

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
St. Francis City Hall 3750 Bridge Street NW
February 2, 2026
6:00 p.m.

1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The regular City Council meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Mark Vogel.

2. ROLL CALL

Members Present: Mayor Mark Vogel, Councilmembers Kevin Robinson, Sarah Udvig, Amy Faanes, and Joe Muehlbauer.

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Deputy Administrator-City Clerk Jenni Wida, Community Development Director Jodie Steffes, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Deputy Administrator-Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, Police Chief Todd Schwieger, Fire Chief Dave Schmidt, Finance Director Darcy Mulvihill.

3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: FAANES APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

4. CONSENT AGENDA

A. City Council Minutes - January 20, 2026

B. Outdoor Warning Siren Preventative Maintenance

C. Rivers Edge 7th Addition Acceptance of Public Infrastructure Improvements and Reduction of Financial Security

Resolution 2026-06 Accepting Infrastructure Improvements and Starting the Warranty Period

D. Payment of Claims

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: MUEHLBAUER APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

No one came forward to address the Council.

6. **SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE**
7. **PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE**
8. **OLD BUSINESS - NONE**
9. **NEW BUSINESS - NONE**
10. **MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC - NONE**

11. **REPORTS**

A. City Administrator Report

City Administrator Kate Thunstrom requested approval of two work session dates. The first date is February 23rd to discuss individual department business. The second date is March 23rd for interviews for the finance director position. Both dates are Mondays at 5:30 p.m.

Muehlbauer stated he is available for both dates and can attend via Zoom or in person.

Robinson stated he is available either way. Udvig stated that both dates work for her.

Faanes asked if both dates are Mondays. Thunstrom confirmed they are. Faanes stated she is available.

Mayor Vogel stated he is available for both dates and confirmed the time as 5:30 p.m.

Thunstrom shared that she has received notification from the offices of Senators Klobuchar and Smith and Representative Emmer that the President has signed into law \$2 million in funding for the City's utility water and sewer project. She noted that the staff is making progress on the underground work and will bring designs and project discussions to the Council in the spring and early summer.

Thunstrom asked if the Council would like to discuss the budget. Mayor Vogel stated that he and Thunstrom had discussed this before the meeting. He noted that Robinson and Muehlbauer had expressed interest in conducting a deeper dive on the budget. Mayor Vogel expressed concern about the approach, noting that while he wants to know more details, he struggles with each Council member individually going to the Finance Director with questions about line items. He stated that he believes the Council's role is to provide overall budget guidance and goals rather than micromanaging individual line items. Mayor Vogel noted that even when reviewing the check register, he often has questions about items he does not

understand.

Thunstrom explained that the challenge with reviewing the budget line by line is that many line items are generic and do not show the underlying details. For example, a "contracts" line item may contain multiple different contracts with different uses. She stated that to effectively review the budget, the Council needs to first establish goals. She asked what the Council's priorities are. Are they looking at cutting a service, reducing events, or pulling back on inflation. Thunstrom noted that Staff has discussed internally what can be pulled back and that Finance Director Mulvihill is reviewing last year's numbers to see where the budget fell. She stated that understanding the Council's goals and priorities will help Staff provide meaningful budget discussions. Thunstrom suggested a work session in June after the new Finance Director is hired to conduct a deeper dive into the budget.

Faanes stated that she agrees with both the Mayor and Thunstrom that the Council needs to know what the goal is before reviewing the budget. She noted that to answer questions about where to cut back, the Council either needs to go through the budget line by line or have the department heads tell them where cuts can be made. Faanes stated that the department heads are the experts on their budgets and should be the ones to identify where reductions can happen. She noted that if the goal is simply to have a smaller increase or a percentage decrease, the Council needs the department heads' expertise to identify where that can occur.

Mayor Vogel stated that he thinks the Council could provide general guidance, such as not wanting to see an increase larger than 10 percent, which would give the department heads something to work towards.

