

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY OF ALBERT LEA
May 11, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.**

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

Councilor Rachel Christensen attended via Zoom.

ADDITIONAL STAFF PRESENT: Chief of Police Darren Hanson, Lieutenant Jeff Strom, City Planner Megan Boeck

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. Recognition of the Citizen Academy Participants

Chief Hanson opened by recognizing the dedication of this year's Citizen Academy participants and expressing appreciation for their engagement. He also extended his thanks to the staff who plan and facilitate the Academy, noting the significant effort that goes into making the program successful. He introduced Detective Luke Tuzinski, the coordinator of the Citizen Academy. Detective Tuzinski outlined the details of the program, followed by introducing the group of participants.

B. Mayor Murray read aloud the Proclamation Declaring May 17-23, 2026 National Public Works Week. Several staff members from the Public Works Department were present to receive the proclamation.

C. Mayor Murray read aloud the Proclamation Declaring May 10-16, 2026, National Police Week. Staff members were present to receive the proclamation.

D. Mayor Murray read aloud the Proclamation Declaring the Month of May Building Safety Month. Staff members were present to receive the proclamation.

PUBLIC FORUM

Dave Karge spoke in opposition to the proposed animal ordinance changes.

Martha Jones-Sichko spoke in opposition to the proposed animal ordinance changes and asked that the council table the matter to obtain additional information.

Kim Hammer of the Freeborn County Humane Society expressed support for removing the cap on the number of household pets, noting that responsible pet ownership is what truly matters. She also emphasized that welcoming pets into a family contributes positively to the local economy.

Dee Amberg of Camp Companion noted the difference between feral and stray cats. She provided tips on how residents can deter stray or feral cats from their yard. She discourages people from feeding cats to allow the TNR program to be effective.

CONSENT AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- A. Approve Minutes of the April 27, 2026 Regular Council Meeting
- B. Approve Minutes of the April 27, 2026 Work Session
- C. License & Permits
- D. Resolution Approving In-Fill Housing Incentives – Turning Point
- E. Resolution Not Waiving Monetary Limits on Tort Liability

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

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 26-085 and 26-086
(Included with these minutes)

PETITIONS, REQUESTS, AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Ordinance Amending Chapter 8 – Article II. – Animal Control (1st Reading) - TABLED

These updates modernize the City's animal control regulations, clarify definitions, and strengthen tools for addressing nuisance and safety concerns.

The ordinance aligns the definition of service animal with the ADA, noting that emotional support animals are not included and "are subject to all regulations applicable to pets."

The previous numerical limit on household pets is replaced with a responsible ownership standard. Owners must ensure animals are not kept in "unsanitary or overcrowded conditions" and that noise, odor, and waste are properly controlled. This allows flexibility while giving the City clearer authority to act when conditions become a nuisance or health risk.

A new section addresses feral cat overpopulation by prohibiting feeding unless part of a City-approved TNR program, citing the health and overpopulation impacts of unauthorized feeding.

The ordinance extends running-at-large requirements to include both dogs and cats, emphasizing that animals must be kept on their owner's property and not allowed to roam in public spaces. This approach supports responsible ownership, minimizes nuisance issues, and affirms that owners remain accountable even if an animal escapes unintentionally.

The ordinance also clarifies inspection authority, allowing the City to investigate complaints and order a reduction in animals if conditions threaten public health or safety.

Dangerous and potentially dangerous dog procedures are updated to reflect state law, including notice, appeal timelines, and requirements such as proper enclosures, muzzling, microchipping, and insurance.

Finally, kennels are prohibited within city limits, defined as premises with four or more dogs, four or more cats, or a combination of six or more animals over six months of age. Zoning requirements for commercial kennels or runs are addressed separately in Chapter 50 of the City Code.

Councilor Baker asked the council to restate the work-session discussion so the audience could hear the concerns and understand the ordinance.

Councilor Anderson opened by noting the council had a productive discussion during the work session, where the less formal structure allows for more open dialogue. He reiterated that his primary concern continues to be enforcement rather than the number of animals permitted. He emphasized the need to focus on enforcement and asked Police Chief Darren Hanson to address the enforcement component of the ordinance.

