

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY OF ALBERT LEA
May 27, 2025 – 7:00 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, and Building/Zoning Official, Wayne Sorensen

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 - None

PUBLIC FORUM

Colin Minehart mentioned he is interested in opening a cannabis dispensary in the current building he owns, Mine Agains Bar & Grill.

Jerry Collins discussed the established fees for cannabis licenses outlined in the City's fee schedule. He expressed his opposition to a large corporation opening a cannabis business, favoring smaller potential businesses instead. He also believes that the selection criteria for the two cannabis businesses should be based on merit. He expressed his gratitude to the council and staff for their responsiveness whenever he reached out with questions.

CONSENT AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- A. Approve Minutes of the May 12, 2025 Regular Council Meeting
- B. Approve Minutes of the May 12, 2025 Work Session
- C. License & Permits
- D. Appointment of Rosemary Bloomquist to Senior Center Advisory Board

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve the consent agenda 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.

PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS

A. Ordinance 25-134 Amending Chapter 50, Article I, Section 50.0018 (2nd Reading)

This amendment removes language about the “required” front yard setback versus the defined front yard as written in section 50.002. Planning Commission recommends approval of this second reading.

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 Ordinance 25-134
Included with these minutes)

B. Ordinance 25-135 Amending Chapter 50, Article III, Division 8, Section 50.0402 (2nd Reading)

This amendment will allow steel siding with exposed fasteners on buildings that are not substantially visible from a public street. Exposed fasteners will be limited to no more than 60% of the building face in order to preserve overall aesthetics. Planning Commission recommends approval of this second reading.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Van Beek. 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 Ordinance 25-135
Included with these minutes)

C. Ordinance 25-136 Amending Chapter 50, Article IV, Section 50.0842 (2nd Reading)

This amendment adds a definition for real estate signs and clarifies how far a wall sign may extend beyond the building, eave, or parapet. Planning Commission recommends approval of this second reading.

Motion made by Councilor Anderson to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Baker. 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 Ordinance 25-136
Included with these minutes)

D. Ordinance 25-137 Amending Chapter 50, Article IV, Section 50.0843 (2nd Reading)

This amendment adds directional signs, window signs, and real estate signs to the list of signs that are exempt from requiring a permit. Planning Commission recommends approval of this second reading.

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 Ordinance 25-137
Included with these minutes)

E. Ordinance 25-138 Amending Chapter 50, Article IV, Section 50.0846 (2nd Reading)

This amendment decreases the number of flag or feather signs allowed per 100 feet of lot frontage while increasing the number of wall signs per site. Due to larger lots along the B-2 commercial corridor. This amendment also adds language regarding the size and height of real estate signs. Planning Commission recommends approval of this second reading.

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 Ordinance 25-138
Included with these minutes)

F. Ordinance 25-139 Amending Chapter 50, Article IV, Section 50.0847 (2nd Reading)

This amendment decreases the number of flag or feather signs allowed per site while increasing the number of wall signs allowed per site in industrial districts. It also adds language pertaining to the size and height of temporary real estate signs. Planning Commission recommends approval of this second reading.

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 Ordinance 25-139
Included with these minutes)

G. Ordinance 25-140 Amending Chapter 50, Article VI, Section 50.0938 (2nd Reading)

This amendment requires buildings in the B-2 community business district to have a minimum of 10% of the lineal ground floor of a building in windows. It will also allow windows or glass to be

tinted or frosted. In addition, it will prohibit cannabis, hemp products, liquor, tobacco, or related paraphernalia from being visible through windows. Planning Commission recommends approval of this second reading.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Howland. 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 Ordinance 25-140
Included with these minutes)

H. Resolution 25-088 Approving Publication Summary of Ordinances 25-134, 25-135, 25-136, 25-137, 25-138, 25-139, and 25-140

Ordinance Summaries may be published if they reasonably inform the public of the effect and intent of the Ordinance. Summaries fulfill all legal requirements as if the entire summarized matter had been published, and also direct the public on how to obtain the complete Ordinance. Staff recommends approval to publish an Ordinance Summary for Ordinances 25-134, 25-135, 25-136, 25-137, 25-138, 25-139, and 25-140.

