222 2nd Street SE
Wadena, MN 56482

Regular City Council Minutes
Tuesday, March 10, 2026

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL

Comprising a quorum of the City Council, the meeting was called to order at 5:00 pm with the following members present: Mayor George Deiss, Council Members Duke Harrison, Mark Lunde, Wade Miller and Mac Nelson.

CONSENT CALENDAR

Motion approving the consent calendar items.

A. Claims Register Summary
B. Monthly Financial Reports
C. City Council Meeting Minutes:
   a. February 10, 2026, Regular Meeting
D. Action 26-19: Arbor Day Proclamation
E. Action 26-20: Accept Emily Uselman's Fire Department Resignation
F. Resolution 2026-19: Mayor's Appointment of Brad Wollum to Park Board
G. Resolution 2026-20: TIP Ottertail Chapter, Inc., Gambling Site Permit, Highway 10 Billiards

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Nelson
Roll call vote:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

OLD BUSINESS

Ordinance 259: Motion approving to amend City Code, Chapter 71 Parking Regulations, 71.09 Parking Hours, to include municipally owned parking lots.

Second reading is completed.

Moved by:	Miller	Seconded by:	Harrison
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

Resolution 2026-16: Motion approving an increase to the annual Fire Relief Assn pension benefit plan from $4,100 to $4,600, contingent on confirmation that the fund is at least 105% funded once state records are updated for two resigning members.

Tabled from the February meeting, the requested Stifel fund ratio report was not available yet as the state reporting system has not removed two resigning firefighter liabilities, temporarily lowering the fund ratio. Once corrected, the fund is expected to remain above the city policy requirement of 105%. Current estimate after changes is 107-108%.

Moved by:	Nelson	Seconded by:	Lunde
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

Action 26-12: Motion approving a grade adjustment for the Assistant to the Administrator position from pay grade 4, to pay grade 5. Moving the employee currently in the position to step 1, grade 5.

Expanded and higher-level responsibilities are added to the job description, warranting a wage adjustment. The added duties include assisting with administrative oversight, having knowledge of reports to state and county agencies, maintaining written standard operating procedures, improving utilization of the City's cloud-based document management system, administering the website and social media communications, and cross-trained across all administrative functions such as payroll, accounts payable, and utility billing. The position would also serve as backup for key office functions to allow greater operational flexibility when staff are absent. Council also discussed workload expectations and existing capacity within the role could support the expanded duties.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Nelson
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance 260: First reading amending City Code Chapter 152 Zoning, 152.28 C-B Commercial District to allow residential use on floors other than the main floor.

The planning commission recommends the proposed amendment to allow residential uses on floors other than the main floor of commercial buildings to assist in addressing housing shortages, along with better utilization of existing infrastructure. The proposal requires a minimum size of 600 square feet per unit and one off-street parking space for newly created residential units to prevent the creation of numerous small units that could increase downtown parking demand.

Ordinance 261: First reading amending City Code, Chapter 152 Zoning, 152.29 C-1 Central Business District to allow residential use on floors other than the main floor.

The planning commission recommends the proposed amendment to allow the creation or expansion of residential units in commercial buildings, provided the units are not located on the main floor and are placed on an upper floor or lower level with proper egress and follow state building codes. The proposal requires one off-street parking space per residential unit. Unlike the Central Business (CB) District amendment, this proposal does not include a minimum unit size requirement. Council discussed the differences between the districts, noting that restrictions on main-floor residential uses are more important in the downtown CB area, while C-1 districts are more dispersed throughout the city.

Resolution 2026-17: Motion approving MnDOT Local Road Improvement Program grant agreement SAP 080-594-005 in the amount of $131,608.20.

The state has $131,608.20 remaining in LRIP reimbursement funds that were not used during phase I or II of the project. The City's engineer worked with the state to allow the remaining funds to be applied towards other eligible project expenses. Because of state program requirements, the funds must be issued through a new grant agreement, which will allow the City to submit reimbursement requests for the remaining amount, likely associated with costs related to the Highway 10 project.

Moved by:	Harrison	Seconded by:	Nelson
Roll Call Vote:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

Resolution 2026-18: Motion approving support to display the old State Flag on City property.

Mayor Deiss recognized several cities in the state that have adopted this, asking for the same support in Wadena.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Miller
Roll Call Vote:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

Action 26-21: Motion approving to assign Mac Nelson and Duke Harrison to an ad-hoc committee to continue researching the feasibility of a Roots & Wings Forest School project at Black's Grove Park.

