

**City of Menahga  
Regular City Council Minutes  
May 12, 2025**

**1. Call to Order**

The Menahga City Council held their Regular Monthly Meeting on Monday April 14, 2025.

**2. Roll Call**

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

Mayor Jody Bjornson            Mike Netland            Keith Waaraniemi

Bill Hodge – departed at 6:53            Durwin Tomperi

City Office Staff present: City Clerk/Treasurer Brett Gagnonpalick

**3. Pledge of Allegiance**

**4. Approval of Agenda**

Mayor Bjornson noted a couple of procedural items from the League of Minnesota Mayor’s handbook, stating that motions would not be debated until there was a motion and a second on the table. He also emphasized that each member should speak when acknowledged to keep the conversation more structured.

Council member Tomperi requested adding an item under new business regarding a job performance evaluation for the Greenwood Connections administrator, Laura Alhf. Brett confirmed he would reach out to schedule this.

Main Motion: To approve the agenda as presented.

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

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

**6. Consent Agenda**

The consent agenda included the April 14, 2025 Regular Council Meeting Minutes and April 28, 2025 Special Budget Meeting Minutes.

**Main Motion: To approve the consent agenda.**

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

**7. Public Hearing – None**

**9. Acknowledgment of Receipt of Commission Minutes**

None

**10. New Business**

**First Read – Personnel Policy**

Brett explained that the personnel policy draft was sent to council members via email due to its length. He noted that more committee meetings would be held to discuss it further, with the intention of aligning it with union contracts where appropriate. Brett encouraged council members to email him with any feedback for discussion.

Council member Netland inquired about comments in the document from Angelica Garneros, which Bjornson clarified was likely from a paralegal involved in drafting the document in 2023. Netland also asked if Brett had thoroughly read through the document, to which Brett responded that he had, but was not comfortable making changes himself without committee input.

Mayor Bjornson noted that anywhere the policy mentioned "city administrator", it would be changed to "city administrator/city clerk/treasurer" to cover both roles. He expressed hope that by the July meeting, they could have their input ready for legal review, with the goal of having an approved personnel policy by August.

## **Liquor Store Manager Heather Shepersky Annual Evaluation Summary and Raise Consideration**

Brett presented a summary of Liquor Store Manager Heather Shepersky's evaluation, commending her leadership and performance. He noted that Shepersky had not received a step increase in the four years she had been manager.

**Main Motion: Motion to approve the advancement of Liquor Store Manager Heather Shepersky from step 1 to step 5 on the City of Menahga pay scale in recognition of her successful evaluation and outstanding service to the community.**

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

## **Public Works Director Ron Yliniemi Annual Evaluation Summary and Raise Consideration**

Brett read a summary of Public Works Director Ron Yliniemi's evaluation, noting his increased ability to manage operations effectively and his commitment to professional growth.

**Main Motion: Motion to approve the advancement of Public Works Director Ron Yliniemi from step 7 to step 8 on the City of Menahga pay scale in recognition of his commitment to his department and willingness to succeed.**

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

## **Resolution 2025-10 – Donations to Hooked on Fishing and Sounds of Spirit Lake**

Brett presented Resolution 2025-10, acknowledging donations for the Hooked on Fishing event and Sounds of Spirit Lake event. He noted there was a typo that would be corrected before the final signature.

**Main Motion: To adopt Resolution 2025-10 accepting donations.**

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

**Craig Lawery – Billing Dispute**

Brett explained that Craig Lawery had a billing dispute regarding a \$100 fee for not responding to door knockers. The council discussed that this fee was in line with city policy. They reached a consensus to maintain the policy and keep the fee in place.

**Tennis/Basketball Court Property Lines**

Mayor Bjornson discussed issues with property lines for the tennis and basketball courts, noting discrepancies in GIS mapping. Bjornson explained that the school was looking to resurface the courts and wanted confirmation that it was school property. The council discussed the need for a survey to straighten out the property lines, potentially involving four affected properties. They debated how to split the cost of the survey.

**Main Motion: To designate tennis courts and basketball courts as school property, schedule a survey, and share the cost between the school and city, and the property lines to be adjusted as necessary.**

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

**Appoint Victoria Nurmi to Planning & Zoning Commission**

Mayor Bjornson explained that Victoria Nurmi had attended the last planning and zoning meeting and expressed interest in filling a vacancy on the commission.

