

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY OF ALBERT LEA**

**April 28, 2025 – 7:00 P.M. (Due to a Tornado Warning, the meeting was postponed until
7:23 P.M.)**

PRESENT: Mayor Rich Murray, Councilors Rachel Christensen, Larry Baker, Jason Howland, Reid Olson, Keith Van Beek, Brian Anderson, City Manager Ian Rigg, Public Works Director Steven Jahnke, City Attorney Joel Holstad of Lakes National Law LLP, and City Clerk Daphney Maras.

ADDITIONAL STAFF PRESENT: Sergeant-at-Arms-Public Safety Director JD Carlson, Finance Director Kristi Brutlag, and Community Engagement & Enrichment Director Cathy Malakowsky.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL - Mayor Murray called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. City Clerk Maras administered roll call.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - Mayor Murray asked all in attendance to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

CEREMONIAL ITEMS

- A. Proclamation Declaring May 2025 as Motorcycle Awareness Month
- B. Proclamation Declaring May as REACT Month
- C. Proclamation Declaring Building Safety Month

Mayor Murray read each proclamation aloud. Members of the local Motorcycle organization, as well as members of REACT were present to receive the proclamation and photos.

PUBLIC FORUM – None

CONSENT AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- A. Approve Minutes of the April 14, 2025 Regular Council Meeting
- B. Approve Minutes of the April 14, 2025 Work Session
- C. License & Permits

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve the consent agenda as read, seconded by Councilor Christensen. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Christensen, Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS

2025 “Best Places to Work” in Southeast Minnesota – Sponsored by Workforce Development, Inc

Human Resources Director Mike Zelenak highlighted the "Best Places to Work" program in Southeastern Minnesota, which the Workforce Development Center manages. He expressed his gratitude on behalf of the city for receiving this prestigious award for the fourth time in the past 15 years. He presented a video showcasing city employees at work to celebrate the achievement.

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution 25-074 Accepting Donations to the Recreation Department as Presented

The Recreation Department is planning weekly programming for students ages 12-18 this summer. Cargill of Albert Lea is donating \$500 to the programs, which will include an escape room, archery tag, basketball, and swimming. Look for details in the Summer Fun Guide being delivered soon to all households in Freeborn County.

Motion made by Councilor Christensen to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Christensen, Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-074
Included with these minutes)

B. Resolution FAILED Approving Corridor Grant and Assessment Agreement

City Manager Rigg explained this is a \$16,000 "loan" secured through assessments on the taxes that position the City above other potential lenders that have an interest in the property located at 201 Front Street E. The grant is through the Corridor program and is under the \$25,000 limit. The agreement for the grant will help protect us from any remaining liabilities. The ability to assess is allowed because the primary purpose is not actually economic development; it is blight remediation, and under state statute, it is allowed with a maximum of a 5-year term. The choice of using Blight or Revolving Loan Fund came down to available funds, as the original RLF (Fund 203) does have blight removal of a business structure as a use, and currently it has a higher balance with no known request/projected uses in 2025. If it were less secure, it would have come from the Blight Fund.

Councilor Howland asked for clarification on who will receive the loan. Rigg stated that it is for the property located at 201 Front St. E., though he could not recall the owner's name. He reiterated that the building will be repaired, with \$16,000 assessed to the property and the remaining \$16,000 provided through the Main Corridor Grant program.

Rigg explained that if the owner pursued a traditional loan from a bank, they could receive the \$16,000 grant but would have to repay the loan to the bank. However, given the circumstances, he recommends using the City's fund and its legal authority for blight remediation, allowing the cost to be assessed to the property and repaid over five years.

The owner currently has no specific plans for the building but recognizes that demolishing it would still result in an assessment to the property, while also eliminating a potential economic opportunity.

Councilor Christensen asked Rigg to confirm that the city is providing both a \$16,000 grant and a \$16,000 loan. Rigg affirmed this, noting that the city has used similar approaches in the past, such as offering business loans with partial forgiveness. In this case, while the project does not involve job creation, it does support blight elimination and qualifies for the corridor grant. Under this structure, half of the funds would be provided as a loan that the borrower must repay, while the other half would be given as a grant. Christensen voiced concerns about the lack of equity in the project, stating that \$32,000 is a significant amount to invest in rehabilitating a concrete shell.

Rigg stated that, at present, the owner has no direct business plans. While the city has previously provided funds to individuals who can secure bank loans but leveraged city assistance for more favorable terms, this particular group faces barriers that prevent them from obtaining traditional financing. This situation presents an opportunity for the city to be more effective rather than merely affective, helping stabilize property values in a way that could support future business expansion. He added if not for the fact that assessing the \$16,000 enhances the loan's security, he would not be making this recommendation.