Chief Hanson referred back to the earlier discussion, noting that the amendments now address several gaps in the ordinance, including clearer definitions for service animals and emotional support animals, as well as more explicit authority for law enforcement to inspect properties when warranted. He emphasized that the issue is rarely the number of dogs a person owns; the real concerns stem from complaints about persistent barking, feces left in yards, poorly maintained properties, and animals running at large. Responsible owners tend to be responsible regardless of how many dogs they have.

In response to Councilor Baker's question about whether law enforcement can issue citations, Hanson explained that while a citation is possible, the City's practice is to begin with education and voluntary compliance. Baker then asked what a citation involves. Hanson noted that it depends on the level of the offense and may be classified as either a misdemeanor or a petty misdemeanor. He then deferred to the City Attorney, who agreed and added that he does not recall ever issuing a penalty based solely on the number of animals, but has taken action in cases involving animal care, conditions, or public safety concerns.

Councilor Herman restated the point he raised during the work session, that he prefers the focus

remain on enforcement, and he would support adopting the enforcement provisions while retaining the current limit of two dogs and two cats per household. He noted that the issues typically arise from barking and other nuisance behaviors.

Anderson stated that public concern has centered on the allowable number of animals rather than the ordinance's substantive updates. He noted that complaints he has received relate to dog behavior, making a numerical limit seem arbitrary. He said the enforcement provisions should be the primary focus.

Chief Hanson stated that the department follows the State Statute outlining penalties and the process for determining when a dog is classified as potentially dangerous or dangerous. He reported that five dogs are currently designated as dangerous. He noted that when a situation meets the criteria for a dangerous-dog determination, enforcement procedures are clear and applied accordingly.

Councilor Baker suggested setting a limit of a total of four dogs and cats, as he believes it would help people who already have three dogs.

Rigg restated that the City's enforcement practices have focused on nuisance behavior, public safety, and animal welfare rather than the number of dogs in a household. City Attorney Holstad emphasized that the revised ordinance strengthens the City's ability to address these issues. He explained that regulating conditions is significantly more enforceable than regulating a numerical limit, and that in practice, the number of animals matters far less than whether they are being cared for appropriately.

The City Manager reminded council that maintaining a numerical limit, while acknowledging that the limit is not enforceable, would not be a prudent use of staff time or the judicial system. If a complaint were based solely on exceeding that number, staff would be placed in a position where they must disregard a portion of the ordinance due to limited time and resources, rather than focusing on the substantive health and safety issues the ordinance is designed to address.

Councilor Anderson asked whether law enforcement could provide citation data, and Chief Hanson confirmed that he could.

Council agreed to table the first reading of this ordinance until the May 26th council meeting.

B. Resolution 26-087 Accepting Bids and Awarding Contract for 2026 Bituminous Material

Public Works has reviewed the bids opened on Tuesday, April 28, 2026 for the 2026 Bituminous Material.

The City received two bids. Public Works is recommending the low bid from Flint Hills Resources of St. Paul, Minnesota, with a bid of \$616.00/Ton delivered w/o tax for CRS-2P and \$576.00/Ton delivered w/o tax for CRS-2. Although the CRS-2 bid was \$1.00 per ton more than MEIGS, the overall combined bid was lower.

Below is a summary of the bids:

Flint Hills Resources

CRS-2P \$616.00 per ton delivered w/o tax

CRS-2 \$576.00 per ton delivered w/o tax

MEIGS Paving Asphalts & Emulsions

CRS-2P \$646.64 per ton delivered w/o tax

CRS-2 \$575.00 per ton delivered w/o tax

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

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 26-087
(Included with these minutes)

C. Resolution 26-088 Accepting Donations as Presented to the City of Albert Lea

The City of Albert Lea is generally authorized to accept donations pursuant to Minnesota Statutes Section 465.03 for the benefit of its citizens. Staff recommends acceptance of the following donations as submitted for Council review and approval.