Muehlbauer stated that his purpose in meeting with the Finance Director is to look at what could be reviewed and to gain knowledge and information. He noted that everyone is hurting in the current economy. Muehlbauer explained that to keep everything the same as the previous year, the budget would have required approximately an 11 percent increase. He stated that Staff removed inflation from the budget, which resulted in a lower increase. Muehlbauer noted that at the federal and state levels, there is discussion of waste and fraud, but cities are different. He stated that cities do not have social programs that subsidize things and are the most accessible level of government to residents. Muehlbauer expressed that his goal is not to micromanage but to gain understanding. He noted that when looking at the Capital Improvement Plan and other factors, the dollar amount will always go up because the cost of living, materials, and labor all increase. Muehlbauer explained that the City has implemented several programs over the years, including a road program, a parks program, and a building maintenance program. He stated that these programs should have already been on the books and that he is happy to take responsibility for the increase. Muehlbauer noted that Staff does a great job and is not wasting money. He stated that his goal is to understand where things are and what is worth looking into. He added that slowing down what is put into these programs might be the only option rather than cutting them entirely.

Mayor Vogel stated that he agrees with Muehlbauer and noted that Staff still needs overall direction. He explained that last time, Staff indicated they needed approximately 11 percent to keep everything the same. In response, Thunstrom went through the budget with the departments and identified approximately \$96,000 in cuts. Mayor Vogel stated that this reduces the cushion, but that providing an overall goal of not exceeding a 10 percent increase would give Staff something to work towards.

Muehlbauer added that the Council should be aware that union contracts have scheduled raises that cannot be avoided, which is something the public should understand when considering budget cuts.

Robinson stated that he wants to show the public that the Council tried, regardless of the outcome. He noted that the Council was elected to do this work and that he would rather show the public the final results than have the public involved in committees. Robinson stated that he is thinking about a three to four-year look back at the budget, noting that contracts are intangibles that cannot be changed. He expressed concern about potential state funding cuts and noted that some communities have achieved 4 to 6 percent increases this year, but their day of reckoning will come. Robinson stated that he is concerned about the state's \$18 billion surplus being gone and \$9 billion being wasted in fraud, which could result in cuts to state aid to cities. He noted that this is a real possibility and a big deal. Robinson stated that he agrees with Muehlbauer that all departments do a great job and that there has been no impropriety in the seven years he has been on the Council. Robinson expressed concern about potential state funding cuts and suggested that the Council should have a contingency plan in case the state cuts aid by 50 percent. He stated that the Council does not have to enact such a plan, but should have one in place. Robinson also expressed concern about the Finance Director's involvement and suggested that Darcy should be more involved before June, perhaps in April, to review specific departments and show the public that the Council has done its due diligence.

Udvig stated that she shares Robinson's concern about potential state funding cuts. She noted that if the state cuts funding, it will put the City in a difficult position. Udvig stated that she thinks the Council should start looking at the budget sooner rather than later and that giving Staff some parameters is helpful. She noted that when prices go up, budgets must increase or services must be cut, and she does not think the public wants the City to cut services.

Mayor Vogel stated that what he is hearing is that the Council wants to meet sooner rather than later, especially with the potential for state funding cuts. He suggested that at one of those sessions, the Council could come up with some sort of overall goal, such as a 10 percent increase limit.

Thunstrom stated that the Council should look at the City's website, where the

budget and other documents are available. She noted that the proposed budget is posted, but the final budget is not yet available. She stated that if the Council starts meeting in April or June, the discussions will be very high-level because the Council will not yet know what the Local Government Aid will be or what the tax capacity will be. Thunstrom stated that the Council will be talking without revenue numbers because it is too early for that information. She noted that Staff can pull a few different programs and services to review more closely, but the discussions will not have ties to revenue. Thunstrom stated that she will work with Mulvihill and bring a date to the next Council meeting for a work session.

