

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING  
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY OF ALBERT LEA  
August 25, 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-Police Chief Darren Hanson, Finance Director Kristi Brutlag, Human Resource Director Mike Zelenak.

**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**

Police Chief Darren Hanson proudly welcomed Joshua Knudtson as the newest member of the patrol team, followed by City Clerk Maras formally administering the Oath of Office.

**PUBLIC FORUM**

Bethany Greiner addressed the Charter amendment on the council agenda, specifically Chapter 2 related to filling a council vacancy.

**CONSENT AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- A. Approve Minutes of the August 11, 2025 Regular Council Meeting
- B. Approve Minutes of the August 11, 2025 Work Session
- C. License & Permits
- D. Resolution Approving Plans and Ordering of Bids for the Front Street Basin Project – Job 2507

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.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-135  
Included with these minutes)

**PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS** - None

**UNFINISHED BUSINESS**

- A. Resolution 25-136 Approving Publication Summary of Ordinance 25-143 Amending Chapter 46 – Vegetation, Article II. – Weeds and Tall Grass

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 25-143

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)

**B. Resolution 25-137 Approving Publication Summary of Ordinance 25-144 Amending Chapter 8 – Animals - Article 1. – In General**

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 25-144

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 25-137  
Included with these minutes)

**NEW BUSINESS**

**A. Public Hearing Regarding Property Tax Abatements**

City Manager Rigg reported that the 2025B bond issue includes \$185,000 for the Freeborn Bank Parking lot and \$435,000 for the Eberhart Street Project. Under State Statute, the City has the option to pledge tax revenue from an existing parcel to pay debt service for these types of projects. The impact is minimal on the amount of future ability to abate taxes for economic development. This process requires a public hearing.

Rebecca Kurtz of Ehlers attended the meeting and provided additional context and information regarding the financing strategy.

Mayor Murray opened the public hearing. He called three times. No one spoke. Mayor Murray closed the public hearing.

**A.1 Resolution 25-138 Approving Property Tax Abatements**

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 25-138  
Included with these minutes)

**B. Resolution 25-139 Providing for the Sale of \$1,895,000 General Obligation Bonds Series 2025B**

Per the City Charter, the City of Albert Lea has the authority to issue General Obligation Improvement Bonds. Staff recommends the sizing of the bond to be \$1,895,000 to finance the assessment portion of the 2025 Neighborhood Improvement Project (Job 2501), the 2025 State Aid Street Overlay Project (Job 2502), and the 11th Street Reconstruction Project (Job 2503). This debt issue also includes the Freeborn Bank Building Project, the Eberhart Street Project, and the TIF portion of the Eberhart/Blazing Star Cleanup. Rebecca Kurtz from Ehlers & Associates was in attendance and reviewed the bond sale. She said her office reviewed the five bids received at 10:00 a.m. this morning on the 2025 GO Bonds. She congratulated staff and council for receiving the AA- Standard & Poors rating with a stable outlook.

Motion made by Councilor Baker 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 25-139  
Included with these minutes)

**C. Public Hearing Regarding Ordinance Amending Part 1 – CHARTER – Chapter 2 – Form of Government and Chapter 3 – Council Procedure and Adding New Sec. 3.12 – Disposal of Excess Personal Property**

The Charter Commission held a meeting on July 24, 2025, and has submitted recommendations for amendments to the City Charter. These proposed changes affect Chapters 2 and 3, and include the addition of a new section regarding the disposal of excess personal property.

Chapter 2 – Council Vacancies (Section 2.07)

The amendment clarifies the procedure for filling a vacancy on the City Council during a member's term. It authorizes the Council to appoint a replacement, allowing for a timely and cost-effective solution that avoids the need for a special election.

Chapter 3 – Legislative Signatures (Section 3.08)

This revision simplifies the approval process for Resolutions and Ordinances. Under the proposed change, only the Mayor's signature will be required, and attested by the City Clerk, removing the current requirement for signatures from two additional councilmembers.

### Chapter 3 – Disposal of Excess Personal Property (New Section 3.12)

A new section has been introduced to permit the City to dispose of excess personal property. This may include transfers to other political subdivisions or private non-profit entities, provided the transaction serves a public purpose. The Charter Commission recommends approval.

City Manager Rigg elaborated on the proposed amendments, emphasizing that the council retains discretion in determining how to fill a vacancy if one arises during a member's term, not requiring a special election by law. Mayor Murray commented that during the last vacancy, he and the council repeatedly invited the public to inquire with interest in applying to fill the vacancy.

Mayor Murray opened the public hearing. He called the first time. Bethany Greiner had three questions related to the disposal of property. #1 - Is there a dollar limit on what can be disposed of without a committee meeting? #2 - Is there a definition of what type of property can be donated as opposed to disposed of, and #3 – Is there a specific description of who can receive the property?

City Manager responded to each of Ms. Greiner's questions.

Mayor Murray called two more times. No one spoke. He closed the public hearing.

Councilor Howland thanked the Charter Commission for their work on these amendments.