Councilor Olson inquired about any existing plans or designs for the building, to which Councilor Baker responded by outlining the framework for the garage doors and the exterior covering, with the intent of matching the existing structure. Baker's knowledge comes from his work at the company involved in design plans for the owners of 201 Front St. E.

Councilor Anderson believes it is not the council's role to judge the type of business or its future value. What matters now is that a business owner wants to enhance their property, and it falls within the main corridor for which the grant money is intended. He said, as the City Manager noted, the city serves as the lender of last resort. In this case, there are no alternative funding options. If the building is repaired, it creates an opportunity for the current or future owners to utilize it effectively. Without stabilization, nothing will ever happen.

Councilor Baker inquired about the consequences of failing to repay the loan. City Manager Rigg explained that, in such a case, the property would eventually be subject to tax forfeiture, at which point another party could pay the outstanding amount and assume ownership.

Motion made by Councilor Anderson to approve as read, seconded by Councilor VanBeek. On roll call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Howland, Van Beek, and Anderson. Councilors Christensen, Olson, and Mayor Murray voted Nay. Councilor Baker abstained. Mayor Murray declared the motion failed.

C. Resolution 25-075 Accepting Bids and Awarding Contract for 2025 Bituminous Materials

Public Works has reviewed the bids opened Tuesday, April 22, 2025 for the 2025 Bituminous Material.

The city received three bids. Public Works is recommending the low bid from Flint Hills Resources of St. Paul, Minnesota with a bid of \$588.00/Ton delivered w/o tax for CRS-2P and \$553.00/Ton delivered w/o tax for CRS-2.

Below is a summary of the bids:

Flint Hills Resources

CRS-2P	\$588.00 per ton delivered w/o tax
CRS-2	\$553.00 per ton delivered w/o tax

MEIGS Paving Asphalts & Emulsions

CRS-2P	\$634.90 per ton delivered w/o tax
CRS-2	\$596.04 per ton delivered w/o tax

Jebro Inc.

CRS-2P	\$718.01 per ton delivered w/o tax
CRS-2	\$688.01 per ton delivered w/o tax

Last year the low bid was \$592.00/Ton delivered w/o tax for CRS-2P and \$542.00/Ton delivered w/o tax for CRS-2.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Christensen, Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-075
Included with these minutes)

D. Resolution 25-076 Accepting Bids and Awarding Contracts for the Splashpad Bathroom Construction (Job 2511)

Public Works has reviewed the bids for the 2025 Splashpad Bathroom Construction – Job 2511. The splashpad bathroom and storage area will be located on the northwest corner of the north parking lot. The bathroom will be constructed with a combination of City forces and contractors.

The total project cost with 10 percent contingencies is estimated to be \$177,783.00. The budget for this project was \$250,000. The bid abstract is attached.

Councilor Howland expressed gratitude to the city staff, with special recognition for Assistant Public Works Director Ryan Hajek, whose diligent efforts ensured the project remained under

budget by leveraging city staff for the work.

Councilor Christensen asked about potential grants for the project, to which Rigg assured that if any had been available, they would have pursued them. Christensen concurred with Councilor Howland and noted her appreciation that the project was completed under budget.

Motion made by Councilor Howland to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Christensen, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Councilor Baker abstained. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-076
Included with these minutes)

E. Resolution 25-077 Appointing Human Rights Commission Members

The Albert Lea Human Rights Commission stopped meeting during the pandemic. Based on requests from several Albert Lea residents to revive the commission, the city sought applicants for this 7-member board. We received applications from 14 extremely well-qualified residents. Choosing only 7 was difficult, and the city encourages those not chosen to volunteer to help with Human Rights Commission activities or apply for a different volunteer board. The first order of business for the commission will be to provide the Council with recommendations on how to update the ordinance establishing the commission. The last update was in 2007 and state laws have changed since then, nullifying some of the purposes, duties and responsibilities of the commission. Human rights apply to all residents, including minorities, women, people with disabilities, senior citizens – everyone.

Motion made by Councilor Howland to approve the start of the term effective January 1, 2025 and will expire December 31, 2025, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Christensen, Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-077
Included with these minutes)

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS:

First Ward, Councilor Christensen reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Blue Zones is seeking a coordinator to organize the community's Walking Mois initiative. The Senior Center is undergoing a thorough evaluation of its current programs.