Muehlbauer noted that having reserves is important because the state has cut funding in the past, and reserves help lessen the blow to residents when that happens. He stated that this is similar to a household budget where people maintain a savings account for emergencies. Muehlbauer expressed that the Council should make an effort to show the public that it is trying to address budget concerns, even if the results are limited. He noted that Staff does a great job and is not wasting money. He stated that the Council should set realistic expectations for the public about what can be accomplished.

Robinson asked about the City's investment strategy and who manages the reserves. Finance Director Mulvihill stated that Elders manages the City's investments. Robinson asked if Elders meets with Mulvihill and if she is satisfied with their performance. Mulvihill stated that Elders meets with her monthly and that she is very satisfied with their work. She noted that they have done a wonderful job, particularly with bond fund investments, and that they are experts in their field. Mulvihill stated that she communicates with them about when the City will need money available for projects. Robinson asked if the Elders could provide a presentation to the Council. Mulvihill stated that they could if the Council wanted.

Robinson asked if the Council should develop a contingency plan in case the state cuts funding by 50 percent. He stated that the Council does not have to enact such a plan but should have one in place as a what-if scenario. Robinson asked what the Council would do if it had to cut parks, community development, or code enforcement. He stated that once the City cuts back on code enforcement, it is hard to reverse that decision.

Mayor Vogel stated that he does not know if the discussion helped or made things muddier for Thunstrom. Thunstrom stated that if she has until April to sort things out, the Council will be good. She stated that she will work with Mulvihill to put together some high-level conversations and will also touch base on fees. Thunstrom stated that she will bring a date for a work session to the next Council meeting.

Mayor Vogel asked if there were any other questions for Thunstrom. Robinson stated no. Mayor Vogel thanked Thunstrom.

12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Robinson reported attending a town hall meeting with the State Senator and State Representative. He stated that it was very beneficial and that he would like to see them make an appointment to visit the City in the future. Robinson noted that the new State Representative is in his first year after redistricting and did an excellent job. Robinson stated that the town hall ran from 5:30 p.m. to 7:30 p.m. and thanked Staff and the Police Chief for their assistance. Robinson stated that he would like to make an appointment with either or both legislators to discuss vendors and other matters.

Robinson reported that he attended a Jilick meeting with the Police Chief. He stated that it was short, which he noted might be a good thing if there is not much to discuss regarding crime.

Robinson reported meeting Peter, the new owner of Bill's Barbershop, who is taking over the business. Robinson stated that he met Peter and his father at Chamber of Commerce festivities and that Peter seems like a nice young man. Robinson stated that he encouraged Peter to talk to the athletic department about haircuts for youth.

Robinson reported that he met the new owners of the Stone Lion winery, a husband and wife from Isanti. He stated that the husband is a concrete contractor. Robinson noted that he mentioned previous noise concerns from the venue and that the owners are planning to build an indoor facility to address this issue.

Udvig reported that she attended the Pioneer Days planning meeting. She stated that this year is the 60th anniversary, and the theme is dinosaurs and diamonds. Udvig noted that the planning committee brought this theme to the Chamber dinner and that there will be fun activities. She stated that if Tim gets his way, there will be a mustache, beard, and mullet competition.

Udvig encouraged people to check out the new walk-in cooler at the bottle shop. She stated that Joe is doing an amazing job at the bottle shop and has brought it to the next level. Udvig noted that people who had stopped going there because they thought the selection was limited and prices were high have returned.

Udvig stated that at a future work session, the Council should revisit the community room policy. She noted that the community room was a selling point for the building and that the Council should determine the fee structure and how Staff will manage the room for events like grad parties and wedding receptions.

Faanes stated that she agrees with Udvig that the Council should revisit the community room policy. She noted that she has had a couple of people ask about it.

Faanes reported that the First Baptist Church did an amazing job on their

construction project. She stated that the church is now open and has had two services. Faanes noted that the construction process made pickup and drop-off difficult, but that the final result looks really nice.