Motion made by Councilor Anderson to approve 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.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-088
Included with these minutes)

I. Ordinance 25-141 Amending Chapter 5, Cannabis Products (2nd Reading)

This amendment is in response to recent information from the State of Minnesota Office of Cannabis Management on the process of retail license approvals, the City's role in such approvals, and the fee structure. Given the number of potential business owners, preliminarily approved licenses from the state, and the City's imposed limit, a process needs to be clear on revocation, selection, and other impactful decisions related to cannabis retail.

Councilor Christensen requested a review of the amendments made to the original ordinance. Clerk Maras read aloud the redlined amendments as presented during the first reading. City Manager Rigg elaborated on the criteria for selecting two cannabis businesses and noted potential changes at the OCM level that could impact both the selection criteria and the number of businesses the council may choose to permit. In response to Baker's inquiry about limiting the number to two, Attorney Holstad explained that the criteria developed by staff minimizes discretion and ensures a secure process within the city's limited authority. Baker then asked whether the council could increase the limit if desired, to which Rigg confirmed that the council holds the discretion to either maintain the restriction or expand the number of permitted businesses.

Councilor Anderson recommended that if the council intends to adjust the allowable number, it would be more effective to do so sooner rather than later. He anticipates that OCM will make modifications, which will likely prompt the city to make further adjustments. In response, Mayor Murray reminded the council of the need to be cognizant of the number of cannabis businesses in the community, noting that residents are saying two is already too many. Councilor Olson expressed a preference for beginning with two established businesses before considering an increase in the allowable number.

Councilor Van Beek raised concerns about the cannabis event ordinance, particularly the prohibition on consumption during the event. In response, Rigg explained that the restriction aligns with existing Parks policies, Blue Zone initiatives, and the Clean Indoor Act for indoor events. Councilor Howland expressed skepticism, questioning the logic of issuing a Cannabis Event Permit while simultaneously banning consumption. Acknowledging the complexity of the issue, Rigg noted the inherent challenge of balancing event permissions with consumption restrictions. He added that, when the ordinance was initially drafted, it was understood that revisions would likely be necessary in the future.

Motion made by Councilor Howland to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Christensen. On roll 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 Ordinance 25-141
Included with these minutes)

J. Resolution 25-089 Approving Publication Summary of Ordinance 25-141

Ordinance Summaries may be published if they reasonably inform the public of the effect and intent of the Ordinance. Summaries fulfill all legal requirements as if the entire summarized matter had been published, and also direct the public on how to obtain the complete Ordinance. Staff recommends approval to publish an Ordinance Summary for Ordinance 25-141.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Olson. 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 25-089
Included with these minutes)

NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution 25-090 Accepting Donations as Presented to the City of Albert Lea

Chevron Renewable Energy Group out of Glenville is donating \$20,000 to Albert Lea Fire Rescue and the City of Albert Lea for the purchase of a LUCAS Device. A LUCAS Device is a mechanical chest compression device used to provide automated and consistent chest compressions to

patients in cardiac arrest. This donation assists in supporting EMS response in the City of Albert Lea. Albert Lea Fire Rescue personnel are trained in its use, but now will have the device on scene sooner to provide high-quality CPR sooner.

In a separate donation, the STARS Mentorship Program wishes to donate \$5000.00 for a 20' x 20' flower bed to the Inclusive Park Site. The goal is to create a beautiful garden space for the public to enjoy and for mentored youth to participate in community-building projects.

Project Vision:

Strategic plans to teach young people in the STARS program through therapeutic hands-on group events with results for long-term sustainable living, education, and civic engagement. The completed project is for all to enjoy and get to the heart of some of the young people within our community with a sense of belonging.

