every Saturday at the recycling center. She additionally highlighted the City's composting program.

C. Better Futures Presentation and Recycling Champions Certificate
Presenting Item: Jesse Davies, Refuse Coordinator

Jesse Davies, Refuse Coordinator, introduced Jason Allen, who is the CEO of Better Futures of Minnesota. He thanked the City for the continued partnership over the years. He noted that Better Futures is a non-profit social enterprise that is rooted in the idea that people, planet, and economic opportunity are not separate goals but are interconnected outcomes. He added that they organize their work around the three pillars of sustainability. He noted that they create access to employment and stability for individuals who are often excluded from the workforce. They care for the planet by advancing environmental stewardship through waste diversion and material reuse. They provide economic opportunities by delivering high-quality contract-based services that create real economic value for their partners.

Mr. Allen noted that the partnership with the City is collaborative. The City decided to invest in an organics collection program because of the environmental impact. The program has grown and highlighted the City's values. He noted the three-year extended contract with the City will display continued trust and show that the work matters. The organic program exists because the City recognized the environmental benefit of keeping organic material out of the landfill and the human opportunity embedded in the work. Jobs are created throughout the process.

Mr. Allen stated that they are proud to continue the work with the City and remain committed to delivering a service that reflects operational excellence and the values that made the partnership possible.

Mayor Márquez Simula presented Mr. Allen with the Recycling Champions Certificate and noted that Better Futures has collected over 100 tons of organics in the last two years, keeping the material out of the trash and delivering it to a facility where they make high-nutrient compost. The convenience of their curbside program has encouraged 500 properties to participate so far, with more signing up every month. In addition, they have deconstructed some City properties to save building materials, household fixtures, various metals, etc., for reuse and recycling before major demolition and disposal of the structure.

CITY COUNCIL AND ADMINISTRATIVE REPORTS

Report of the City Council

Mayor Márquez Simula read a statement on behalf of the City Council. The statement expressed heartfelt thoughts towards the family, coworkers, and friends of Fire Captain Anthony Cuzzupe, and highlighted his constant presence in the City. Most recently, Fire Captain Cuzzupe helped the local Cub Scout Troop welcome the new Minnesota State flag into the City Council Chambers. The Fire Department and the City mourn his passing and honor his legacy of service.

Councilmember James mentioned that Mayor Márquez Simula invited the Council to wear orange to honor Fire Captain Cuzzupe. She thanked the Public Works Department and noted that they have been busy filling in potholes, putting in new park equipment, sweeping the roads, cleaning storm drains, and flushing hydrants. She noted she attended the Boards and Commissions reception at City Hall. She mentioned that she had many residents express concerns about flock cameras. She stated she attended the League of Women Voters event about who decides what belongs in the libraries. She mentioned she had a meeting with other elected officials on the right to renew provisions, and she met with the Brooklyn Park Council President to discuss their decision to discontinue the use of flock cameras. She noted she attended the Columbia Heights Public Schools Night of Gratitude and Community event and the Buy Nothing event. She explained that she went to the Minnesota House Taxes Committee and testified on behalf of the City for an opportunity for the TIF extension for the 4300 Central Avenue project. She mentioned that she attended the Metro Transit BRT open house, the Anoka County Fire Protection Council meeting, and the HeightsNext street cleanup on Central Avenue. She thanked everyone who celebrated Earth Day.

Councilmember Deneen stated she attended the HeightsNext planning meeting, the Boards and Commission reception, the League of Women Voters discussion, the Metro Transit open house, and the HeightsNext street cleanup event on Central Avenue.

Councilmember Spriggs mentioned he attended the Columbia Heights Public Schools Night of Appreciation, which recognized the community for all that they did during Operation Metro Surge. He acknowledged that there is still enforcement going on in the community. He noted he attended the end of the Minnesota Climate Coalition meeting. He explained that he had the opportunity to meet with a few health professional students through an organization called Advocates for Better Health,

and had a few meetings with residents regarding concerns about flock cameras. He stated he attended the Board of Appeals meeting.

Mayor Márquez Simula stated she attended the Arbor Day celebration and helped distribute sweet potato pies with Sweet Potato Comfort Pies. She mentioned she participated in the League of Women Voters meeting, the JLEC meeting, and met with the new leader for the Minnesota Council on Latino Affairs, where they discussed an immigration bill that impacts children in foster care as they age out of the system. She noted that Anoka County Warrant Resolution Day would occur on May 1st. Those who have an outstanding warrant can get it resolved. She mentioned that she participated in the Columbia Heights Public School Day of Gratitude. She mentioned that one of the County Commissioners had a flock camera listening session, and the City would host a listening session on May 14th at City Hall from 6:00-8:00 pm. She added that there would be a Friends of Kordiak Park meeting in the afternoon at City Hall. She stated she was invited to the Governor's State address at the Capitol tomorrow night.

