

**City of Menahga
Regular City Council Minutes
March 10, 2025**

1. Call to Order

The Menahga City Council held their Regular Monthly Meeting on Monday March 10, 2025.

2. Roll Call

Comprising a quorum of the Council, the following members were present:

Mayor Jody Bjornson Mike Netland Keith Waaraniemi
Bill Hodge Durwin Tomperi

City Office Staff present: City Clerk/Treasurer Brett Gagnonpalick

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Approval of Agenda

Mayor Bjornson asked for any changes or additions to the agenda. Councilmember Mike Netland requested adding an item under New Business to set a date for the first 2026 budget meeting. The item was added to New Business 'I.'

Main Motion: To approve the agenda as amended.

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| Moved by: | Netland |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Hodge, Tomperi, Netland, Bjornson, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | None |

5. Communication Appearance Request – None

6. Public Forum and Correspondence (Must Sign in) – None

7. Consent Agenda

Councilmember Mike Netland pointed out an error on page 6 under the liquor store section, where Laura was incorrectly listed in the roll call. It was agreed this needed to be corrected and the name changed to Heather.

Main Motion: To approve the consent agenda.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Tomperi |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Hodge, Tomperi, Netland, Bjornson, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | None |

8. Public Hearing – None

9. Acknowledgment of Receipt of Commission Minutes

06 February 2025 Planning and Zoning Minutes

There was brief confusion about the date, but it was confirmed that Planning and Zoning meets on the first Thursday of the month.

10. City Council Closed Session

Mayor Bjornson announced that the council would enter a closed session pursuant to Minnesota statute 13D.05 subdivision 3b to discuss the case of Pleasant Pines and Marsh Creek versus City of Menahga and options in this litigation. He stated the closed session was necessary to maintain confidentiality on legal strategy discussions, as public disclosure could compromise the city's position.

Main Motion: To close the meeting IAW Minnesota statute 13D.05 subdivision 3b.

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| Moved by: | Netland |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Hodge, Tomperi, Netland, Bjornson, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | None |

The council entered closed session at 6:07 PM. Upon returning to open session, Mayor Bjornson summarized that the city had decided not to accept the offer to settle with Pleasant Pines. He stated that litigation would move forward and

negotiations would continue.

11. New Business

Fee Schedule – Updates

Brett Gagnonpalick presented proposed fee schedule updates, noting that staff had reviewed and made determinations on various fees. He outlined increases for campsite rentals, both nightly and weekly.

Councilmember Mike Netland inquired if the increases were based on historical usage and would bring the campground to a breakeven status. Gagnonpalick responded that it would bring them close, noting the campground was filling up with many reservation calls.

Gagnonpalick then detailed proposed increases for cemetery lots, public works services like street sweeping and snow plowing, and utility late fees. There was discussion about the reasoning behind the increases, particularly for nuisance cleanup fees.

Main Motion: To approve an update fee schedule as presented reflecting adjustments to cover the cost of administration, improvements, and maintenance effective immediately.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Netland |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Hodge, Tomperi, Netland, Bjornson, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | None |

Local Board of Appeal and Equalization Meeting

Brett Gagnonpalick provided information on the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization meeting scheduled for 9 AM on Thursday, April 10 in the council chambers. He noted that 100% of the council had completed their certifications for this. Mayor Bjornson and Councilmember Mike Netland agreed to attend as the required two council members present.

Lifeguard job description and advertisement

Brett Gagnonpalick presented a draft job description for lifeguards. There was discussion about certification requirements, particularly whether deep water certification would be needed given the depth of the lake. Mike Netland suggested contacting Detroit Lakes for information on their lifeguard requirements.

The council discussed potential swimming lesson offerings and how to incorporate that into the lifeguard job description. They noted that lessons were offered in the past, typically starting at 10:00 AM. There was consensus that if swimming lessons were offered again, a fee should be charged. Councilmember Mike Netland suggested reaching out to other municipalities that offer similar programs, such as Detroit Lakes, for insights on best practices and requirements. Brett Gagnonpalick agreed to contact Detroit Lakes for further information on their certification requirements.

There was further discussion about work hours for the lifeguards, with a suggestion that they might begin their shifts at noon and cover peak hours until 8:00 PM, though these hours could adjust depending on staffing levels. Mayor Jody Bjornson emphasized that it would not be a seven-day-a-week position and that hiring enough lifeguards would affect how hours and shifts could be allocated. Brett Gagnonpalick also brought up potential uniforms, stating that providing a uniform or 'swag' would ensure lifeguards were easily identifiable and consistently presented to the public.

Councilmember Mike Netland inquired about provisions for safety equipment, like elevated lifeguard chairs and bullhorns. Brett Gagnonpalick confirmed they had the necessary equipment, stating there were two lifeguard chairs and portable loudspeakers available, though they would verify their condition and readiness for use.

Main Motion: To approve the hiring of seasonal lifeguards for the city beach with recruitment efforts beginning at the end of March in accordance with the established job description and pay rates.