Leona Cichy of Roots and Wings Forest School, a nonprofit outdoor education organization, provided a presentation to request a partnership project within Blacks Grove Park. The organization described its programming, the regional reach efforts, and vision to expand its nature-based education opportunities, camps, and community events.

Currently, the request is to consider forming a committee to include city representatives, Parks Board member(s), Roots and Wings staff and board members, and other stakeholders to explore the feasibility of a nature-based learning center or similar project within the park.

Council discussed the concept and potential community benefits, as well as compatibility with existing park uses.

Council members Mac Nelson and Duke Harrison offered to be on the committee.

Moved by:	Nelson	Seconded by:	Harrison
Roll Call Vote:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

Action 26-22: Motion approving submission of T-Mobile and Sourcewell grants towards an indoor play area project at the Maslowski Center contingent on the project receiving 100% funding via grants or donations towards all expenses.

The Friends of the Maslowski recommend approval towards their next project to convert the glass racquetball court into an indoor playground space. The project would be fully funded through grants and contributions from Friends of the Maslowski Center.

There should be no cost participation from the City.

Council and staff noted current use of the racquetball courts are minimal and that one racquetball court would remain at the Maslowski Center.

Council expressed support for the project as a community amenity. Wellness Director Anderson also plans to host private birthday parties and other events as an additional revenue source.

Moved by:	Miller	Seconded by:	Lunde
Roll Call Vote:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

Action 26-23: Motion approving Highway 10/71 digital city monument sign.

A digital city monument sign is proposed for displaying Chamber and City events.

The estimated project cost is approximately $75,000-$80,000. It's proposed to seek (4) $25,000 sponsorship investors. The remaining funds will be reserved for future maintenance, repairs, or upgrades. Council discussed potential design elements, donor recognition, and the need for a clear policy outlining what messages may be displayed.

State approval is still being worked through. It was noted the project will not move forward until state approval is received.

Moved by:	Lunde	Seconded by:	Miller
Vote in Favor:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC: 5:49 pm. No one present.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS
Public Works Department – Dan Kovar – Nothing to add.
Utilities Department - Superintendent David Evans
- City received a grant to replace private water services that meet Minnesota Department of Health lead replacement criteria. Initial work will focus on the northeast section of town, where many qualifying services are located. Notification letters were sent to residents, and the City is receiving a strong response from interested property owners. Approximately 54 services are known, with funding likely sufficient to replace an additional 50–100 services depending on project costs.

Wadena Development Authority and Planning & Zoning – Dean Uselman
- Warm weather has increased activity in Planning & Zoning.
- Thanked the council for appointing members to the Planning Commission.
- Continue working with local businesses for financing projects, growth, and/or expansion.

Police Department – Naomi Plautz
- Officers performed well to assist in catching a recent high-speed pursuit through town. They informed the Ottertail Sheriff's office rather than getting into a dangerous chase. The suspect was later apprehended.
- Also noted a couple probation violation cases they assisted with.

Fire Department – Nate Biederman, Fire Relief Assn President
- With the two recent resignations, the department will be looking to hire more firefighters.

Wadena Liquor Store – Tim Booth
- The credit card processing fee surcharge is going well. Haven't received many complaints.

Maslowski Wellness and Research Center – Lisa Anderson - Nothing to add
Whitetail Run Golf Course – Kevin Ross - Not present
City Administrator – Kim Schroeder
- County valuations for 2027 taxes payable are being sent with some commercial properties receiving higher than normal increases. Two commercial businesses have been in contact with city hall concerned about consideration to close their doors. WDA Director Uselman and I have been communicating with a couple County Commissioners to identify potential issues.
- Noted that the MnDOT/Mathiowetz Open House will be on Tuesday, April 7th.
- Jeff Brown's project for pickleball courts near the Maslowski Center is moving forward. Funding is secured primarily from the Browne Foundation.
  Question was posed to the council whether the courts should be part of the Maslowski Center membership or remain open to the public. After much discussion, it was decided to leave the courts open to the public. Schroeder will continue with the hockey assn to transfer the land and bring it back to the council.

COUNCIL REPORTS
Duke Harrison: Nothing to report or add.
Mark Lunde: Nothing to report or add.
Mac Nelson: Nothing to report or add.
Wade Miller: Nothing to report or add.
Mayor George Deiss: Recently traveled to Texas and saw road construction projects, one in particular from Dallas to San Antonio noting how comparatively small Wadena's road project is to other areas of the country.

Action Motion: Motion to adjourn at 6:19pm.			
Moved by:	Miller	Seconded by:	Nelson
Vote in favor:	Deiss, Harrison, Lunde, Miller, Nelson		

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George Deiss, Mayor

Attest: ________________________________
Kim Schroeder, City Administrator