Goals:

- a) Build a 20X20 flowerbed to plant flowers and trees. All funds donated through STARS.
- b) Work with Dalton Hanson and his crew from Landscaping Solutions in Albert Lea to complete the project and source plants.
- c) Recruit community volunteers to work elbow-to-elbow with our mentors and mentees.
- d) Display a sign in appreciation of volunteers.
- e) Recruit media outlets to promote teamwork and sharing the joys of community.
- f) Expand each year as needed or if funds become available.

Councilor Christensen expressed gratitude to the STARS Program for their generous donation, with Mayor Murray echoing the appreciation.

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 25-090
Included with these minutes)

B. Resolution 25-091 Amending Fee Schedule

The 2025 fee schedule reflects amendments recommended by staff, effective May 30, 2025, and are highlighted in red. These updates include the addition of an Aquatic Center season pass, for individuals ages 3-9 years (with the purchase of individual (16 and older) or Caretaker Pass), establishment of fees for Cannabis businesses and Cannabis events. Additionally, an investigation fee has been added for an individual employee affiliated with partnerships or corporate entities.

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 25-091
Included with these minutes)

C. Resolution 25-092 Authorizing a 2026 Capital Budget Request to the State of Minnesota for the Albert Lea Wastewater Treatment Facility Improvement Project

The Albert Lea Wastewater Treatment Facility (WWTF) is a critical piece of infrastructure for ensuring the vitality and growth of the City of Albert Lea and its extensive food, agricultural, and manufacturing businesses. New regulations have required the Minnesota Pollution Control Agency to include a phosphorus limit in the City of Albert Lea National Pollutant Discharge (NPDES) Permit for the protection of the environment.

The City of Albert Lea is committed to protecting and improving the natural resources in the State of Minnesota while concurrently encouraging a strong economy. This commitment will require significant upgrades and infrastructure updates at the Albert Lea Wastewater Treatment Facility. The original facility was constructed in 1983, and numerous facility components need rehabilitation or replacement to support community industries, meet new limits, protect the environment, and provide sustainable wastewater treatment for area residents and businesses. Without significant funding assistance, the cost associated with the improvements will have a significant negative economic impact on the residents, industries, and businesses that rely on the WWTF as well as the State of Minnesota and, beyond that, all benefit from the food that is developed and processed in the community.

The estimated cost to complete the facility upgrades in order to meet project goals and the new permit limits is approximately \$80 million. The City of Albert Lea supports and is requesting a state appropriation of \$40 million in total from Minnesota State bonding proceeds for the wastewater treatment facility improvements needed to support community industries and businesses, and address phosphorus treatment and facility upgrades needed to protect and improve the State's natural resources. The upgrades and improvements to the wastewater treatment facility are the City of Albert Lea's number one priority for state bonding funds.

Motion made by Councilor Anderson to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Van Beek. 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 25-092
Included with these minutes)

D. Resolution 25-093 Authorizing Funds Transfer

The Economic Development Fund (balance of \$724,327 as of 12/31/2024) and the Housing Fund

(balance of \$581,561 as of 12/31/2024) were established with transfers from the General Fund. These funds have not had the projects that were expected when the funds were established and the transfers were made. The Blight/Hazardous fund has had several projects and continues to address the properties in the City that need to be either torn down or repaired. The cash balance of the Blight/Hazardous Mitigation fund has a balance of \$40,485 as of 12/31/2024 and will need additional funding to support the 2025 projects. This transfer of \$300,000 (\$225,000 from the Economic Development Fund and \$75,000 from the Housing Fund) will continue to support the projects that are planned in 2025 to address Blighted and Hazardous properties.

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 25-093
Included with these minutes)

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS

First Ward, Councilor Christensen reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Attended the Chamber of Commerce Age-Friendly gathering last week, where the Lakeside Chorus was highlighted as one of its initiatives. She encourages the community to support this talented group and attend their upcoming concert at St. John's Campus. Additionally, the Chamber sponsored a speaker on mental health, who spoke at the Fire Station today as part of an ongoing series. A recording of the talk is available for public viewing on the Albert Lea Health Care Coalition Facebook page. The Senior Center welcomed new board member Rosemary Bloomquist. The Minnesota Star Tribune came to Albert Lea last week and held a discussion largely focusing on the Blue Zones initiative of Albert Lea.

