

**MELROSE CITY COUNCIL AND PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 24, 2026 – 7:00 A.M.**

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The Melrose City Council and the Public Utilities Commission met in a Special Meeting on Tuesday, February 24, 2026, at 7:00 A.M. at the Melrose City Center pursuant to due notice being given thereof. Present were Council Members Tony Klasen, Travis Frieler, Joeline Wieling, Mayor Joe Finken, Public Utilities Commission Members Eric Seanger and Jeremy Kraemer, Community Development Director Sheila Hellermann, HR Generalist Doris Rieland, Police Chief Craig Maus, and Finance Director Jackie Niehaus. Council Member Niehoff was present by telephone. Mayor Finken presided thereat.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Frieler, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda for the City Council.

A motion was made by Secretary Kraemer, seconded by Vice Chair Seanger, and unanimously carried to approve the agenda for the Public Utilities Commission.

3. NEW BUSINESS

3a. Personnel Matters

City Administrator Winter will be leaving her position as of April 3. The city has received quotes from executive search firms to conduct the hiring process for a new City Administrator. The first quote is South Central Service Cooperative for \$14,500.00. The next quote is from MGT Impact Solutions LLC. Their proposal includes a sample advertisement. The cost would be \$26,000.00. The third quote is from David Drown Associates (DDA). The cost would be \$26,000.00.

Vice Chair Seanger stated that he had reviewed the proposals and that he would go with David Drown Associates as the city had employed them in the last city administrator search. Mayor Finken stated that we have worked with DDA in the past on many different tasks and workshops. Finken stated another reason to go with them would be that DDA focuses more specifically on Minnesota while MGT is a more national search firm.

Council Member Wieling asked why this process for hiring a city administrator would be different than hiring for the city clerk position and require a search firm? Vice Chair Seanger stated that expanding the search is important in hiring this position, you need more reach out to find good candidates. You could try to hire locally for this position and not find a candidate. Council Member Wieling asked if anyone from the local area would still have an opportunity to apply? Vice Chair Seanger stated that yes, even though DDA would advertise more widely, we would still advertise locally and local candidates would still see that and be able to apply.

Council Member Klasen asked if it would be possible to do a local posting first, and see in a few weeks if a local candidate could be found first. Vice Chair Seanger answered that would not be a good use of time, as that time could be spent just employing DDA to do a wider search, and local candidates could still see the posting and apply. And if a local

applicant stuck out in the applicant pool, they would still be able to move forward in the process. Council Member Klasen did express his concern about the cost of the search firm.

Council Member Frieler stated that an issue he could see with splitting the process would be that you could not then compare the candidates that would have then applied to a larger search to who applied to an initial local search. Mayor Finken stated that we do have a complex organization too with the city managing utilities. Vice Chair Seanger stated that he believes we should cast the net as far as possible to look for good candidates. Council Member Frieler stated that he hoped local candidates would apply but that if this is the step that has been taken for this position, that it would be a good idea.

Council Member Wieling stated that she wants to see who is out there in the local area, that there might be a star candidate who is local and would apply for the position. There was discussion about the various quotes from the firms and whether it would be a good idea to interview one or three. Mayor Finken stated during the last city administrator search, there were two local candidates but their qualifications were not as strong as the candidates who ended up being interviewed. Vice Chair Seanger stated that another issue is that candidates are often in a position of needing to relocate and that makes it harder to find candidates if they are not willing to move, and we also cannot require someone to move for this position. Council Member Wieling questioned why it can be a requirement that Council and board and commission members for the city need to reside in city limits, but that cannot be required for the city administrator. Vice Chair Seanger stated that it is unfortunate, but we cannot require residency for the city administrator position.

Vice Chair Seanger stated that a meeting should be set up with DDA. Council Member Frieler asked whether a posting could be put up locally ahead of hiring a search firm. Mayor Finken stated that a local posting would be part of the fee that is paid to DDA, they would take care of all of the advertising. Vice Chair Seanger said that a local candidate would be fully able to apply through DDA's process, and that ultimately the choice is ours as to who to hire. They just give us the facts and information to help with the decision. Council Member Frieler said that ultimately anyone local would know earlier as well that the current city administrator was stepping down. Mayor Finken asked if there was a motion to proceed with scheduling an interview for DDA.

A motion was made by Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Frieler, and unanimously carried to select David Drown Associates to interview for role of conducting a City Administrator search for the City Council.

A motion was made by Secretary Kraemer, seconded by Vice Chair Seanger, and unanimously carried to select David Drown Associates to interview for the role of conducting a City Administrator search for the Public Utilities Commission.

The discussion then moved to making interim arrangements for once City Administrator Winter leaves her position. Mayor Finken opened up the discussion to any input from members. Vice Chair Seanger said that in the past, a single point of contact has been established. There was not an interim position, everyone would keep their same jobs, but one person would answer calls on behalf of the city and hand it off to a specific department if appropriate. If something required more discussion or was a higher-level question, it would go to the mayor and/or the Public Utilities Commission. Vice Chair Seanger said this process worked well. Mayor Finken asked if anyone had concerns with this proposal. There were no concerns. Mayor Finken asked if everyone was good with Police Chief Maus serving as the point of contact for the city. Members expressed they were happy with Police

Chief Maus serving in this capacity. Vice Chair Seanger stated that additional compensation would be discussed for the person serving in this capacity because of the extra workload being assigned. Mayor Finken stated that HR could start this process and let him know if there was anything else needed from the Council and Public Utilities Commission.

Council Member Wieling asked whether this process could be written into a policy like how there is an acting mayor appointed, so that if we run into this situation in the future there is not confusion. Mayor Finken said that in the past, the Finance Director was usually the person to step into the role of covering City Administrator duties in the interim. There was still a Public Utilities Director at that time as well, so the Finance Director could take on city functions and the Public Utilities Director could manage the utilities functions. Secretary Kraemer stated that this is still a governing body and that the city administrator is still governed by the Council and Public Utilities Commission. So, it makes sense to go on a case by case basis in these circumstances depending on what the governing bodies feel is the best option for an interim plan rather than having it automatically be done a certain way every time.

A motion was made by Council Member Frieler, seconded by Council Member Wieling, and unanimously carried to appoint Police Chief Craig Maus as the interim point of contact for the city once City Administrator Winter leaves her position.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Seanger, seconded by Secretary Kraemer, and unanimously carried to appoint Police Chief Craig Maus as the interim point of contact for the city once City Administrator Winter leaves her position.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Klasen, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 A.M. for the City Council.

A motion was made by Vice Chair Seanger, seconded by Secretary Kraemer, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 7:26 A.M. for the Public Utilities Commission.

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read "Connor Kockler", written over a horizontal line.

CONNOR KOCKLER – CITY CLERK