

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA
St. Francis City Hall 3750 Bridge Street NW
January 20, 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 Muehlbauer.

2. **ROLL CALL**

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

Members Absent: None.

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Deputy Administrator-City Clerk Jenni Wida, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Deputy Administrator-Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, Police Chief Todd Schwieger, City Engineer Craig Jochum (Hakanson Associates, Inc.).

3. **APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

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

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

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

4. **CONSENT AGENDA**

A. City Council Minutes - January 05, 2026

B. B. Application Resolution for the 2026 Anoka County Community Development Block Grant Resolution 2026-03 Authorizing Application to Anoka County for Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Funds

C. C. Payment of Claims

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

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

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Derek Lind, representing the Anoka County Election Integrity Group (ACEIT), addressed the Council regarding post-election reviews. Mr. Lind provided background on the post-election review process and distributed documentation to the Council members.

Mr. Lind noted that nearly two-thirds of the country does not trust machine tabulators, according to a September 2025 Rasmussen Poll. He provided a list of seven cities that have conducted post-election reviews and explained the process.

Mr. Lind explained that the post-election review concept originated in Big Lake in 2022. He noted that after seven cities in Anoka County adopted the practice in 2024, the Secretary of State sent correspondence discouraging the practice. Mr. Lind distributed a letter from the Secretary of State explaining that cities cannot count their own votes unless randomly selected in a post-election review.

Mr. Lind clarified that Anoka County's standard post-election review only samples four of the 128 precincts and checks only the top two races. Mr. Lind stated that the County will never check local-level races unless there is a close recount.

6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE

7. PUBLIC HEARINGS - NONE

8. OLD BUSINESS

A. Minnesota State Flag

Resolution 2026-04 in opposition to any display of the Minnesota State flag

Mayor Vogel explained that this resolution formalizes the consensus reached at the previous meeting.

Udvig asked for clarification on the resolution language, noting that the wording could be interpreted as opposing the display of any Minnesota State flag.

Faanes expressed similar concern about the language being confusing.

City Administrator Thunstrom explained that the resolution duplicates language used by other jurisdictions. She noted that the resolution language addresses the 2023 flag design and expresses the City's intent to continue flying the 1957 Minnesota State flag.

Udvig noted that, as the State no longer recognizes the flag, there may be additional costs to replace flags over time. She emphasized the importance of being stewards of taxpayer money, even on smaller items.

Faanes asked Deputy Administrator-Public Works Director Paul Carpenter about the quantity of flags the City has in stock. Udvig clarified that the current stock is sufficient, but replacement costs could increase as the flag becomes less common.

Robinson stated that he conducted research on flag availability and found that flag companies are willing to print the 1957 flag design at no extra cost. Muehlbauer confirmed that there is no extra cost at this time, given the City's current stock.

MOTION BY: ROBINSON SECOND: FAANES APPROVING RESOLUTION 2026-04 IN OPPOSITION TO ANY DISPLAY OF THE MINNESOTA STATE FLAG

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

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

B. Public Works Contract Agreement for 2026-2027

Resolution 2026-05 Approving the Tentative Agreement Between the City of St. Francis and the International Union of Operating Engineers, Local No. 49, Representing the Public Works Bargaining Unit for the Calendar Years 2026 and 2027

City Administrator Thunstrom explained that the tentative agreement was negotiated throughout the 2025 calendar year and is a two-year contract for 2026 and 2027. She noted that she and Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps were available to answer questions.

Muehlbauer asked why the contract uses Roman numerals instead of numbers. Thunstrom explained that the City performed significant cleanup on this contract, consolidating previous forwards and memorandums of understanding.

Assistant City Attorney Schaps noted that the union requested the switch to Roman numerals and the City agreed.

Robinson expressed appreciation for the work that Thunstrom and Schaps completed on the contract. Mayor Vogel agreed and noted that while negotiations took longer than expected, he was pleased that all parties reached an agreement.