**Main Motion: To appoint Vicotria Nurmi to the Planning and Zoning Commission.**

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

## City Adopting Juneteenth as a Paid Holiday

Brett presented the proposal to adopt Juneteenth as a recognized city holiday, noting that Menahga was one of the few cities in the state that had not adopted it. He mentioned that their previous decision not to recognize it had resulted in a grievance. Council members Netland and Tomperi discussed their concerns about the financial implications and setting precedents. A motion to decline recognizing Juneteenth as a paid holiday was made by Netland and seconded by Tomperi, but it failed to pass. Another motion to approve Juneteenth as a paid holiday and add it to the list of federal and state holidays recognized by the city was then made and seconded. The motion passed 3-2.

### **Main Motion: To not recognize Juneteenth as a paid holiday.**

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

### **Main Motion: To approve Juneteenth as a paid holiday and add it to the list of federal and state holidays recognized by the city.**

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

Council Member Bill Hodge had to depart the meeting.

## 12. Department/Committee Reports

### Police:

Brett presented the police report, noting 213 calls, one warrant arrest, and ongoing work to replace the digital speed sign.

Gagnonpalick read the summary for the evaluations conducted by Chief Amy Lane.

**Main Motion: To approve the advancement of Menahga Police Department Officer Joe White from step 6 to step 7 on the City of Menahga police officer pay chart, effective his anniversary date, in recognition of his success evaluation.**

Moved by:	Netland
Seconded	Waaraniemi
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-0 voice vote
In favor:	Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Waaraniemi
Opposed:	none

## Liquor Store

Brett presented the liquor store report from Heather. The council discussed plans for expanding the liquor store, including adding a cooler and potentially remodeling the interior.

Gagnonpalick read the summary for successful evaluations conducted by Heather Shepersky, Liquor Store Manager.

**Main Motion: To approve the step increases for Rachel Pietila, currently at step 8 and moved to step 9, and Scott Nordback, currently at step 6 and moved to step 7, on the liquor store pay scale, as recommended by the liquor store manager, following successful evaluations, retroactive to their employment anniversary date.**

Moved by:	Waaraniemi
Seconded	Tomperi
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-0 voice vote
In favor:	Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Waaraniemi
Opposed:	none

## Public Works

Ron Yliniemi presented updates on various public works projects, including the completion of the shop floor, updates on the Beach House Lift Station and wastewater treatment, road grading and maintenance, and ongoing interviews for new staff. The council reached consensus on letting Yliniemi and the Personnel Committee hire a qualified candidate without full approval. This will enable faster onboarding and city in-processing.

Yliniemi brought his vehicle acquisition proposal to the council. Yliniemi found a good candidate that will meet the towing requirements for city equipment.

**Main Motion: To approve public works to find a truck up to \$27,000 total, with trade ins, based on a satisfactory Car Fax.**

Moved by:	Waaraniemi
Seconded	Tomperi
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-0 voice vote
In favor:	Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Waaraniemi
Opposed:	none

## **Fire Department**

There was no report from the fire department. Council members expressed concern about the lack of communication and the need for information on budget items like turnout gear replacement.

## **Greenwood Connection**

Laura Ahlf presented updates on Greenwood Connections, noting that the nursing home has been experiencing stable census numbers, generally maintaining about 57 to 60 residents, translating to an occupancy rate of around 88 to 90 percent. This stability has contributed to a profitable month for March. Laura mentioned a notable concern with upcoming legislative changes that might significantly impact funding for nursing homes, especially considering a proposed decrease in rates over the next four years totaling approximately \$1.2 million, which does not account for unfunded mandates.

Specifically, a scheduled mandate would require nursing assistants to be paid a starting rate of \$22.50 per hour by 2026.

Additionally, Laura discussed plans for facility improvements, including common areas and a potential cafe for a more modern, independent living environment to bolster the facility's appeal and functionality. Ideas were drawn from recent visits to similar facilities to gain insights into effective new features. She indicated that they are working on design drafts for possible expansion but are awaiting estimated costs for these plans.

