



**Regular City Council Minutes
Tuesday, January 13, 2026**

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

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. December 9, 2025, Regular Meeting
- D. Resolution 2026-01: Appoint Council Member as Acting Mayor
- E. Resolution 2026-02: Setting the Date and Time for 2026 City Council Meetings
- F. Resolution 2026-03: Designating the Wadena Pioneer Journal as the Official Newspaper
- G. Resolution 2026-04: Designating 2026 Official Depositories for City Funds
- H. Resolution 2026-05: Designating Skoog Law as 2026 Civil Legal Counsel
- I. Resolution 2026-06: Designating Wadena County Attorney as 2026 Criminal Legal Counsel
- J. Resolution 2026-07: Annual Delegation to Make EFT Transfers
- K. Resolution 2026-09: Designating City Representative with Missouri River Energy Services
- L. Resolution 2026-10: Designating City Representative with Western MN Power Agency
- M. Resolution 2026-11: Accepting Donations
- N. Resolution 2026-13: Authorizing MnDOT Grant Agreement for Apron Reconstruction-Design Only

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

NEW BUSINESS

Ordinance 258: 2026 Fee Schedule, amendment to wastewater rates.

The first reading was completed.
Staff reviewed proposed wastewater rate changes related to seasonal summer sprinkling. The existing structure increases the sewer minimum from 300 to 600 cubic feet during summer months for customers on the sprinkling rate and also requires staff to manually change the rate twice per year in the software. This creates customer confusion and numerous complaints, particularly from low usage and fixed-income households billed for usages they did not actually use. Also creates administrative burden and margin for error.

To address the issue, staff proposes eliminating the seasonal rate entirely and return to a year-round 300 cubic foot minimum. To maintain overall revenue neutrality, the revenue previously generated during the summer months will instead be spread evenly over all 12 months with a \$1.00 increase in the monthly fixed meter service charge, as well as the regular users of 600 cf or higher still billed for their utilization.

Resolution 2026-08: Motion approving the 2026 designated board/committee appointments and assignments.

Mayor Deiss can no longer serve on the Kitchigami Board or be an alternate. Lunde has been assigned to serve on both boards. Harrison assigned as the alternate.

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

Resolution 2026-12: Motion approving to support a new Borealis passenger rail service between Saint Paul, Minnesota and Fargo, North Dakota.

The service is part of the All Aboard initiative and operated through Amtrak. A similar route between Minneapolis and Chicago is currently operating at approximately 90% occupancy, prompting expansion efforts.

The proposed route extends north to Fargo, with Wadena included as a designated stop morning and evening at the Depot. Allowing residents to travel west to Fargo or east as far as Chicago. Final schedules, train length, and station infrastructure improvements (e.g., gates or fencing) details have yet to be finalized.

Council discussed potential impacts, including brief intersection blockages during stops, noting that passenger trains typically have short boarding times to maintain schedules. The service is still subject to approval by Mn state legislature.

Staff noted that the local Chamber of Commerce also supports the proposal.

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

Action 26-01: Motion approving a Jury Duty policy.

The proposed jury duty policy replaces the City's current unwritten practice. The policy provides full-time employees with paid leave at their regular rate while serving. Any jury compensation received from the courts must be remitted to the City, excluding mileage reimbursement. Jury duty time will not count toward overtime.

Employees must notify their supervisor when directed to report for jury duty, return to work if excused during regular hours, and submit court verification of service. The policy improves clarity, consistency, and payroll administration.

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

Action 26-02: Motion approving a \$5,000 Rural Voice grant.

Sarah Browne worked with Jessy Beto of the Initiative Foundation for the rural voice grant to continue her mural art placement within the city. The city will be the applicant and fiscal agent. There is no cost or cost participation required of the city.

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

Action 26-03: Motion approving to hire internal employee Jeremy Zaic for the Wastewater Maintenance Worker, Class D/GIS Technician position, Grade 5, Step 7, probation period 1-year, effective January 14, 2026.

Followed by advertising to fill the open Wastewater Worker position.

Staff recommended promoting internal applicant Jeremy Zaic, who meets all qualifications and was interviewed.

