

**MELROSE CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING
THURSDAY, APRIL 16, 2026 – 5:15 P.M.**

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Melrose City Council met in a Regular Meeting on Thursday, April 16, 2026, at 5:17 P.M. at the Melrose City Center pursuant to due notice being given thereof. Present were Council Members Mark Niehoff, Travis Frieler, Joelene Wieling, Mayor Joe Finken, Police Chief and City Point of Contact Craig Maus, Community Development Director Sheila Hellermann, Finance Director Jackie Niehaus, City Engineer Dave Blommel, and Streets/Parks Supervisor Andrew Rousslange. City Council Member Tony Klasen was absent. Mayor Finken presided thereat.

The Council recited the Pledge of Allegiance.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

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

3. OPEN FORUM

Mayor Finken then opened the floor to public comment. There were no members of the public who wished to comment.

4. CONSENT AGENDA

4. The following items were considered for approval under the Consent Agenda:
 - a. Approval of Minutes
 - b. Approval of Bills/Purchase Orders
 - c. Approval of Investments
 - d. Donation Resolution No. 2026-19 from Roving Hillbillies Snowmobile Club
 - e. Gambling Resolution No. 2026-20 – Church of St. Mary
 - f. Gambling Resolution No. 2026-21 – Melrose Lions
 - g. Gambling Resolution No. 2026-22 – Melrose Chamber of Commerce
 - h. Donation Resolution No. 2026-23 from Proliant Dairy Ingredients
 - i. Donation Resolution No. 2026-24 from Melrose Lions

A motion was made by Council Member Frieler and seconded by Council Member Niehoff to approve the Consent Agenda. Mayor Finken, Council Member Frieler, and Council Member Niehoff voted in favor. Council Member Wieling also voted in favor but abstained from approving items g. and i. The motion was carried.

5. REPORTS

- 5a. Police Department Report

Police Chief Maus provided the following update. In March 2026, the Police Department issued 32 citations, 64 verbal warnings, and 3 written warnings. There were 270 calls/requests for service. In March of 2025 there were 277 calls/requests for service. Overall, the Police Department has received 96 more calls/requests for service at this point in 2026 than in 2025. There were 18 agency assist calls in March of 2026. This is more than the average of 10 per month so far this year. There have been a few accidents in the area, as well as the State Patrol or other units being out of position to handle those accidents or driving complaints, so the Police Department has been taking those calls before they can arrive or taking care of it for them.

With weather changing, there are additional people out biking, walking dogs, and walking. The parks are not officially open until May 1st. There are soft areas all over the parks, so just please be careful in those areas of the parks before things dry up. Mayor Finken noted that a crosswalk has been added as well near Rahn's Oil and Kwik Trip.

5b. Community Development Director Report

Community Development Director Hellermann provided the following update. Work continues on the downtown Jennie-O redevelopment project. There will be a Phase II environmental review and the city is talking with contractors about demolition of the Jennie-O building and ideas for development of the parking lot. Permit applications for windows, siding, roofs, and decks are starting to pick up since it's spring, and homeowners are encouraged to stop by or email to discuss permits as those are required for such projects. This does include porches, driveways, expansions, and sheds. Those require permits as well. The Planning and Zoning Commission is preparing for some re-zoning including the Jennie-O site and the Stearns Electric properties. Both will be changing from industrial to more commercial use, and allowing in the case of Stearns Electric for the proposed daycare facility. The Park Board has decided to open a dog park on a trial basis. They have decided to utilize the hockey rink by Centracare. We will see how it works, how popular it is, and if responsible pet ownership practices are being followed. The Streets and Parks Department has received its bench order, so the city will begin promoting the bench program again. This has been a very popular program for people or organizations to sponsor benches being installed around town for public use. Saturday, May 16th is City-Wide Clean Up Day. There will be dumpsters in the City Center parking lot. Wednesday, May 20th is Hazardous Waste Day at the Fire Hall. This is for paint, chemicals, lightbulbs and other more dangerous items.

5c. City Engineer Report

City Engineer Blommel provided the following update. He will be asking that the Council approve the bids for projects that are on the Action Items later in the meeting. He and Streets/Parks Supervisor Rousslange went to look at Daylight Court and that curb has serious issues so it has been added into the 2026 Streets Improvements Project for repairs.