The Watershed District will host a special informational meeting tomorrow at the Edgewater Pavilion, offering updates on the next steps of the dredging project. Everyone is encouraged to attend.

She has been hosting a group of 12 therapeutic musicians in training, who have expressed admiration for the beauty of Albert Lea. She also extended her gratitude to St. John's for graciously hosting the group

Second Ward, Councilor Baker reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Attended the HRA Board Meeting. He reported on an individual interested in building modular homes in the community. The HRA Board voted to move forward with building an ADA-compliant modular home. Recently spoke at a Student C-Span competition and congratulated the winners.

Third Ward, Councilor Howland reported:

- Ward Items – A couple of items are in the works, awaiting follow-up from city staff.
- Committee Update – Participated in Cleanup Day at the Transfer Station, extending his appreciation to City staff for their involvement. Also attended the CVB and Park & Rec. monthly meeting, where he announced that the Summer Fun Guide has been sent to residents and encouraged everyone to check it out. Discussions covered several projects, including a new pickleball court. The Pickleball Association has proposed building new courts and a tennis court and will lead fundraising efforts for the project. The location of the Trailhead Shelter at Frank Hall Park was also considered, with the best placement determined to be just north of the restrooms. Snyder Field improvements were also discussed, including a plaza area and ADA accessible pathways to each of the fields. City staff have been working with the youth baseball and youth softball user groups on their needs and wants, and these groups will also help with some of the funding. Additionally, the Bridge Avenue public dock was reviewed. The city is working with a company to purchase the dock from the DNR, which requires the installation of a kayak launch as part of the agreement. However, the original manufacturer of the kayak launch is no longer in business, so the city is exploring options with another vendor to ensure the new dock design is compatible with the alternative kayak launch.

Fourth Ward, Councilor Olson reported:

- Ward Items – Thanked Public Works for the yard repairs required after the snowplows went through during the winter.
- Committee Update – None

Fifth Ward, Councilor Van Beek reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – He attended the HRA Board meeting that both Baker and Anderson had already spoken of. He participated in the Urban Geography class here at City Hall last week.

Sixth Ward, Councilor Anderson reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Attended the HRA Board meeting and expressed enthusiasm for the Modular Home presentation. He said the HRA has several empty lots, and utilizing them for this initiative is a good decision. They also discussed “pay plans” with the HRA employees.

MAYOR REPORT:

Attended the following meetings:

- Last week, attended a meeting with the City Manager, city staff, Congressman Finstad, and his team, where updates were shared on developments in Washington, D.C., and progress on the WWTP.
- Delivered a presentation at the Albert Lea Lion’s Club.
- Met with ALEDA and the Oat Mill group, who provided updates to Senator Klobuchar and her team.
- Conducted an ALEDA project review with Director Phillip Johnson.
- Joined Albert Lea High School’s Urban Geography class alongside Councilors Van Beek and Howland.
- Attended the C-SPAN event with Councilor Baker.
- Assisted with Albert Lea Cleanup Day last Saturday at the Transfer Station.
- Participated in the Healthy Kids Event at the Family YMCA.

Mentioned the upcoming events and said they are also listed on the City’s website.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

- He has received proposals for the Strategic Plan, along with submissions for new single-family housing developments on vacant city lots.
- He reminded the council about the upcoming LMC Conference in Duluth this June.
- City Planner Megan Boeck is set to attend a conference in Baltimore focused on Economic Mobility.
- The process of further researching the Stormwater utility will soon begin.
- He will be meeting with Senator Klobuchar’s staff to discuss funding for the Wastewater Treatment Plant and cleanup efforts at Blazing Star.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

A. Resolution 25-078 Approving Claims

(1). Presentation of Claims Over \$25,000

The attached resolution directs the Mayor and City Treasurer to issue the payment of claims as presented in the Detail of Claims report. In addition, Maras displayed a list of claims over \$25,000 for the public’s viewing, transparency and education.

Motion made by Councilor Baker, to approve the claims, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Christensen, Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

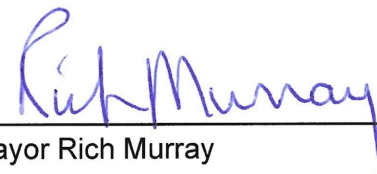
See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-078
(Included with these minutes)

Councilor Howland motioned for adjournment; Councilor Christensen seconded. That there being no further business, the Council meeting adjourn until the next regular meeting of the Albert Lea City Council at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, May 12, 2025. On voice call vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion.

Mayor Murray declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:27 P.M.



Daphney Maras
Secretary of the Council

Mayor Rich Murray