

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY OF ALBERT LEA
September 14, 2026 – 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Rich Murray, Councilors Rachel Christensen, Larry Baker, Ted Herman, Reid Olson, Keith Van Beek, Brian Anderson, City Manager Ian Rigg, City Attorney Joel Holstad of Lakes National Law LLP, and City Clerk Daphney Maras.

ADDITIONAL STAFF PRESENT: Deputy Chief of Police Darin Palmer, Fire Chief Jeff Laskowske, 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

A. Proclamation – See Tracks? Think Train® - Rail Safety Week.

Mayor Murray read the proclamation aloud and formally presented it to the representatives in attendance.

PUBLIC FORUM

Don Blake spoke on behalf of the design and construction committee for the Eddie Cochran statue. He reported that the statue will be unveiled during the Eddie Cochran Car Show in June 2027. He noted they expect a significant increase in participating vehicles and expressed the committee's interest in securing additional parking near the event, preferably in the North Lot.

CONSENT AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- A. Approve Minutes of the August 24, 2026 Regular Council Meeting
- B. Approve Minutes of the August 24, 2026 Work Session
- C. License & Permits
- D. Resolution Approving Gambling Permit – Twin Lakes Firemen's Relief Association
- E. Resolution Declaring 2026 Hometown Pride Fall Cleanup Day

Councilor Baker moved to approve the consent agenda, seconded by Councilor Herman. On a voice 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 26-151 through 26-152
(Included with these minutes))

PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

- A. Public Hearing and Resolutions Regarding Main Corridor Urban Renewal Grant and Revolving Loan Funds Agreement with Carrington Company

A1. Resolution 26-153 Authorizing a Main Corridor Urban Renewal Grant Agreement with Carrington Capital, LLC, 2610-2618 Bridge Ave.

The Main Corridor Renewal Grant is intended to assist property owners in making façade and site improvements that preserve the architectural character of the property, improve the curb-side appeal and/or spur economic development along the City's main commercial corridors.

Carrington Capital, LLC, a limited liability company under the laws of Minnesota, applied for a matching grant for lighting upgrades and improved parking areas. The total project cost is \$30,400.00, and the property owners will receive a matching grant of \$15,200.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve 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 26-153
(Included with these minutes)

A2. Resolution 26-154 Permitting an Agreement for an Economic Development Revolving Loan – Carrington Company

The City of Albert Lea considers loans for up to a ten-year term on a case-by-case basis with the criteria of creating and retaining permanent private-sector jobs to fuel above-average economic growth, increase the tax base, and improve employment and economic opportunities within the community.

The Carrington Company has sought to enter into an agreement with the City of Albert Lea for an Economic Development Revolving Loan for \$50,000 over five years at 5.23% interest per annum to create and retain (5) jobs until November 1, 2031.
City Manager recommends approval.

City Manager Rigg emphasized that the loan's amount and structure should not be viewed as establishing precedent, and that this type of loan will not be continuing in the future.

Councilor Christensen noted her appreciation for the City Manager's clarification. She acknowledged earlier concern and hesitation but stated that, following discussion during the Work Session, she will support the loan at this time.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Herman. On voice 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 26-154
(Included with these minutes)

B. Resolution 26-155 Approving Joint Letter with Hayward and Freeborn County to the MN DNR to Finish Blazing Star Trail

As explained in the resolution and joint letter with the City of Hayward and Freeborn County, the Minnesota Department of Natural Resources has delayed completion of the Blazing Star State Trail once again. The trail reached a major milestone in 2025 when the DNR connected the segments between Myre-Big Island State Park and Hayward, including the bridge over Albert Lea Lake. However, the DNR pulled the last half-mile of gravel from last year's project, leaving a major obstacle to attracting more trail users, attracting more visitors to our communities, and boosting our tourism industry. The trail has been more than 20 years in the making. A total of 8.1 miles has been completed. There is only a half-mile left to pave. The resolution and letter urge the DNR to finish the job for everyone's benefit. The Hayward City Council is also voting on the resolution tonight, Sept. 14, with the Freeborn County Board voting on its Sept. 15.

