

**MELROSE CITY COUNCIL AND
MELROSE PUBLIC UTILITIES COMMISSION
SPECIAL JOINT MEETING
MONDAY, MARCH 9, 2026 – 5:30 P.M.**

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL

The Melrose City Council and Public Utilities Commission met in a Special Joint Meeting March 9, 2026 at 5:30 P.M. at the Melrose City Center pursuant to due notice being given thereof. Present were City Council Members Joelene Wieling, Travis Frieler, Mark Niehoff, and Mayor Joe Finken, Public Utilities Commission members Joe Finken, Jeremy Kraemer, Eric Seanger, Community Development Director Sheila Hellermann, Police Chief Craig Maus, Water/Wastewater Supervisor Jeremy Schrantz, Finance Director Jackie Niehaus, Human Resources Generalist Doris Rieland, and City Clerk Connor Kockler. Council Member Tony Klasen was absent. Mayor Finken presided thereat.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Niehoff, 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. City Administrator Transition – Search Firm Selection

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. Pat Melvin from David Drown Associates (DDA) was in attendance and presented his proposal for the City Administrator search.

He gave a quick introduction to DDA, they have been around for 25 years, they started out in finance and economic development, and they now do classification studies and recruitment. They have grown in different areas as business has demanded. They are a relatively small firm. They have a network and background in this work. Melvin's personal experience is in county and city leadership. They understand government practices and laws and that is helpful in conducting city recruitment processes.

He said that it is currently a tough labor market for city leadership positions, such as finance directors and public works. Their recruitment process is something DDA has finetuned over the years. There are several stages to the process, including video interviews. The intent is to cast a wide net to find as many qualified candidates as possible, and then work with the hiring committee to narrow the candidates down, invite a few for in-person interviews, and then work closely with a few finalist candidates and the city stakeholders to make the final hiring offer.

There are a number of different search options available that the city can choose from. There is a full-service search package that covers everything from beginning to end. Or there are smaller packages or even a la carte options that the city could pick for services. DDA has a relationship with LinkedIn and so they can reach out proactively to potential

candidates in Minnesota or outside of the state who might be interested in the position to increase the number of candidates being advertised to. It is a tight labor market so it is important to do this proactive outreach including candidates who may have applied in DDA's network to other positions.

He then invited the Council and Commission Members to ask any questions that they might have.

Vice Chair Seanger recommended from his previous experiences with the City of Melrose, that we have used the full-service process in the past, and he recommends doing so again for this search. He said that anyone who has not been through a search process like this before, now is the time to ask questions about what a search all entails and what the search firm provides.

Mayor Finken asked whether there was a meet and greet option available as part of the process, as that has been done before. Melvin stated that is something that could be done as part of the process. Mayor Finken stated that in the past three finalists did a meet and greet with certain city staff and Council and Commission members.

Secretary Kraemer asked whether Melvin would be able to walk through a list of the services DDA could provide and then members could say if they wanted to have that service and build a package from there? Melvin stated that yes, he could go through the available services.

Melvin stated that the full-service search package includes everything from start to end and costs \$26,000, with an additional benefit of a one-year guarantee. This means that if a person accepts the job and is only at the City of Melrose for 8 months, then DDA would conduct another full search for an additional cost of \$5,000 instead of the full amount. They also provide the city with one year of leadership development mentoring to the new City Administrator. This would be provided by a DDA employee who is a certified leadership coach.

The enhanced recruitment package would include the essential things and would have a reduced cost of \$15,500. The focused recruitment package would just include the advertising. There are less assessments and options with each reduced package.

A la carte services include: job description review and update, market salary analysis to comparison cities' city administrators, position profile creation, stakeholder input session, workplace climate assessment, multiple listing spots for the job posting, background check, initial screening of candidates, video interviews for initial selected candidates from screening, work personality index, and reference checks.

Melvin stated that typically, DDA recommends picking 4-5 finalist candidates because often individuals will have other applications pending as well to different positions. He has had a process before where 3 of 4 finalist candidates dropped out before scheduled interviews. Ahead of the finalist interviews, DDA will complete the background check with an outside agency, and have the candidates complete the personality indexes. Melvin would then prepare a list of sample questions for the hiring committee to sort through ahead of the interviews with the finalists. A folder would be provided to each committee member with the candidates' information in advance and then all the interviews would be conducted over a day, with time afterward for deliberation to choose the top choice, and an alternate in case the top choice does not work out during the negotiations. DDA aims to have an agreement

worked out with a candidate within a couple days of the decision being made.