5d. City Point of Contact Report

Police Chief/City Point of Contact Maus provided the following update. He stated that running two different departments has been a big learning curve, there has been a lot of work. At the MADA meeting, there was a discussion about the downtown Jennie-O redevelopment and the DEED grant that was awarded to the city, so Community Development Director Hellermann has been working on that. At the Public Utilities Commission meeting, there was discussion and a decision for an underground replacement line at County Road 169. The PUC also met with contractors for improvements to the Water/Wastewater Plant. Rice Lake Construction was selected as the contractor to work alongside the engineer Nero Engineering on this project. This should be a one year and a half to a two-year project before it is completed. There was discussion about posting for a new Electric Supervisor and so that position should be posted soon. There was also discussion about hiring for another Journey Lineworker. A special PUC and Council meeting was also held about the wage structure for the City Administrator position as the city is currently undergoing a search for the next City Administrator. Labor contracts were also reviewed and considered. Centracare and the Ambulance Department are working on ironing out some new agreements as Centracare is changing some of the services that they previously provided. On April 7, Melrose hosted the Stearns County Commissioners' Meeting. There was a public hearing on changes to shotgun and rifle hunting in the area. He estimated that we had an attendance of 275 in the meeting rooms and 25 out in the hallway. There were about 70 people who stated their opinions on the issue. Finance Director Niehaus will be working with the auditors next week for the regular audit procedures. The Post Office has asked anyone parking on the street to stay away from and try to keep from blocking mailboxes. This has been an issue for mail carriers. There have been some late additions to the meeting as well, Maus asked whether the Council be ok with passing these items or do we want special meetings for some items? Mayor Finken stated that he would prefer items in the future to be added earlier and the Council packet to go out by Thursday or Friday before the meeting so that he and Council members can ask questions if needed. Additional Council Members agreed.

6. NEW BUSINESS

6a. City Administrator Position Profile Discussion

Pat Melvin with David Drown Associates (DDA) was in attendance by Teams to present the City Administrator Position Profile for discussion and posting by DDA as part of the search process for the next City Administrator. He stated that he is looking to get approval of the Profile and if there are any changes the Council wants made before it is posted for applications by prospective candidates. Council Member Niehoff stated that the top salary range for the City Administrator should be increased to \$150,000. Chief Maus stated that increasing the base wage would also potentially increase the top range salary and vice versa so that will need to be reviewed. Melvin stated he can consult on this before posting the position profile. Finance Director Niehaus stated that she would work on this. Melvin stated as well that keeping salary ranges consistent across the city is usually a good idea, he can work with Chief Maus and HR on this. Finance Director Niehaus stated that if the

\$150,000 top range is applied, the new starting wage would be \$126,000 according to the usual city step increase schedule. The Council Members stated they had no other proposed changes to the Position Profile. Melvin stated that if the Profile is approved tonight, he can start posting and doing outreach for the position tomorrow or Monday. Usually, the position is posted for a period of about four weeks. He stated it is advisable to have the interview dates in the Position Profile so that candidates know well in advance which date(s) they would need to have open in their calendars. Melvin stated that usually he would want to set up the interviews to start in the morning, and for 4-5 finalists to be invited for the interviews, so that there are still enough candidates if there are some cancellations. And then the Council and interview committee would have time to discuss candidates later in the day. Council Members agreed to select June 30 as the day for interviews. Chief Maus stated he would also pass this along to the Public Utilities Commission.

Council Member Niehoff made a motion, seconded by Council Member Frieler, and unanimously carried to approve the Position Profile for the City Administrator and the new salary range of \$126,000 to \$150,000 to align what was agreed to at the April 13, Special Council-PUC Meeting with the usual city salary ranges.

- 6b. Council Consideration of Resolution 2026-18, Approving Labor Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding Between the City of Melrose and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council No. 65, Local 0748.

A proposed contract between the City of Melrose and AFSCME Council No. 65, Local 0748 has been received to be considered for approval. A MOU regarding the Minnesota Paid Leave Law has also been received to be considered for approval.

A motion was made by Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Frieler, and unanimously carried to approve Resolution 2026-18, Approving Labor Agreement and Memorandum of Understanding Between the City of Melrose and American Federation of State, County, and Municipal Employees, Council No. 65, Local 0748.

7. ACTION ITEMS

- 7a. Application for Authorization to Dispense Alcoholic Beverages at a Community Festival – Public Property, Melrose Chamber of Commerce at the Riverfest, June 26 – June 27, 2026

The City has received an application from the Melrose Chamber of Commerce to serve alcoholic beverages at the Riverfest from June 26-June 27, 2026. All application forms have been received by the City Clerk. Council Member Wieling stated that she would need to abstain from this vote.

A motion was made by Council Member Niehoff, and seconded by Council Member Frieler, to approve the Application for Authorization to Dispense Alcoholic Beverages at a Community Festival – Public Property for the Melrose Chamber of Commerce at the

Riverfest, June 26 – June 27. Mayor Finken, Council Member Frieler, and Council Member Niehoff voted in favor. Council Member Wieling abstained. The motion was carried.

7b. Melrose 2026 Street Improvements Project

City Engineer Blommel presented. Bids were opened via QuestCDN at 10:00 a.m. on April 9, 2026, for the above referenced project. A total of 7 bids were received ranging from \$267,035.75 to \$346,162.50. The low bid was submitted by Joe Riley Construction, Inc. of Morris, Minnesota in the amount of \$267,035.75.