Faanes asked Deputy Administrator-Public Works Director Paul Carpenter about the ice rink. Carpenter stated that the City has lost the ability to light the lights underground. He stated that he was able to acquire temporary lights and has been in touch with Mr. Staley, who runs the program. Carpenter noted that the temporary lights are working well and that the City will look at permanent repairs this summer. He stated that he chose to rent temporary lights rather than attempt repairs on site due to frozen ground conditions.

Faanes asked when the rink will close. Carpenter stated that the rink will be open for about four more weeks in February. He explained that as the February sun comes out, it becomes difficult to keep ice on an asphalt parking lot without a cooling system. He noted that high temperatures and full sun will kill the ice sheet.

Robinson asked if the 51-day contract with the Home Run Club is too long. Carpenter stated that it took a while to arrive at 51 days and that it is about right. He noted that the City hopes to go a week longer this year and that the Home Run Club typically asks for an additional week.

Muehlbauer reported that he attended the town hall with the State Senator and State Representative. He stated that he was impressed with how well it went and the level of engagement, especially given the short notice. Muehlbauer stated that he left 15 minutes early but was really impressed with the event. He encouraged the legislators to come back in the spring and noted that having that engagement is awesome.

Muehlbauer stated that he agrees that Council members should not spend hours with Staff members asking questions about the budget. However, he noted that if a Council member has a quick question or idea, they should send an email to the department head or make a quick phone call. He stated that this is an efficient way to gain knowledge and that department heads can respond or call back if they have questions. Muehlbauer encouraged Council members to engage with department heads to gain knowledge and make better decisions.

13. MAYOR REPORTS

Mayor Vogel reported that on January 21st, he received a phone call from Senator Klobuchar's office informing him that \$2 million in funding for the City's utility water and sewer project had been approved. Mayor Vogel noted that he immediately texted City Administrator Thunstrom. He stated that it is important to answer calls from unknown numbers because they may be from citizens or important officials.

Mayor Vogel reported that on January 22nd, he attended an Anoka County Fire Protection Council meeting. He stated that the main takeaway was that the county is considering researching the possibility of placing drone stations across Anoka County. Mayor Vogel explained that when a 911 call comes in, drones would immediately fly to the location. He noted that the county has received approval from the Local Government Aid to conduct further research. Mayor Vogel stated that someone raised concerns about potential constitutional issues if drones are used improperly.

Mayor Vogel reported that he attended the January 26th town hall. He stated that he thought it was fantastic and recognized the turnout of about 30 people, given the short notice. Mayor Vogel noted that the questions and interaction were excellent and that the relationship building between the Council and legislators is important.

Mayor Vogel stated that his two biggest takeaways from the town hall were from Representative Lawrence. First, Lawrence quoted President Kennedy, saying that the country has flipped the message from "ask not what you can do for your country" to "what can the government do for me." Mayor Vogel noted that this approach comes with a price tag that cannot be met. Second, a citizen asked what their taxes are for, and Lawrence responded that it is a great question, indicating that he takes the concern seriously.

Mayor Vogel stated that he would like to get more people like the legislators to come to City Council meetings. He noted that two county commissioners live in St. Francis and that he would like to invite them to a Council meeting to build relationships and have them engage with the City.

Mayor Vogel reported that on January 28th, he attended a Local Government Officials meeting. He stated that the main agenda items were the shotgun versus rifle zone issue. Mayor Vogel explained that the state changed the rules so that there is no longer a shotgun and rifle zone delineation. However, communities can choose to remain shotgun only if they hold an annual public meeting and renew the designation every year.

Mayor Vogel stated that his biggest takeaway was learning that the shotgun versus rifle zone was not created for safety reasons but for harvesting purposes. He explained that the delineation was created to prevent the deer herd in the southern part of the state from being cleared out by rifles. Mayor Vogel noted that this was not a safety issue as he had previously perceived.

Mayor Vogel stated that Anoka County has not yet decided what it will do, but that the rough takeaway is that the county will likely go along with state recommendations and accept rifles. He noted that this has not been decided yet.