Melvin stated that for the a la carte options, those are billed per candidate so that is another consideration to be made when choosing which services to pick. If the full-service search package is selected, everything is included in the guaranteed price. Council Member Frieler asked what would happen if there were only three candidates. Melvin stated that if only three candidates applied, that the process should go forward with the three, and if none were a good fit, then DDA would reopen another recruitment, which would be covered under the one-year guarantee with the full-service search package, with just an additional \$5,000 to be paid for advertising. Council Member Frieler asked if there have been recruitments that have not yielded a large number of candidates. Melvin stated that now more than ever, there has been more difficulty recruiting candidates to these types of positions. DDA used to be able to offer a two-year guarantee, but no longer does so and changed it to a one-year guarantee.

Secretary Kraemer asked if the one-year guarantee is really more \$31,000 if the search needs to be reopened? Melvin stated that whether a second search was needed because a good fit candidate was not found during the first recruitment, or if an initially hired candidate left within one year of hire, the second search would then be available for just the \$5,000 in additional advertising fee as part of the full-service search package.

Police Chief Maus asked whether it mattered how someone leaves for the one-year guarantee? Melvin stated that no that however someone hired to the City Administrator position left if it was less than a year, the one-year guarantee would still apply to conduct another search under the full-service search package.

Police Chief Maus asked whether there are minimum qualifications that DDA would recommend for this position, and can the city add in candidates we know of that might be a tighter fit for the qualifications or are all candidates confidential? Melvin stated that all candidates will be confidential and will be assigned numbers until in-person interviews. Council Member Frieler asked whether the committee will get a number of candidates who applied or just a number of qualified candidates based on DDA's review? Melvin stated that he will send weekly updates including the total number of applicants, the number of qualified candidates, and then information about them. Experience will be obscured, general job titles and not identifying candidates by cities or employers.

Council Member Wieling asked whether the number of candidates to interview will be decided by the city? Melvin stated yes, that based on the number of candidates in the pool, the hiring committee gets the decision of how many candidates they want to invite for in-person interviews.

Members discussed the benefits and drawbacks of the various search package options. Secretary Kraemer stated that he felt the full-service search package might be too much but he was open to others' opinions. He stated that the full year of leadership development mentoring is really dependent on candidates. He said he was between the full-service search package and the next lower package. Council Member Frieler stated that he was in agreement with that. He stated that we do need help with this process, and the top two options would be helpful. Council Member Wieling stated that she is nervous about not having the leadership development for the new administrator, so she would want the package with that development. Council Member Frieler asked what exactly the leadership development would entail. Melvin stated that there would be approximately 10 sessions offered by DDA's coach to the new administrator and that the Council would get a report on

the usage of the leadership development services. Vice Chair Seanger stated that 5 to 10 thousand is not much based on the stakes of the decision, especially in wanting to make the right decision, it will be less money in the long run if the right person is selected this time. He stated that trying to do a good search by ourselves and leaning on staff is a lot of work with everything going on.

Police Chief Maus asked whether the search would be paid for 50% each by the Council and the Public Utilities Commission. Finance Director Niehaus stated that the position is paid for out of city and public utilities funds, and the cost of not having someone in the position now means that paying for the search now isn't spending that much money compared to paying the salary of the City Administrator. The cost would be split equally.

A motion was made by Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Niehoff, and unanimously carried to approve hiring David Drown Associates for a full-service executive search package for the new City Administrator for the City Council.

A motion was made by Secretary Kraemer, seconded by Vice Chair Seanger, and unanimously carried to approve hiring David Drown Associates for a full-service executive search package for the new City Administrator for the Public Utilities Commission.

3b. REC Designated Entity Contract No. 25-UGPR-152 between the City of Melrose, Missouri River Energy Services, and the Western Area Power Administration

The Department of Energy, Western Area Power Administration submitted a proposed REC Designated Entity Contract to the City to replace the previous contract signed May 16, 2023. This contract must be approved by a resolution of the City Council.

City Clerk Kockler presented. He stated that the Western Area Power Administration reached out to the City to approve this updated contract, and that they require a resolution from the City Council for approval along with signature by city staff. He stated that this new contract just updated some definitions from the previous contract and included some changes from the current presidential administration compared to the 2023 contract.

A motion was made by Council Member Niehoff, seconded by Council Member Wieling, and unanimously carried to approve Resolution 2026-15 Approving REC Designated Entity Contract No. 25-UGPR-152 between City of Melrose, MRES, and WAPA for the City Council.

4. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Council Member Frieler, seconded by Council Member Wieling, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 P.M. for the City Council.

A motion was made by Secretary Kraemer, seconded by Vice Chair Seanger, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:18 P.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