



## PLANNING SESSION - COMMON COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES

August 31, 2026 at 6:00 PM  
1260 North Road, Mauston, WI

- 1. Call to Order/Roll Call:** The Mauston Common Council held a Planning Session on Monday, August 31, 2026. Mayor Teske called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Members present were Jim Allaby, Leanna Hagen, Barb Hoilien, Tim Ponshock, Casey Radcliff, and Kayla Thomas. Member absent was Mary Bender. Also present were City Administrator Daron Haugh, Police Chief Mike Zilisch, Fire Chief Brent Lenorud, Director of Public Works Rob Nelson, Library Director Bridget Christenson (arriving at 6:05 p.m.), Deputy Treasurer Mercedes Ravenscroft, and Deputy Clerk Carole Wolff.
- 2. Pledge of Allegiance:** Mayor Teske led the Pledge of Allegiance.
- 3. Minutes:** Motion by Hagen, seconded by Hoilien, to approve the August 4, 2025, minutes. Motion carried by voice vote.
- 4. Strategic Plan Presentation:** Haugh led the Council through a strategic planning discussion focused on where the City is today, and its priorities and direction for the future.

**Five-Year Capital Improvement Plan:** Haugh reviewed the City's rolling five-year capital improvement planning process. Discussion focused on annually evaluating equipment condition, replacement costs, and operational needs; making annual contributions toward future equipment replacement to reduce reliance on borrowing; and coordinating capital projects with available funding and long-term City priorities.

**Public Safety and Succession Planning:** Discussion focused on long-term staffing and succession planning for the Police, Fire, EMS, and Public Works departments. Priorities included developing internal leadership candidates, planning for anticipated retirements, evaluating future staffing needs, and considering opportunities for shared services with neighboring municipalities. Haugh discussed the potential for a full-time Fire Chief position and the possibility of combining firefighter and EMT responsibilities as part of future staffing considerations. The sustainability of the paid-on-call fire department model and potential future coordination of fire and EMS services were also discussed.

**Public Works and Utility Administration:** Haugh reviewed anticipated staffing transitions within Public Works, including future retirements affecting utility administration, the Public Works Director position, and the Streets Superintendent position. Discussion focused on succession planning, recruitment, training, and maintaining continuity of City services. Nelson also discussed seasonal

Parks staffing challenges and the possibility of developing incentives to encourage seasonal employees to return in future years.

**Zoning and Building Inspection:** Discussion was held regarding the future administration of zoning and building inspection services. Future considerations included establishing an in-house zoning position with building inspection responsibilities, reducing reliance on contracted services, retaining permitting revenue, and considering shared-service opportunities.

**Infrastructure and City Facilities:** Haugh reviewed progress on major City investments, including the wastewater treatment plant improvements, library renovation, State Street Lounge Park, and the west-side dog park. Discussion focused on maintaining these investments, ensuring dependable utility and facility services, and improving communication with residents regarding the purpose and benefits of City projects. A future Council tour of the wastewater treatment facility was also discussed.

**Zoning and Permitting Modernization:** Haugh discussed the City's approach to updating zoning regulations through targeted amendments rather than a complete zoning code rewrite. Priorities discussed included updating downtown parking regulations, improving conditional use provisions, creating clearer permitting standards, and aligning zoning regulations with future housing, downtown development, and annexation plans. Vierbicher is assisting with the zoning amendment process.

**Housing, Downtown, and Business Development:** Haugh reviewed recent housing development, downtown redevelopment efforts, façade and awning projects, and TID-supported improvements. Future development opportunities discussed included a new residential subdivision, additional affordable housing efforts, continued downtown redevelopment incentives, and the potential development of a hotel. Discussion emphasized coordinating housing, downtown, and business development as part of an overall economic development strategy.

**Annexation, Growth Capacity, and Partnerships:** Discussion focused on potential growth areas to the north and northeast, infrastructure capacity, and future annexation. Haugh noted that utility planning is underway with MSA. Future priorities included evaluating development based on infrastructure and fiscal impacts, strengthening relationships with surrounding towns, Juneau County, and the school district, considering shared services where beneficial, and maintaining communication with property owners and developers.

**Parks and Recreation:** Haugh reviewed recent and planned park improvements, including State Street Lounge Park, the west-side dog park, the Lions Park expansion, and the Veterans Memorial project. Discussion included addressing vandalism at the downtown park through lighting, cameras, patrols, and programming; completing fundraising for the Veterans Memorial; maintaining

the Lions Park project timeline; and completing the City's updated five-year Comprehensive Outdoor Recreation Plan (CORP) by the end of 2026.

**Communications, Engagement, and Technology:** Haugh reviewed the City's website restructuring, planned citywide app, and creation of the Communications Coordinator position. Discussion focused on developing consistent and proactive communication across the City's website, app, social media, and community events. Cybersecurity, records retention, emergency continuity planning, and improving public understanding of City projects and services were also discussed.

**Upcoming Projects and Milestones:** Haugh reviewed anticipated milestones through 2027, including completion of the utility design study, website restructuring and citywide app launch, wastewater treatment facility improvements, updated capital and CORP plans, implementation of the Communications Coordinator position, parking and zoning amendments, annexation and development projects, Veterans Memorial construction, anticipated staff retirements, and the Lions Park expansion. Haugh stated that progress on the City's strategic priorities would be reported to Council quarterly.

**Council Discussion:** Mayor Teske emphasized the importance of communicating the reasons behind City initiatives and maintaining a high-level focus on the City's future direction. Council members were encouraged to continue asking questions and representing residents' interests.

**Department Updates:** Department heads discussed future operational needs and challenges. Police Chief Zilisch discussed staffing, future facility needs, community changes affecting law enforcement, and the importance of planning for growth. Fire Chief Lenorud reported that Fire Department equipment is in good condition but expressed concern regarding recruitment, staffing, experience levels, and anticipated retirements among longtime firefighters. Public Works Director Nelson discussed seasonal staffing challenges, employee retention, upcoming staffing transitions, the Tremont Street project, and pending federal funding requests. Library Director Christianson provided an update on the library renovation and noted that the new space is scheduled to open September 14, 2026.

**5. Notice of Majority Presence**

- 6. Adjourn:** Motion by Hagen, seconded by Thomas, to adjourn. Motion carried by voice vote. The meeting adjourned at 7:42 p.m.

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Chair

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Date