Report of the City Manager

City Manager Chirpich explained that Fire Captain Cuzzupe's life would be honored and the visitation would be on April 29th from 4:00-8:00 pm at Washburn McCreary in Coon Rapids at 1827 Coon Rapids Blvd NW, Coon Rapids, MN 55433. The funeral service will be on April 30th at 1:00 pm, and the visitation will start at 11:00 am. All firefighters are invited to attend and support the family and the department. Fire departments that are planning to attend are encouraged to contact the City's Fire Department to let them know if they are coming. He added that people are encouraged to wear orange and to include an element of orange in any flower arrangements that are sent.

City Manager Chirpich acknowledged mutual aid departments that assisted the City's Fire Department after hearing the news. He expressed appreciation to the departments in Fridley, St. Anthony, and Brooklyn Park for providing services to the City so that the City's Fire Department could gather and decide next steps and grieve together. In addition, all members of the Fire Department will be able to attend the funeral service due to the surrounding communities covering the services. There will be a flock town hall on May 14th at City Hall at 6:00 pm, and more details will be on the City's website. He added that the City will provide an online submission process so questions can be submitted.

City Manager Chirpich noted that the City's annual Arbor Day tree sale concludes on April 30th. There is a limited number of trees available for purchase. He encouraged community members to visit the City's website or call the City Forester at 763-706-3722 for up-to-date availability for trees. Fire hydrant flushing continues in the northwest quadrant of the City from April 27th through May 1st, and concludes in the southwest quadrant May 4th through May 7th. Hydrants are flushed from 7:00 am to 3:00 pm, and the flushing may cause temporary discoloration to the water, which is normal and safe. Concerns and questions can be directed to the Public Works Department at 763-706-3700.

COMMUNITY FORUM
There were no comments in the Community Forum.

CONSENT AGENDA
Motion by Councilmember James, seconded by Councilmember Deneen, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. All Ayes, Motion Carried 4-0.

1. **Approve April 6, 2026, City Council Work Session Meeting Minutes.**
   Presenting Item: City Manager Aaron Chirpich
   MOTION: Move to approve the April 6, 2026, City Council Work Session meeting minutes.

2. **Approve April 6, 2026, Special City Council Meeting Minutes.**
   Presenting Item: City Manager Aaron Chirpich
   MOTION: Move to approve the April 6, 2026, Special City Council meeting minutes.

3. **Approve April 13, 2026, City Council Meeting Minutes.**
   Presenting Item: City Manager Aaron Chirpich
   MOTION: Move to approve the April 13, 2026, City Council meeting minutes.

4. **Accept February 4, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes.**
   Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
   MOTION: Move to accept the February 4, 2026, Planning Commission meeting minutes.

5. **Accept March 3, 2026, Planning Commission Meeting Minutes.**
   Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
   MOTION: Move to accept the March 3, 2026, Planning Commission meeting minutes.

6. **Consideration of Resolution 2026-030, to Apply for Metropolitan Council Local Planning Assistance Grant Funds to Complete the 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update**
   Presenting Item: *Aaron Chirpich, City Manager*
   MOTION: Move to waive the reading of Resolution 2026-030, there being ample copies available to the public.
   MOTION: Motion to adopt Resolution 2026-030, a resolution identifying the need for funding to complete the 2050 Comprehensive Plan Update and authorizing an application for Planning Assistance Grant Funds.

7. **License Agenda**
   Presenting Item: Aaron Chirpich, City Manager
   MOTION: Move to approve the items as listed on the business license agenda for April 27, 2026**,** as presented.

8. **Rental Occupancy Licenses for Approval.**
   Presenting Item: *Aaron Chirpich, City Manager*
   MOTION: Move to approve the items listed for rental housing license applications for April 27, 2026, in that they have met the requirements of the Property Maintenance Code.

9. **Review of Bills.**
   MOTION: Move that in accordance with Minnesota Statute 412.271, subd. 8 the City Council has reviewed the enclosed list of claims paid by check and by electronic funds transfer in the amount of $1,233,724.90.

ADJOURNMENT

Motion by Councilmember Spriggs, seconded by Councilmember Deneen, to adjourn. All Ayes, Motion Carried 4-0.

Meeting adjourned at 6:41 pm.

Respectfully Submitted,



Sara Ion, City Clerk/Council Secretary