



CITY OF
GRAND RAPIDS
IT'S IN MINNESOTA'S NATURE

CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

Monday, July 28, 2025

5:00 PM

Mayor Connelly called the meeting to order at 5:00 PM.

PRESENT: Mayor Tasha Connelly, Councilor Molly MacGregor, Councilor Rick Blake, Councilor Dan Mertes. **ABSENT:** Councilor Tom Sutherland.

STAFF: Kimberly Gibeau, Chad Sterle, Natalee Bushman, Kevin Ott, Rob Mattei, Chery Pierzina, Carl Babich

POSITIVE HAPPENINGS IN THE CITY:

Mayor Connelly recognized employees for their recent milestones and accomplishments. This included welcoming a new hire to the Police Department and acknowledging an employee who successfully completed their probationary period in Public Works. Several staff members were honored for their years of dedicated service across various departments, including the Police Department, Public Works, the Community Development Department, and the Grand Rapids Area Library.

COUNCIL REPORTS:

Councilor MacGregor shared a brief report on recent activities, including her attendance at the League of Minnesota Cities annual meeting in late June, which she found to be a valuable experience. The League typically conducts three policy committees each summer to prepare for the legislative session, but this year they have added a fourth focused on human resources and data practices. The other committees cover topics such as service delivery, local economic development, and fiscal planning. Councilor MacGregor encouraged others to reach out if they're interested in learning more or submitting policy ideas, mentioning that building maintenance funding—such as for the Central School—was discussed. Additionally, she noted the formation of three task forces on housing, data practices, and elections, with the housing task force meeting scheduled for August 12 via Zoom, emphasizing participating in these committees and task forces is a great way to stay informed on legislative priorities.

Councilor MacGregor also reported on the Arrowhead Regional Development Commission's quarterly meeting held on July 17th, highlighting an energy efficiency community development block grant that offers technical assistance for reviewing grants and loans available to municipalities in the region. The application materials are forthcoming and this opportunity has been discussed with city staff. The grant may help advance a previously discussed project involving the development of a microgrid to support the Emergency Operations Center and the wastewater treatment plant—an effort made more urgent by recent power outages caused by storms (and even by incidents like squirrels interfering with transformers). The proposed project would aim to extend the solar garden to these critical facilities and is estimated to cost under half a million dollars. Mr. Pagel is willing to assist with the grant application if needed.

Councilor MacGregor concluded her report by sharing that Grand Rapids was one of five recipients of an Aging Impact Award. This recognition is part of a collaborative project involving Grand Itasca, the Arrowhead Economic Opportunity Agency, and ElderCircle.

Councilor Blake reported on Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities summer conference held in Bemidji. Event included an update from the executive director of Flaherty & Hood on anticipated state budget challenges, including potential future threats to Local Government Aid (LGA), a media panel featuring journalist Aaron Brown and representatives from the Minnesota Newspaper Association, panels on civic engagement strategies, historic tour of Bemidji highlighting both local history and recent storm damage, and a presentation on the impacts of data centers on local infrastructure. The legislative panel, which included Representative Spencer Igo, focused on navigating a divided government during the recent legislative session. Councilor Bake also encouraged the mayor and fellow councilors to attend the upcoming fall conference at the Timberlake in November, emphasizing its value and the quality of information presented.

Mayor Connelly provided a brief update on several ongoing and upcoming matters. First, the ongoing discussion regarding the library and its budget in relation to the county will continue with a meeting between Library Director Will Richter and the Itasca County Commissioners on July 29th. That meeting, scheduled from 12:00 to 12:30 p.m., will be televised and will focus on responding to questions previously submitted by the commissioners.

Mayor Connelly also reported on Senator Amy Klobuchar's recent visit to Grand Rapids, during which she met with Grand Itasca leadership.

Finally, a reminder is given to the public that Tall Timber Days will be taking place over the upcoming weekend. Residents and visitors should be aware of road closures and increased pedestrian traffic throughout the community during the event.

PUBLIC FORUM:

No one from the public wished to speak.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

1. Approve Council minutes for Monday, July 14, 2025 Regular Council meeting.

Motion made by Councilor Mertes, Second by Councilor MacGregor to approve Council minutes as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

VERIFIED CLAIMS:

2. Approve the verified claims for the period July 8, 2025 to July 21, 2025 in the total amount of \$2,040,489.38 of which \$594,433.66 are debt service payments.