Mayor Vogel reported that he had a good discussion with Pam LeBlanc of Anoka County Elections after the meeting. He stated that he discussed the letter the City was sending regarding post-election reviews. Mayor Vogel noted that he asked the county to go to the state if the majority of cities in Anoka County request a post-election review. He stated that he is inclined to put a resolution before the Council shortly.

Robinson asked about the safety consensus regarding rifles versus shotguns. He noted that rifles are faster and more deadly projectiles, but that the operator is the main issue. Robinson stated that with a shotgun slug, most shots are at 30 yards or less, while with a rifle, shots can be at longer distances. He asked what the safety portion of the discussion was.

Mayor Vogel stated that the discussion noted that most people do not shoot beyond 150 yards with a slug. He explained that slugs have been refined over the years and are now rifled, making them more accurate and more lethal, similar to rifles. Mayor Vogel stated that most ethical hunters shoot up to 400 yards with a rifle. He noted that if a shotgun and rifle were both shot at a 30-degree angle, the slug would go roughly three-quarters of a mile while the bullet would go two and a half miles. However, ethical hunters shoot downward, not upward.

Mayor Vogel stated that the shotgun zone was enacted in 1942 to limit the harvest. He noted that Wisconsin has already made this change and has not seen a rise in incidents of slugs or bullets going errant.

Robinson stated that he is concerned about the change because concealed carry permits require minimal training compared to youth hunter safety courses. He noted that youth go through much more intense and longer training than concealed carry permit holders.

Police Chief Todd Schwieger stated that there are still firearm safety use certificate requirements for hunting in general. He noted that people who are now allowed to use rifles in former shotgun zones will still have those firearms safety certificates and training, even if they received them when they were younger. Schwieger stated that he does not think there will be a huge increase in new, uneducated, or reckless hunters just because of this change.

Robinson thanked Schwieger for the clarification.

Mayor Vogel stated that if the Council wants more information, they can reach out to the Anoka County Parks Director, who gave the presentation.

Mayor Vogel stated that the last item from the Local Government Officials meeting was about Everbridge, which is a way for the county to reach out to citizens. Mayor Vogel explained that Everbridge has two branches: emergency alerts and community alerts. He stated that Anoka County would provide this

service for free to cities like St. Francis. Mayor Vogel noted that individuals can choose whether they want to receive one or both types of alerts. Mayor Vogel stated that he would encourage the City to explore this option compared to the current Nixle system.

Mayor Vogel asked if anyone knew what the City pays for Nixle. Robinson stated that it is \$3,500 a year. Police Chief Schwieger stated that it is just over \$3,000 a year.

Mayor Vogel stated that there may be advantages to keeping Nixle. Schwieger explained that anytime the City wants to put something out, it has to relay information to Central Communications, and then they put it out on the City's behalf. Schwieger noted that the major downfall is that there could be an increased time delay. He stated that Central Communications is capable of putting out very similar messages to what the City currently puts out.

Mayor Vogel stated that he would like to explore the Everbridge option a little closer, but is not saying the City has to switch.

Robinson asked if Everbridge would be beneficial for traffic alerts. Schwieger stated that for general community notifications, the City would have to alert Central Communications. He explained that if there is an accident in town and the City wants to alert people to a road closure, the City or an officer would have to call Central Communications and ask them to put out a notification. Schwieger stated that he is not sure if they use a mapping system, but that they probably do something similar to their I-Pulse alerts. He noted that the major downside is that there would be an increased delay because the information would have to get to Central Communications, and then they would have to put it out when they have time. Schwieger stated that he is not shooting down their system and that it is pretty new for what they are doing with general communications. He noted that it has only been in effect for a couple of months. Schwieger stated that the City did blast out information about Everbridge on social media when dispatch sent it out.

Mayor Vogel thanked Schwieger and asked if anyone had anything else to discuss.

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: FAANES TO ADJOURN THE MEETING

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None

Motion carries: 5-0

There being no further business, Mayor Vogel adjourned the regular City Council at 6:59 p.m.



Jennifer Wida, City Clerk