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| Moved by: | Tomperi |
| Seconded | Waaraniemi |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Hodge, Tomperi, Netland, Bjornson, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | None |

PLM Lake addition

Councilmember Durwin Tomperi presented a proposal from the Spirit Lake Association to partner with the city on expanding weed treatment in the lake near the boat landing and fishing pier. He explained the proposal would cover 200 feet of shoreline at a cost of \$1,285, which the SLA offered to split 50/50 with the city, for a total investment of \$2,570.

There was discussion about the effectiveness of the treatment, permitting

requirements, and the benefits to the recreational area.

Main Motion: To authorize the city to partner with SLA to treat 200 more feet for weeds in the lake, splitting the cost evenly, up to a maximum of \$1,285 to the city.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Tomperi |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Hodge, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | none |

Public Works job description

Brett Gagnonpalick proposed creating a hybrid public works position that would focus on campground, beach, building maintenance, and cemetery duties, as well as general public works responsibilities. He explained this would help manage seasonal hires and maintain city facilities year-round.

There was extensive discussion about how this position would be structured, including concerns about union versus non-union status and reporting structure. Councilmembers debated the pros and cons of the hybrid role.

Main Motion: To create a hybrid public works role as presented.

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| Moved by: | Netland |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Hodge, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | none |

Cannabis Ordinance Discussion

Brett Gagnonpalick presented a draft cannabis ordinance for the city, noting it was largely based on an ordinance from the city of Emily. He highlighted the zoning and land use restrictions, which limit where cannabis businesses can be located due to distance requirements from schools, daycares, and other facilities.

Councilmembers discussed the proposed ordinance, including questions about hours of operation and the number of businesses allowed. Gagnonpalick mentioned there had already been inquiries from potential cannabis businesses.

Mayor Bjornson emphasized that the city cannot prohibit cannabis businesses due to state law, so this ordinance was their way of controlling it. The council agreed to review the draft and address it further at an upcoming meeting.

Administrative Clerk on union pay scale, effective 01 Jan 2025

Brett Gagnonpalick explained that as part of resolving a grievance, the Administrative Clerk position would now be placed on the union pay scale at step 8 with a base compensation of \$27.44 per hour for 2025. This aligns the position's compensation with the union contract and corrects the previous use of the city pay scale.

Main Motion: To approve the placement of administrative clerk position on the Teamsters Local 346 union pay scale at step 8 with a base compensation of \$27.44 per hour for 2025 in accordance with the union contract and to correct the previous use of the city pay scale.

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| Moved by: | Hodge |
| Seconded | Waaraniemi |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Hodge, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | none |

Set date for preliminary budget meeting

The council discussed setting a date for the first 2026 budget meeting. They agreed to have committee meetings in April to gather department budget needs and capital improvement requests. The council settled on Friday, May 9th at 9 AM for the preliminary budget meeting.

Department/Committee Reports

Police:

The council reviewed the police department's monthly report, noting 232 calls and several citations issued. Mayor Bjornson mentioned that the transmission repair on a police vehicle had been completed, thanking the VFW for their donation towards the cost.

Main Motion: To approve Resolution 2025-06, accepting a \$1,700 donation from VFW Post 6206 for the police vehicle transmission repair.

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| Moved by: | Tomperi |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Hodge, Waaraniemi, Netland |
| Opposed: | None |

Main Motion: To approve Resolution 2025-07, accepting a \$2,000 grant from Sourcewell for the police vehicle transmission repair.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Hodge, Waaraniemi, Netland |
| Opposed: | None |

Liquor Store

Heather Sheperksy, the liquor store manager, presented a proposal to sell low-potency THC products at Northbound Spirits. There was extensive discussion about the potential financial benefits and moral concerns regarding selling THC products.

Main Motion: To approve the city liquor store sale of low potency THC products according to Minnesota law, ensuring compliance with all state regulations and responsible sales practices.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Bjornson |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 3-2 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | Hodge, Netland |

Shepersky also presented quotes for roof repairs at the liquor store. The council discussed the options and long-term plans for the building.

Main Motion: Motion made by Durwin Tomperi and seconded by Keith Waaraniemi to approve Option A (Herzog) for full roof replacement at \$45,000.

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| Moved by: | Tomperi |
| Seconded | Waaraniemi |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Waaraniemi, Hodge, Netland |
| Opposed: | None |

The council also addressed the excess property from Northbound Spirits. Items identified for disposal included outdated or unused equipment stored at the liquor store. Heather listed several items in varying conditions, detailing potential space savings and organizational improvements.

Main Motion: To approve Resolution 2025-03 for the sale and disposal of excess property from Northbound Spirits.