Laura also highlighted the activities lined up for nursing home week, emphasizing engagement for both residents and staff, though some events were adjusted due to weather concerns. One such event, a cookout, was postponed to avoid adverse weather conditions, echoing previous unfortunate experiences from 2013 when similar plans were unexpectedly disrupted. Overall, her report was comprehensive, detailing both current operational successes and strategic plans for navigating future challenges.

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

Moved by:	Netland
Seconded	Waaraniemi
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-0 voice vote
In favor:	Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Waaraniemi
Opposed:	none

**Campground, Beach, and Building Maintenance**

The department representative, Bryan Soukup provided updates on preparations for the campground and beach season, including repairs to facilities, improvements to campsites, and ongoing maintenance work.

**Resolution 2025-12** Adding two seasonal positions to the official Menahga pay scale. The purpose of this resolution is to incorporate their pay into the already approved compensation framework. Gagnopalick read the resolution.

**Main Motion: To adopt resolution 2025-12.**

Moved by:	Netland
Seconded	Waaraniemi
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-0 voice vote
In favor:	Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Waaraniemi
Opposed:	none

**Main Motion: To approve the placement of James Moeller at Step 6 and Ralph Cox at Step 8 on the official City of Menahga Pay Scale, effective immediately.**

Moved by:	Netland
Seconded	Waaraniemi
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-0 voice vote
In favor:	Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Waaraniemi
Opposed:	none

**Hire Authority for Lifeguard and Swim Instructor**

The council discussed the hiring process for lifeguards and swim instructors for the upcoming beach season. Brett emphasized the need to hire these positions promptly to ensure they had adequate time for orientation, obtaining uniforms, and preparing swim instruction plans. He noted that authorization was needed to proceed with hiring before the June meeting. Brian provided updates on the progress, mentioning that he conducted phone interviews with three applicants. They seemed skilled and eager to work; two were already lifeguard certified, and one was nearing completion of their

swim instructor certification. The council agreed on the importance of having certified staff ready for the beach opening on June 16th, a timeline set to align with staff availability before their other summer commitments like sports camps.

**Main Motion: To authorize city staff, in collaboration with the personnel committee, to hire for the Swim Instructor and Lifeguard positions following the close of the posting on May 15, 2025.**

Moved by:	Netland
Seconded	Tomperi
Action:	Motion carried by a 4-0 voice vote
In favor:	Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Waaraniemi
Opposed:	none

**13. Unfinished Business**

**Erika Kjellberg**

Council members discussed the policy, noting that such charges are consistent because the responsibility for waterlines and metering from the stop, or shut-off point, onwards falls on the homeowner. Mayor Bjornson emphasized the importance of adhering to the policy, suggesting that making exceptions could set a precedent that complicates future situations. The council reached a consensus to uphold the policy and maintain the charge, acknowledging that while potentially difficult for Ms. Kjellberg, this adherence prevents any bias and ensures fairness across cases.

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

Brett Gagnonpalick presented the invoices for approval:

- a. Batch #042325PAY – \$8,614.33
- b. Batch #050125EFT - \$8518.99
- c. Batch #050125PAY - \$12,395.25

**Main Motion: To approve Batch #042325PAY – \$8,614.33, Batch #050125EFT - \$8518.99, Batch #050125PAY - \$12,395.25 for a grand total of \$29,528.57.**

Moved by:	Waaraniemi
Seconded	Tomperi
Action:	Motion carried on a 4-0 voice vote
In favor:	Bjornson, Tomperi, Netland, Waaraniemi
Opposed:	None.

**Closed Session at 8:18.**

The council moved into closed session pursuant to Minnesota Statute Section 13D.05, Subdivision 3(a) to evaluate the performance of Brett Gagnonpalick, City Clerk Treasurer.

A summary of the closed meeting will be on the agenda of the 09 June 2025 Regular Council Meeting.

**13. Adjournment**

The council decided to adjourn the meeting after ensuring all agenda items were addressed, ongoing concerns were noted for follow-up.

**Main Motion: To adjourn at 8:46 p.m.**

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

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City Clerk/Treasurer, Brett Gagnonpalick

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Mayor, Jody Bjornson