Mayor Murray noted that work on the Trail has been underway for more than 30 years. He added that a media conference will be held in the council chambers tomorrow to share the contents of the joint letter with the public.

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

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 26-155
(Included with these minutes)

C. Approval of 2026 – 2030 Strategic Plan

This is the final draft after suggestions from the Council, with changes to the vision statement. There were some final edits from staff that were more grammatical or spelling-related. City commission and board members had ample opportunity to ask questions or provide comment on the plan. At the suggestion of the mayor, a few implementation items were deleted that no longer matched the goals or were redundant.

Staff is set to meet in late October to go over the final stages of implementation and the dashboard to track implementation. A strategic plan is a living document that can be updated, changed, and reported on to the Council. It starts with the Council's high-level view, goes to the City Managers mid view, and is better defined and implemented by staff on the ground level.

In response to Mayor Murray's question, Rigg stated that staff will provide quarterly or biannual updates to the Council outlining progress on Strategic Plan implementation. He noted the first report will be delivered within the first six months of 2027 and will summarize actions completed, goals achieved, and items still outstanding. Rigg emphasized that the Council should review each

report and engage in discussion to address any needed adjustments, questions, or concerns related to implementation. He added that ongoing actions by both staff and the Council are what make the Strategic Plan a living document. Mayor Murray concurred, underscoring the importance of monitoring progress and continuing to offer suggestions for improvement.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve the 2026-2030 Strategic Plan, seconded by Councilor Herman. On voice 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.

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS

First Ward, Councilor Christensen reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update –
- Public Announcements - Provided an update on the many community events.

Second Ward, Councilor Baker reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Attended an HRA meeting and reported positive results related to ongoing projects.

Third Ward, Councilor Herman reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – None
- Public Announcements – Mentioned the many local events he attended over the last two weeks.

Fourth Ward, Councilor Olson reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – None
- Public Announcements – Encouraged the community to get out and support the high school sports

Fifth Ward, Councilor Van Beek reported:

- Ward Items – Currently working on two ward items
- Committee Update – None
- Public Announcements – Mentioned on Sept. 19th that the Parade of Flags will be in town honoring the Nation of Patriots, and he encourages everyone to come out and support them.

Sixth Ward, Councilor Anderson reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – Attended a recent HRA meeting and budget meeting.

MAYOR REPORT

- Joint HRA/EDA/ALEDA meeting — Participated in the combined HRA, EDA, and ALEDA meeting held on August 19.
- Facility and project tours — Toured the new local Oat Mill facility, followed by a tour of WCTA projects throughout the city.
- Community events — Attended Thursdays on Fountain, Daisy Fest, the Bay Side Ski Show, and the Law Enforcement Appreciation Lunch.

Additional meetings and activities:

- ALEDA monthly meeting
- City budget meeting
- Weekend recovery event
- Knutson Place celebration for Grandparents and Assisted Living Week

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

CITY MANAGER REPORT

- Blazing Star Development — Advancing several active components of the Blazing Star Development initiative.
- GFY Project Review — Completing a punch-list review with GFY for the two recently constructed homes.
- Budget & Negotiations — Continuing development of the upcoming budget and progressing through union negotiation items.
- Economic Development Partnerships — Collaborating with the School District and County Administration on emerging economic development opportunities.
- Succession & Workforce Planning — Beginning internal review of succession planning and workforce development needs.

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

A. Resolution 26-156 Approving Claims

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

The attached resolution directs the Mayor and City Treasurer to issue 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 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 26-156
(Included with these minutes)

CLOSED SESSION – Union Negotiations under State Statute 13D.03

Councilor Baker moved to move into closed session at 7:45 p.m.; Councilor Anderson seconded. On a voice call vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed

Councilor Anderson moved to move out of closed session at 8:42 PM; Councilor Van Beek seconded. On a voice call vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

Mayor Murray stated that council provided direction to the City Manager.

Councilor Herman moved 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, September 28, 2026. On a voice vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion.

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

ADJOURNMENT: 8:43 PM

Mayor Rich Murray

Daphney Maras
Secretary of the Council