Further discussion included a step higher pay placement. The promotion results in an approximately \$0.80 hourly increase to the next step on the next grade, without a decrease in pay. While staff and council discussed whether internal promotions or experience should warrant placement at a higher step, it was noted the employee accepted the position at the assigned pay and did not request an adjustment. The decision was no further changes.

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

Action 26-04: Motion approving to hire Jessica Strege for the Lead Billing Clerk/Energy Services Coordinator position, Grade 6, Step 3, 6-month probation, effective February 2, 2026.

Approximately 40 applications were received with (4) scoring the minimum for interviews. Staff recommends hiring Jessica Strege. Strege currently works for the City of Staples with 14 years of municipal utility billing experience; direct experience with Tyler Technologies during her 3 years in Staples. This familiarity is expected to reduce onboarding and training time, noting her ability to absorb duties quickly and allows the focus on local processes and energy service function training.

The recommendation includes placement at Step 3 of pay grade 6. Part of her negotiated package is a recommendation to grant 40 hours of vacation upon hire. All other terms remain consistent with the union contract moving forward.

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

Action 26-05: Motion approving the Hubbard Radio lease agreement for years 2026-2028.

City Administrator Schroeder forwarded a draft of the proposed amounts to Hubbard Radio and they approved what was presented.

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

Action 26-06: Motion approving a temporary 1-day on-sale liquor license for Wadena Elks.

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

MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC AT 5:42pm. No one present.

DEPARTMENT REPORTS

Public Works Department – Dan Kovar

- Recent warm weather allowed crews to remove ice buildup on streets. Early season snow was well packed and limited snowfall this winter has reduced the need for extensive street widening.
- Noted that road salt supplies are limited regionally, with other cities reporting shortages.

Utilities Department - Superintendent David Evans - Nothing to add
Wadena Development Authority and Planning & Zoning – Dean Uselman

- Met with DEED regarding projects.
- Planning & Zoning permits are slow for the season.
- Touched base with Sgt Brandon Pearson regarding a nuisance complaint at the Pederson Biddick site.

Police Department – Naomi Plautz

- Added that Sgt Brandon Pearson has been in communication with the Pederson Biddick nuisance complaint. Will continue to follow up and follow the nuisance ordinance.
- Wants to meet and discuss the ATV/UTV Ordinance with the original ad-hoc committee to discuss increasing the age use in town.

Fire Department – Cody Yglesias - Not present

Wadena Liquor Store – Tim Booth

- Sales have decreased, partly due to the construction project.

Maslowski Wellness and Research Center – Lisa Anderson - Nothing to add

Whitetail Run Golf Course – Kevin Ross - Not present

City Administrator – Kim Schroeder

- Design and concept of a billboard on the corner of Hwy 10/71 has started with JH Signs.
- The fire dept Local Sales Tax project has faded due to timing and little interest from the fire dept members. However, they are interested in looking at the possibility for the 2028 election.
- Have not heard much regarding the MnDOT project timelines to date. Will keep the council and public updated when more is known.
- Reminder that the Comprehensive Plan meeting is Tuesday, January 20 at the Maslowski Center.

COUNCIL REPORTS

Duke Harrison

- Would like to continue discussions to connect the walking paths in and around the City.
- Followed up on previous items, skating rink account coding and RR quiet zone update. Coding was discussed with Kovar and Poling and will be changed going forward. Schroeder updated that Bolton & Menk and staff have been actively continuing work on the quiet zone project.

Mark Lunde: Nothing to report or add.

Mac Nelson

- Noted that the Opry at the Auditorium was a big success; 204 tickets sold, over \$1,000 in silent auction profit, and music was fantastic.

Wade Miller: Nothing to report or add.

Mayor George Deiss:

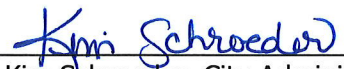
- Noted Wadena was part of the first 98 Mayor letters to the state referring to dissatisfaction of the fraud occurring. Also noting 241 mayors have sent a letter to date.
- Mayor Deiss delivered a message of unity, expressing that the council makes decisions for the best of the community, not political parties.

Action Motion: Motion to adjourn at 6:06pm.

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



George Deiss, Mayor

Attest: 

Kim Schroeder, City Administrator