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| Moved by: | Hodge |
| Seconded | Tomperi |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Waaraniemi, Hodge, Netland |
| Opposed: | None |

Public Works

Ron Ylienimi, Public Works Director, presented several items for discussion:

Water Plant Generator Maintenance Plan

Ron explained the testing routine for the water plant's standby generator, which automatically conducts a test every Monday for thirty minutes. During the test, the generator transfers power to the water plant, causing the high service pumps to trip. He noted that if these pumps are running during the switch, they typically experience a reset issue, necessitating staff intervention. Ron mentioned discussions with Bergstrom's, who had wired the generator, to identify potential causes and resolutions for the tripping problem. Ron committed to further monitoring during tests to pinpoint the issue, ensuring the generator operates smoothly during actual power outages.

Main Motion: To approve the five-year maintenance plan for the water plant generator.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Waaraniemi, Hodge, Netland |
| Opposed: | None |

High Service Pumps Tripping During Generator Tests

Council members expressed concern over the potential water supply issues if high service pumps trip during generator start-up, especially during non-working hours. Ron clarified that in such events, the pumps could be reset via the system's remote access, eliminating the need for physical presence at the facility. Jody Bjornson emphasized the importance of resolving this to prevent any disruption to the city's water supply during emergencies.

Wastewater Treatment Proposal for Beach House Lift Station

Ron provided an overview of a proposed aeration and degreasing system for the Beach House Lift Station. The enhancements aim to control odors, prevent grease and solid buildup, and improve overall lift station efficiency. Ron highlighted the intent to reduce the frequency and associated costs of manual pump outs, which currently involve significant expenses with onsite vendor services. Council members discussed the financial aspects, understanding the plan as an investment that offers long-term operational savings and enhances overall system performance.

Main Motion: To approve the Beach House Lift Station Waste Water Treatment Agreement for a monthly fee of \$431.52.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Waaraniemi, Hodge, Netland |
| Opposed: | None |

Greenwood Connection

Laura Ahlf presented the monthly report for Greenwood Connections, providing an update on several areas. She highlighted the success of the recent assisted living survey, noting it had been three years since the last one, and commended the staff for maintaining high standards. The surveyor's positive feedback included suggestions that the location could serve as a model for others in the industry, specifically praising the nurse's exceptional work.

Laura reported that census numbers were strong, with current occupancy at 60 residents, equating to 92%, while the TCU (Transitional Care Unit) remained full, typically staffed for up to 12 residents but sometimes accommodating up to 14. Financially, January was profitable, with figures reflecting an 87% occupancy rate and indicating that reaching higher census levels directly impacted month-end results favorably. February numbers appeared similarly promising due to the maintained occupancy.

Laura also discussed plans for the facility's 60th anniversary celebration in June, acknowledging that the actual anniversary fell on May 1st but suggesting a later date for more favorable weather. The planning process involved brainstorming ideas that would commemorate past achievements while looking towards future developments, such as potential expansions and building projects on the east side of the property. Council members expressed interest in participating in site tours to better understand

the growth plans. Laura indicated she had reached out to firms regarding a market study that could inform these future projects and anticipated providing more information at the next board meeting.

Main Motion: To approve the monthly report and financials as presented by Greenwood Connections administrator Laura Ahlf.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Hodge, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | None |

Fire Department

The council reviewed the fire department's report, which included responses to structure fires and vehicle crashes.

Unfinished Business

Resolution 2025-01 Pay Scale 2025

Brett Gagnonpalick presented Resolution 2025-01 adopting the 2025 pay scale for city employees.

Main Motion: To accept Resolution 2025-01 adopting the 2025 pay scale for city employees.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Bjornson |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Hodge, Waaraniemi, Netland, Tomperi |
| Opposed: | None |

Main Motion: To approve that employees will maintain their current step level on the 2025 pay scale with the adjustment taking effect 01/01/2025.

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| Moved by: | Tomperi |
| Seconded | Waaraniemi |
| Action: | Motion carried by a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Hodge, Waaraniemi, Netland, Tomperi |
| Opposed: | None |

Councilmember Compensation / Bank Sign Up

Additionally, the council confirmed that most councilmembers would receive their compensation via direct deposit, while Councilmember Netland would continue to receive a monthly check.

Consideration of Bills, Budget YTD, Investment Report, Bank Securities Pledge

Brett Gagnonpalick presented the invoices for approval:

- a. Batch #022825EFT – \$85,417.16
- b. Batch #021925PAY - \$70,192.17
- c. Batch #031025PAY- \$26,083.24

Main Motion: to approve batch 022825EFT for \$85,417.16, batch 021925PAY for \$70,192.17, and batch 031025PAY for \$26,083.24, for a grand total of \$181,692.57.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Hodge, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | None. |

13. Adjournment

The council decided to adjourn the meeting after ensuring all agenda items were addressed, ongoing concerns were noted for follow-up, and the next work session was set for March 31st.

Main Motion: To adjourn at 9:05 p.m.

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| Moved by: | Waaraniemi |
| Seconded by: | Hodge |
| Action: | Motion carried on a 5-0 voice vote |
| In favor: | Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Hodge, Waaraniemi |
| Opposed: | None |

City Clerk/Treasurer, Brett Gagnonpalick

Mayor, Jody Bjornson