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: FAANES APPROVING RESOLUTION 2026-05 APPROVING THE TENTATIVE AGREEMENT BETWEEN THE CITY OF ST. FRANCIS AND THE INTERNATIONAL UNION OF OPERATING ENGINEERS, LOCAL NO. 49 REPRESENTING THE PUBLIC WORKS BARGAINING UNIT FOR THE CALENDAR YEARS 2026 AND 2027

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

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

C. Anoka County Post Election Review

Mayor Vogel noted that the Council received the letter prepared by City Administrator Thunstrom and asked for discussion. Robinson stated the post-election review is worthwhile, and he is glad the City is pursuing it.

Mayor Vogel explained that the plan is to send the letter with Council signatures to the County and reach out to Elections Manager Pam LeBlanc in a couple of weeks to allow time for review. He noted that the issue may eventually require a resolution.

Mayor Vogel stated that he wants to allow the County to respond, particularly since some County representatives have indicated they share similar concerns. He noted that if the County is acting as the City's agent for elections, he wants to see County efforts to appeal to the Secretary of State to address the City's concerns. Muehlbauer asked Assistant City Attorney Schaps what would be a reasonable timeframe for a County response.

Assistant City Attorney Schaps recommended allowing approximately 30 days for a response. He noted that after that timeframe, the Council could take further action or discussion as appropriate.

Mayor Vogel confirmed that the letter does not require a Council vote and only requires signatures. Schaps confirmed that the letter is being sent on behalf of the Council's direction and is not a formal resolution. He noted that Council members can sign the letter, and it will be forwarded to the County.

9. NEW BUSINESS

None.

10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC

Derek Lind addressed the Council again. He stated it is his opinion that the Council should pass a resolution regarding the post-election review. Mr. Lind stated that the County will likely not honor a letter, and the issue will be decided by the canvass board in August. He noted that passing a resolution sends a strong message that St. Francis is joining the other seven cities that have taken this action.

11. REPORTS

A. City Administrator Report

City Administrator Thunstrom informed the Council that Deputy Administrator-Public Works Director Paul Carpenter will serve as acting interim administrator while she is out of the office the following week.

Thunstrom reported that over the next month to a month and a half, Staff will bring forward action items for the Highway 47 project. She explained that the City will need to hold a public hearing for local consent, as the City is reducing the road from four lanes to two lanes. She noted that WSB, as the City's engineer, will lead the Council through the required steps.

Thunstrom noted that Staff is working on several workstation topics involving three to four departments. She stated that once the City moves into February, Staff will begin looking at scheduling dates for these items.

Thunstrom reported that she is working with Barna, Guzy & Steffen (BGS) on charter housekeeping items and questions. She noted that the housekeeping items will be presented to the Charter Commission first and then brought to the Council.

Robinson asked whether the charter amendment to extend the Mayor's term would happen in 2026 or 2028. Thunstrom explained that the consensus at the last discussion was to place the charter amendment on the 2028 ballot to take advantage of the greater voter turnout during a presidential election year.

Robinson asked if there was a problem with placing it on the 2026 ballot instead.

Thunstrom explained that the greater population turnout in 2028 was the reason for that timeline. She noted that the City would be pressed for time to complete the required steps with the County for a 2026 ballot question. She confirmed that 2028 is the most likely timeline given that the City is already in 2026.

Robinson asked if it would be worthwhile to have a sign similar to the one used for Truth in Taxation to alert the public to the Highway 47 public hearing. Thunstrom explained that the public hearing will occur once the design is complete and no changes can be made at that point. She explained that the roundabouts do not require local consent, but the lane reduction does.

Thunstrom stated that the City is willing to share information and welcome residents, but asked how the Council would respond if residents oppose the design or request changes, since the design will be finalized.

Robinson suggested the City could preface any announcement with the fact that the design is final. He noted it would be an opportunity to highlight the hard work the staff completed, the timeline of applying for and receiving funds, and credit the City's legislator for assistance. He suggested sharing information about the City's financial responsibilities as well.