City Engineer Blommel stated they know of no reason the project should not be awarded to the low bidder.

A motion was made by Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Frieler and unanimously carried to approve the contract for the 2026 Street Improvements Project and to award the contract to the lowest bidder, Joe Riley Construction, Inc. of Morris, Minnesota in the amount of \$267,035.75.

7c. Melrose 2026 Sealcoat Project

Streets/Parks Supervisor Rousslange presented. Three bids were opened on April 9th, 2026 for the 2026 Sealcoat Project, ranging from \$73,475.28 to \$74,819.34. At this time, he asks to award the project to Allied Blacktop of Maple Grove, Minnesota, who submitted the lowest bid in the amount of \$73,475.28.

A motion was made by Council Member Niehoff, seconded by Council Member Wieling and unanimously carried to approve the contract for the 2026 Sealcoat Project and to award the contract to the lowest bidder, Allied Blacktop of Maple Grove, Minnesota in the amount of \$73,475.28.

7d. Hiring of Police Officer

Police Chief Maus presented. On April 10, 2026, Chief Maus, Sergeant Nechanicky and Doris Rieland (HR) interviewed two candidates for the Full-time Police Officer position. A contingent offer is being presented to Ms. Amanda Rossetti. This offer is contingent upon passing a successful background check, psychological examination, and a pre-employment physical with a drug screen. Staff are recommending the hire of Ms. Rossetti at Step 1 on the wage scale. Following six months of full-time employment and upon a favorable evaluation, it is recommended to move to Step 2.

A motion was made by Council Member Niehoff, seconded by Council Member Frieler, and unanimously carried approving the hiring of Ms. Rossetti as a Police Officer as presented.

7e. Hiring of Police Officer

Police Chief Maus presented. On April 10, 2026, Chief Maus, Sergeant Nechanicky and Doris Rieland (HR) interviewed two candidates for the Full-time Police Officer position. A contingent offer is being presented to Mr. Alex Broadwell. This offer is contingent upon passing a successful background check, psychological examination, and a pre-employment physical with a drug screen. Staff are recommending the hire of Mr. Broadwell at Step 1 on the wage scale. Following six months of full-time employment and upon a favorable evaluation, it is recommended to move to Step 2.

A motion was made by Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Niehoff, and unanimously carried approving the hiring of Mr. Broadwell as a Police Officer as presented.

7f. Hiring of Seasonal/Temporary Streets & Parks Worker

On April 9, 2025, Streets/Parks Supervisor Rousslange along with Doris Rieland (HR) and Brent Hellermann (Streets/Parks) interviewed 4 candidates for Streets & Parks Worker Seasonal/Temporary positions. After careful consideration a unanimous decision was reached to offer the position to Neil Nathe with a start date of May 4, 2026. Starting wage will be Step 2 on the 2026 wage schedule.

A motion was made by Council Member Frieler, seconded by Council Member Wieling, and unanimously carried to approve the hiring of Mr. Nathe as a Seasonal/Temporary Streets & Parks Worker as presented.

7g. Early Voting Agreement with Stearns County

Stearns County has contacted staff regarding voting administration for the upcoming 2026 primary and general election. The County is requesting the City of Melrose to provide in-person early voting at the City Center to the residents of Stearns County for six days prior to the 2026 state primary election on August 11, 2026, and for six days prior to the general election on November 3, 2026. The City Clerk has determined the City can provide the required staffing of election judges to fulfill this agreement. As part of this agreement, the County would contribute \$2,000 to the City per election towards election judge wages.

A motion was made by Council Member Wieling, seconded by Council Member Niehoff, and unanimously carried to approve the Early Voting Agreement with Stearns County.

7h. Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (DEED Scope) Proposal - Former Jennie-O Turkey Store

Community Development Director Hellerman has received a Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (DEED Scope) Proposal for the downtown former Jennie-O location from Braun Intertec. The cost would be \$59,500. The City has a \$50,000 grant from the Minnesota Department of Employment and Economic Development (DEED) that would cover most of this cost. City Attorney Krueger is reviewing the proposal now and any

approval would be conditional subject to any proposed changes or comments from City Attorney Krueger.

A motion was made by Council Member Frieler, seconded by Council Member Wieling, and unanimously carried to approve the Phase II Environmental Site Assessment (DEED Scope) Proposal for the Former Jennie-O Turkey Store downtown location from Braun Intertec conditionally, subject to any proposed changes or comments by City Attorney Krueger.

8. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

8a. The next City Council meeting will be held on Thursday, May 21 at 6:00 P.M.

9. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Council Member Frieler, seconded by Council Member Niehoff, and unanimously carried to adjourn the meeting at 6:10 P.M.

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

CONNOR KOCKLER – CITY CLERK