Second Ward, Councilor Baker reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Attended the HRA meeting last Tuesday, where he emphasized discussions on housing and the potential of constructing a modular home to showcase the high quality of modern modular housing. Additionally, he encouraged the community to be responsible pet owners by cleaning up after their dogs while out on walks.

Third Ward, Councilor Howland reported:

- Ward Items – Working on a few ward items. Asked the City Manager to, once again, follow up with him regarding the problematic property on 7th Ave.
- Committee Update – None

Fourth Ward, Councilor Olson reported:

- Ward Items – None. He advises residents to carefully vet door-to-door construction workers and ensure they hire a licensed, reputable contractor.
- Committee Update – None

Fifth Ward, Councilor Van Beek reported:

- Ward Items – Will follow up on ward items with the City Manager
- Committee Update – Attended the Library Board meeting last week, where they discussed a recent software migration that required the library to close for a couple of days to complete the transition. He expressed gratitude to Library Director Annice Sevitt and her team for their dedication in ensuring the process went as smoothly as possible.

On Memorial Day, he participated in the Wreath Drop event hosted by the American Legion, a meaningful tribute to honor those who served.

Additionally, Bergdale Harley-Davidson is gearing up for the 6th Annual Bugs Run, with prizes donated by the dealership. All proceeds from the event will benefit the Freeborn County Humane Society. On May 31st, Ride for Heroes is hosting a bean bag tournament at the Pour House in Freeborn, with 100% of the donations going to assist the Veterans in our area.

Sixth Ward, Councilor Anderson reported:

- Ward Items – Working on Ward items. Participated in the Veterans Memorial at Grace Cemetery on Memorial Day.
- Committee Update - Attended the HRA meeting last week and will defer to Councilor Baker to report the details.

MAYOR REPORT:

Attended the following events:

- The Chamber hosted a Fireworks fundraiser on May 16th
- Delivered a presentation at the Lions meeting on May 20th
- On May 21st, participated in the Minnesota Tribune Blue Zones health care forum
- Conducted a project review with Economic Development Director Phillip Johnson on May 22nd
- Attended the Albert Lea High School graduation ceremony on May 23rd, wishing them success in all their future endeavors
- Honored Memorial Day by attending the program at the Veterans Memorial at the Freeborn County Courthouse.
- Expressed appreciation to the community's young people, recognizing their dedication to sports and activities throughout the year

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

CITY MANAGER REPORT

- He will be attending the LMC conference at the end of next month along with two staff members.

- Met with a developer today, with additional meetings scheduled next week. Discussions primarily focused on housing, with some interest in warehousing as well.
- The website upgrade is nearing completion. A link will be sent to the council for review ahead of its presentation at the next council meeting.
- The budget review process is underway.
- Consultant interviews for the Strategic Plan will begin soon.
- Staff remains actively engaged in addressing the Blazing Star contamination concerns.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

A. Resolution 25-094 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.

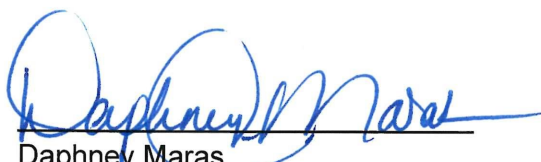
Motion made by Councilor Howland to approve the claims, seconded by Councilor Baker. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Christensen, Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

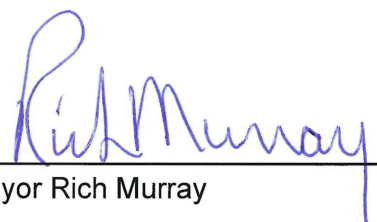
See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-094
(Included with these minutes)

Councilor Howland motioned for adjournment; Councilor Baker seconded. That there being no further business, the Council meeting adjourns until the next regular meeting of the Albert Lea City Council at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, June 9, 2025. On a voice call vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion.

Mayor Murray declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:19 P.M.


Daphney Maras
Secretary of the Council


Mayor Rich Murray