Faanes suggested treating it as a rollout of the design and the project moving forward.

Mayor Vogel asked if there are any additional public hearings for the Highway 47

project after this one. Thunstrom stated that she is not aware of any additional public hearings for the pavement portion of the project. She explained that the City has completed seven years of community engagement, and this is the final step before handing off the completed design to the State. She noted that, beyond public presentations at events like Night to Unite and Pioneer Days, there is no further public input opportunity other than the local consent hearing.

Robinson stated that if the suggestions he made were troublesome or not worthwhile, the Council did not need to pursue them. He noted that the City has worked on this project for many years, and it would be significant to announce that the design is final.

Mayor Vogel asked Deputy Administrator-Public Works Director Paul Carpenter if there is a public hearing associated with the underground utility work. Director Carpenter confirmed there are several steps for the utility portion, and the staff is just beginning that process. He stated Staff will keep the Council informed as the process moves forward.

Muehlbauer confirmed that the public hearing is required by law and that the design is set so that nothing can change. Thunstrom explained that for the last seven years, the Minnesota Department of Transportation (MnDOT) has listened to the Council's request to remove a lane. She stated the resolution puts the Council's words and requests into formal action. She noted that the public hearing allows residents to provide input, even if some residents disagree with the decision.

Muehlbauer noted that there will likely be some residents who disagree. Thunstrom explained that if the Council does not pass the local consent resolution, the City project cannot proceed. She stated the project would likely fall back to what MnDOT has indicated they will do, which is remove the existing pavement and replace it with the same pavement configuration with no intersection or lane changes. She noted this is the current situation and would remain unchanged for the next 20 to 40 years.

Muehlbauer stated that the timing of the public hearing, when changes cannot be made, sets the City up for criticism that the City does not listen to the public. Faanes stated that residents should remember all the public meetings the City held years ago, inviting public input.

Udvig pointed out that residents requested stoplights at the public meetings, and the City chose roundabouts instead. She noted the City did not fully honor that request. Muehlbauer acknowledged that the design did change from the original resident requests.

Udvig explained that the decision was cost-related. She stated it is not that the City does not want stoplights, but there is a significant cost associated with them. She acknowledged that residents clearly stated their preference at the public meetings,

and the City changed direction, so she expects some pushback from residents.

Robinson asked if the City showed residents the price tag of over 2 million dollars for stoplights. Udvig stated the City did inform residents at the beginning that stoplights would cost the City money and would be the City's financial responsibility. She noted residents were informed multiple times, but still indicated stoplights were their preference.

Muehlbauer noted that some residents at the Truth in Taxation meeting stated they did not want the City to touch Highway 47 and blamed bad drivers for the issues. Muehlbauer noted that residents ask the City to fix the road, but when costs are presented, some residents oppose the project.

Robinson stated he thought it was better to communicate about the project than to let it proceed without public awareness. Udvig agreed.

12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS

Udvig highlighted the Pioneer Days planning meeting scheduled for Wednesday, January 21, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. at the Legion. She also noted the Chamber Casino Night on January 30, 2026, at the Refuge, describing it as a good fundraiser and an opportunity to enjoy the community.

Robinson echoed the importance of the Pioneer Days meeting and emphasized that the event needs volunteers to run smoothly. He added he will attend a Joint Law Enforcement meeting next week with Police Chief Todd Schwieger.

Faanes stated she received an email from a resident with questions. The resident noted that recent Council meetings have not been very long and suggested the Council could begin budget work earlier than usual, rather than waiting. The resident asked if members of the public could assist with budget preparation. Faanes suggested budget discussions could be incorporated into upcoming work sessions.

Faanes noted the resident also asked if Fire District meetings are open to the public. She confirmed that the meetings are open to the public, but noted the Fire District meeting scheduled for that day was not listed on the City's calendar. She suggested Fire District meetings could be added to the City's calendar since that is where residents would likely look for meeting information.