The Stars Mentorship Program offers community service opportunities to disadvantaged youths in the area, and the garden is part of this broader effort to engage young people in civic responsibility, the outdoors, and good stewardship. As part of the continuing relationship with the City of Albert Lea, the Stars Mentorship Program is donating \$150 of plants to replace expired annual plants in the garden located next to the inclusive playground at Edgewater Park. This is a project that was donated by the organization last summer.

Select Foods of Albert Lea has generously contributed \$2,400 toward the placement of a memorial bench honoring the life of Bryan Skogheim. The City extends its sincere appreciation for this meaningful gift, which will serve as a lasting tribute to Bryan's memory and his connection to the community.

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

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 26-088
(Included with these minutes)

D. Resolution Approving Preliminary and Final Plat of Dress Second Addition – TABLED

The Planning Commission held a public hearing on May 5, 2026, to review the Plat of Dress Second Addition for compliance with Chapter 38 Subdivisions.

The purpose of the plat is to subdivide a smaller 16-acre parcel to provide for a potential residential development. The preliminary plat of Dress Second Addition meets all the requirements of Chapter 38—Subdivisions. However, there are additional utility easements not shown within or along the abandoned Chicago, Milwaukee, St. Paul Railroad and Freeborn County, as questioned ownership of the area described in Detail 3 of the Plat. As such, the Planning Commission recommends approval contingent upon the applicant providing evidence or title status, including encumbrances and easements in the form of an opinion of title addressed to the City of Albert Lea, provided by a licensed attorney or a commitment to ensure title naming the City of Albert Lea. The final plat is to conform to the evidence of title.

City Manager Rigg said staff does not recommend approval at this time. Several issues had been identified since the Planning Commission reviewed the plat and indicated the item should be tabled to allow staff additional time for review. Council agreed to table this item.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS

First Ward, Councilor Christensen reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Blue Zones committee met last week.
- Public Announcements – Attended the ribbon cutting ceremony at the opening of Althing Clinic. Participated in the City/County joint meeting

Second Ward, Councilor Baker reported:

- Ward Items – Sent ward items to the City Manager
- Committee Update – Provided an HRA update
- Public Announcements – Attended Freeborn County Officer of the Year ceremony

Third Ward, Councilor Herman reported:

- Ward Items – Public Works Director handled a ward item on Herman's behalf
- Committee Update – None.
- Public Announcements – Attended the Cinco de Mayo festival held downtown and the Freeborn County Officer of the Year ceremony. Volunteered at the Family Literacy Night at the Library

Fourth Ward, Councilor Olson reported:

- Ward Items – Thanked CSO Green for taking care of an issue
- Committee Update –
- Public Announcements – Reminded the community that to watch for children as school season is ending this week.

Fifth Ward, Councilor Van Beek reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – None
- Invited the community to attend the Nation of Patriots event on May 16th at Bergdale Harley Davidson

Sixth Ward, Councilor Anderson reported:

- Ward Items – Many conversations with residents regarding the proposed animal ordinance
- Committee Update – Attended the HRA meeting

MAYOR REPORT:

Reported the following and provided details of each:

- Thanked council members who stepped in on his behalf, as he has been absent the last couple of weeks out of town
- Received some ALEDA updates
- Met with the Lakeview Lions Club a couple of weeks ago.

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

CITY MANAGER REPORT

- Attended the joint City/County meeting
- Received a letter from the US Housing and Urban Development related to the cleanup at the Blazing Star, indicating future communications regarding details of the awarded funds.
- Planned meeting to review the development of the 300 block
- Special Taxing districts will need to be discussed at the next meeting
- Human Rights meets on Thursday
- An agreement will soon be in place for a mural to be painted on the retaining wall by the water tower
- Submitted two legislative items and presented and spoke with legislatures
- Will be attending the Relay for Life on June 5.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

A. Resolution 26- 089 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 Anderson to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Baker. On roll call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Christensen, Baker, Herman, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 26-089
(Included with these minutes)

Councilor Herman motioned for adjournment; Councilor Van Beek 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, May 11, 2026. On a voice call vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion.

Mayor Murray declared the motion passed, and the meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:09 PM

Mayor Rich Murray

Daphney Maras
Secretary of the Council