### **C1. Ordinance 25-145 Amending Part 1 – CHARTER – Chapter 2 – Form of Government and Chapter 3 – Council Procedure and Adding New Sec. 3.12 – Disposal of Excess Personal Property**

Motion made by Councilor Christensen 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 Resolution 25-145  
Included with these minutes)

### **D. Resolution 25-140 Accepting Donations as Presented to the City of Albert Lea**

The Friends of the Albert Lea Public Library raise non-profit funds for programs and equipment not covered by the general library budget. The Friends of the Albert Lea Public Library raise funds through the Fountain Lake Bookstore, two book sales throughout the year, membership fees, and general donations. During June and July 2025, the Friends of the Albert Lea Public Library donated a total of \$4,351.93 to the Albert Lea Public Library. The funds were used for the programs and equipment listed on the included sheet. Without the generous donations from the Friends of the Albert Lea Public Library, many of the library's programs and services would not be possible.

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, Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-140  
Included with these minutes)

E. Registration of Cannabis Microbusiness License – Benjamin Kapple dba Mountain Sight Vision, LLC

On August 7, 2025 Benjamin Kapple dba Mountain Sight Vision, LLC was granted licensure by the Minnesota Office of Cannabis Management. The business registered with the City on the same day, marking it as the fourth cannabis business registration received since the City began accepting applications. Given that our two available registrations have been filled, we cannot, at the moment, approve this registration; however, a discussion on how we continue to proceed with the many licenses the OCM will send us needs to take place. Options at the moment could be no action for lack of motion, denial in the affirmative, or table.

Councilor Anderson suggested revisiting the topic in the future of lifting the cap on two cannabis businesses in the future.

Motion made by Councilor Anderson to deny this cannabis registration and refund the \$500 registration fee to Benjamin Kapple, and direct staff to no longer accept cannabis registrations, 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.

### **MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS**

First Ward, Councilor Christensen reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Lots of activities at the Senior Center and Blue Zones. Also working on the budget with other committee members.
- Public Announcements – None

Second Ward, Councilor Baker reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – One Water Shed One policy committee meeting last week. HRA meeting tomorrow.
- Public Announcements – Thanked city staff for their work on the budget.

Third Ward, Councilor Howland reported:

- Ward Items – Working on one ward item. Received a call asking what the policy is for the city to waive the fee at the Transfer Station following a big wind storm.
- Committee Update – None
- Public Announcements – None

Fourth Ward, Councilor Olson reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update - None
- Public Announcements – Reminded the public that school is back in session, so please slow down and pay attention. Encouraged the public to attend school activities.

Fifth Ward, Councilor Van Beek reported:

- Ward Items – Has one ward item to work on.
- Committee Update – Attended the recent Library Board meeting. Will attend the HRA meeting tomorrow.
- Public Announcements – Ride for Heroes event was held on August 16<sup>th</sup>, and there are plans to go bigger next year.

Sixth Ward, Councilor Anderson reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Attended the budget meeting on Thursday and the HRA meeting tomorrow.
- Public Announcements – None

### **MAYOR REPORT:**

Attended the following events:

- Thursdays on Fountain
- Albert Lea Cross Country kick-off
- Meeting with Congressman Finseth and Senator Dornink. They visited several local businesses.
- Met with the All-Aboard-Train group
- Chamber Business After Hours last Tuesday, sponsored by Accentra Credit Union.
- Rotary meeting at Wedgewood Cove
- The Library Board meeting
- Battery Energy Storage System (BESS) meeting related to a potential battery storage building near Glenville
- Kite Festival at Edgewater Park
- ALEDA project review
- Completed the City Manager's Performance Review and reported he received great feedback from the council. The council concurred that the City Manager is working at meeting or exceeding expectations.

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

### **CITY MANAGER REPORT**

- Staff continues to work on the budget
- Reviewing the sales tax option
- September 23<sup>rd</sup> joint meeting with the Watershed District

- League of MN meeting where a cannabis discussion took place related to concerns about municipalities not receiving tax revenue
- Will soon be closing on some properties to be developed into single-family homes

## **APPROVAL OF CLAIMS**

### **A. Resolution 25-141 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 the claims, 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 25-141  
(Included with these minutes)

## **CLOSED SESSION**

Motion made by Councilor Anderson to move into closed session at 8:03 PM, 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.

#### 1. Union Negotiations Subject to Minn. Stat. 13D.03 Subd. 1(b)

Human Resource Director Mike Zelenak presented to council. Mayor Murray provided direction to staff.

#### 2. Legal action in reference to Cannabis Retail Registration subject to Minn. Stat. 13D.05 Subd. 3(b)

City Attorney Holstad provided an overview of the legal action. Mayor Murray provided direction to staff.

Motion made by Councilor Howland at 8:57 PM to move out of closed session, seconded by Councilor Anderson. 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.

Councilor Howland motioned for adjournment; Councilor Christensen 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, September 8, 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: 58 PM**

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Mayor Rich Murray

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Daphney Maras  
Secretary of the Council