Motion made by Councilor MacGregor, Second by Councilor Blake to approve the verified claims as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

CONSENT AGENDA:

3. Consider authorizing the Police Department to enter into a Joint Powers Agreement with the Aitkin-Itasca-Mille Lacs Vehicle Theft Initiative.
4. Consider adopting a resolution authorizing a grant application to the IRRR Development Partnership Grant Program for goMARTI 2.0

Adopted Resolution 25-46

5. Consider labor agreements with Clerical, Police Patrol, Polic Sergeants, and Public Works unions.
6. Consider Voiding Lost Accounts Payable Checks and Issue Replacement Checks.
7. Consider approving updated Automated License Plate Reader policy
8. Consider approving revised job description for Police Investigator.
9. Consider establishing new eligibility list for Firefighter Trainee.
10. Consider the termination of seasonal employee and hiring of two (2) seasonal employees at Pokegama Golf Course.
11. Consider accepting the resignation from part-time seasonal golf employee.
12. Consider adopting a resolution approving lender documents related to the Downtown Housing Development Project.

Adopted Resolution 25-47

13. Consider authorizing staff to solicit quotes for the multi-use trail culvert replacement project
14. Consider adopting a resolution approving LG230 Application for Off-Site Gambling for Confidence Learning Center

Adopted Resolution 25-48

15. Consider approving agreement with Brothers Burn Mountain for musical performance at 2025 Tall Timber Days event
- 15a. Consider approving temporary liquor license for American Legion Post 476 for Itasca County Fair Beer Garden.

Motion made by Councilor Blake, Second by Councilor Mertes to approve the Consent agenda as amended to include the addition of item 15a. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

SET REGULAR AGENDA:

Motion made by Councilor MacGregor, Second by Councilor Mertes to approve the Regular agenda as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

POLICE:

16. Consider adopting a resolution to accept a donation from the Blandin Foundation in the amount of \$1000.00 for the National Night Out event on August 5, 2025

Police Captain Kevin Ott stated that the Blandin Foundation has generously donated \$1,000 to support the National Night Out event scheduled for August 5, 2025. This donation will help fund activities such as children's entertainment, portable restrooms, and potential giveaways for kids. Sergeants Carlson and Smith are organizing the event, which will be held at Central School's parking lot from 4:30 PM to 7:30 PM. The event will feature emergency service personnel, community organizations like the Yellow Ribbon Committee, radio groups, fire departments (from Grand Rapids and Cohasset), and the SWAT team—providing an opportunity for families and community members to connect with public safety officials and each other in a fun, welcoming environment.

Motion made by Councilor Mertes, Second by Councilor Blake to adopt **Resolution 25-49**, accepting donation from Blandin Foundation as presented. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

CITY COUNCIL:

17. Consider appointing Janet Miller to the Human Rights Commission.

Councilor MacGregor interviewed both applicants and consulted the city attorney for clarification on appointment requirements. Janet Miller had previously run for school board and expressed a desire to stay involved in local government.

Motion made by Councilor MacGregor, Second by Councilor Blake to appoint Janet Miller to the Human Rights Commission to fill an unexpired term through March 1, 2026. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

PUBLIC HEARINGS: (scheduled to begin no earlier than 5:00 PM)

18. Conduct a public hearing to consider the vacation of a portion of the NW 12th Ave. Right of Way adjacent to Block 10 Syndicate Division.

Rob Mattei gave a presentation regarding a public right-of-way vacation request submitted by the Itasca County Housing and Redevelopment Authority (HRA) for a seven-foot-wide strip along Northwest 12th Avenue, adjacent to Block 10 of the Syndicate Division, where the HRA offices are located. The request, brought forward by Executive Director Diane Larson on May 15th, aims to facilitate the reconstruction of a portion of the HRA's existing parking lot, which currently extends approximately seven feet into the public right-of-way. This encroachment was identified through recent survey work, which revealed discrepancies between actual property lines and the city's GIS mapping. The planned project involves tearing out and rebuilding the parking area and retaining wall in the same location, which necessitates property ownership and a zero-foot setback variance to be considered by the Planning Commission.

The Planning Commission reviewed the request during its June 24th meeting, made the required findings of fact, and recommended approval of the vacation contingent on retaining the easement. Their findings and recommendation are included in the resolution to be considered by the City Council following the public hearing. Although such situations are not

common, they do occur occasionally due to the historical lack of accurate mapping and formal permitting processes when older developments were established.

Mayor Connelly stated the purpose of the public hearing and City Clerk Gibeau confirmed that all required notices have been made and no correspondence was received by the Clerk's office regarding this issue.

Motion made by Councilor Mertes, Second by Councilor MacGregor to open the public hearing. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

No one from the public wished to speak, therefore the following motion was made.

Motion made by Councilor MacGregor, Second by Councilor Mertes to close the public hearing. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

COMMUNITY DEVELOPMENT:

19. Consider the adoption of a resolution approving the vacation of a portion of the NW 12th Ave. right-of-way adjacent to Block 10, Syndicate Division

Motion made by Councilor Blake, Second by Councilor MacGregor to **adopt Resolution 25-50**, approving vacation as requested. Voting Yea: Mayor Connelly, Councilor MacGregor, Councilor Blake, Councilor Mertes

There being no further business, the meeting adjourned at 5:32 PM.

Respectfully submitted:


Kimberly Gibeau, City Clerk