Faanes asked what would happen if she wanted to attend a Fire District meeting when Mayor Vogel and Councilmember Robinson were already planning to attend, which would create a Council quorum. Muehlbauer stated that technically, a Councilmember can observe a meeting as long as they do not participate in the official discussion.

Thunstrom explained that the City posts meetings where staff suspect there may

be a Council quorum. She noted this includes Pioneer Days meetings and Fire District meetings. She stated the City posts many meetings beyond what is required due to the possibility of a quorum.

Faanes asked where those meetings are posted. Thunstrom stated that meetings are posted in the City Hall lobby.

City Clerk Wida explained that the official posting location is the bulletin board in the lobby because the City is not required by statute to post meetings online. She noted the City posts online as a best practice for transparency. She explained that the City is currently transitioning between two websites and is not adding significant content to the current website during construction. She confirmed meetings are always posted on the bulletin board and stated she can add them to the online calendar once website updates are complete.

Faanes stated she thought residents would look at the City's online calendar for meeting information. She suggested it would be helpful to make Fire District meeting information easily accessible to residents who want to stay involved.

Mayor Vogel encouraged all Councilmembers to notify City Administrator Thunstrom or City Clerk Wida if they plan to attend a meeting so Staff can post it appropriately, regardless of whether the Councilmember actually attends.

Wida explained that once the Fire District website is operational, all information will be available online. She noted the Fire District is working on launching its website.

Muehlbauer asked for clarification on posting requirements, noting he assumed all government entities would be required to post meetings. Wida confirmed meetings are posted, but the official posting location is the bulletin board, not online. She noted that online posting is not a statutory requirement.

Muehlbauer asked for confirmation that meetings are posted physically, but not always online. Wida confirmed that it is correct.

Wida noted that once the Fire District website is operational, the City can create a cross-link between the City's calendar and the Fire District website so residents can access Fire District agendas easily. She explained that the websites will be completely separate going forward.

Mayor Vogel provided an update that the Rum River Fire District website is in process and is expected to launch in late February or early March.

Robinson noted the website will also include a YouTube tab where meetings could be broadcast or recorded, similar to City Council meetings.

Mayor Vogel confirmed that video recording is being discussed, but at a minimum,

the website will include meeting recordings. He noted Staff is working on potentially livestreaming meetings similar to City Council meetings.

Muehlbauer thanked the staff for their work on the Fire District website and budget matters. He emphasized the importance of making the public aware that the Council is examining the budget closely.

Muehlbauer noted that city-level government is very different from state-level government. He stated that while there is significant waste and fraud at the state and federal levels, city-level government spending is more direct and transparent. He explained that the City does not subsidize programs as state and federal governments do, and city taxes go directly to services.

Mayor Vogel reported that he and Councilmember Robinson attended the Rum River Fire District Board meeting. He noted the primary updates include work on the website and addressing a personnel issue the Council is aware of.

Mayor Vogel stated he will attend the Anoka County Fire Protection Council meeting on Thursday, January 23, 2026.

Mayor Vogel encouraged attendance at the Anoka County Local Government Officials meeting on Wednesday, January 29, 2026. He noted the primary topic of discussion will be the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources (DNR) changes to rifle and shotgun zoning.

13. UPCOMING EVENTS

January 21 - Planning Commission Meeting CANCELLED
February 02 - City Council Regular Meeting 6:00 pm
February 12 - Park Commission Meeting 7:00 pm
February 16 - City Offices Closed
February 17 - City Council Regular Meeting 6:00 pm
February 18 - Planning Commission Meeting 7:00 pm

14. ADJOURNMENT

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: FAANES TO ADJOURN THE MEETING

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

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

There being no further business, Mayor Vogel adjourned the regular City Council at 6:37 p.m.

A handwritten signature in cursive script that reads "Jennifer Wida". The signature is written in black ink and is positioned above a horizontal line.

Jennifer Wida, City Clerk