



MINUTES

Mankato City Council
Regular Meeting
February 23, 2026 - 6 p.m.
IGC - Council Chambers

1. Call Meeting to Order

Roll Call

Members Present: Jessica Hatanpa, Jenn Melby-Kelley, Kevin Mettler, Mike Laven, Dennis Dieken, Michael McLaughlin, and Mayor Najwa Massad

Staff Present: City Manager Susan Arntz, Director of Administrative Services Parker Skophammer, Director of Public Safety Jeremy Clifton, City Attorney Pam Whitmore, and Deputy City Clerk Jennie Guerro.

Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of Agenda

Ms. Arntz asked to remove item D from the Consent Calendar as it was not ready for adoption and requested to add, as the first item under City Council Business, a discussion considering joining the Safe and Stable Communities Coalition. Ms. Hatanpa moved and Ms. Melby-Kelley seconded a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Mettler moved and Mr. Dieken seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of February 9, 2026, as written. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Open Forum (15 Minutes)

Jameel Haque, addressed comments he made previously and expressed regret. His concerns were directed toward Target and other industries. He urged the Council to pass the proposed ordinance.

Ava Corey-Gruenes, expressed concerns about the lack of action to establishing a human rights committee and reminded the audience of the upcoming City Council elections for Wards 1, 3, and 5 and Mayor in November.

Jeremy Kuznia, encouraged residents interested in talking about forming a community resistance to contact him.

Mark Plotz, Road Safety Transportation Planner with Region 9 Development Commission, addressed concerns at Riverfront Drive and Madison Avenue and encouraged consideration of Leading Pedestrian Intervals.

Liz Draper, talked about the proposed development at the former Walgreens site and urged the Council to carefully consider the development and the historic architectural charm of the area.

Cindy Winters, a member of the Greater Mankato walk/bike advocates, asked the city to implement Leading Pedestrian Intervals.

Laurel, encouraged the Council to pass the Emergency Ordinance.

5. **Consent Calendar**

NOTE: All items listed under the Consent Calendar will be enacted by one motion. There will be no separate discussion of these items. If a Council Member wishes to discuss any of these items, they may ask that the item be removed from the Consent Calendar. Removed item(s) will be discussed and acted upon by separate motion.

Mr. Laven moved and Ms. Melby-Kelley seconded a motion to approve the Consent Calendar removing item D. The motion carried unanimously.

- A. Report on project and Change Orders for Capital Improvement Project 32261; Water Resource and Recovery Facility (WRRF) Digester and Disinfection Improvements.
- B. Resolution authorizing acquisition of property and eminent domain for public purposes for Capital Improvement Project 11206; Hiniker Parkway.
- C. Resolution authorizing the selection of the Airport Tower Construction Manager at Risk (CMaR).
- D. ~~Resolution to execute a Joint Powers Contract with MnDOT on behalf of Mankato/North Mankato Area Planning Organization (MAPO) for a Highway 14 Corridor Study.~~

- E. Resolution authorizing participation in the Minnesota First Responder AED Project and execution of documents necessary to receive Automated External Defibrillators (AEDs) for Public Safety operations.
- F. Set March 9, 2026, as the date of public hearing on an Ordinance amending Mankato City Code Chapter 2, Sec. 2-36 related to the Local Board of Appeal and Equalization.

6. **Council Business**

- A. Ms. Arntz discussed Safe and Stable Communities Coalition; she had colleagues from the Metro reach out asking Mankato to consider becoming a member of the coalition. She stated that this is a nonpartisan coalition of Minnesota cities working together to restore stability, trust and effective local governments to ensure public safety and government's impacts of operation metro surge. She indicated that the city can participate in full membership status with a \$5,000 fee or as an Ally without a fee. She recommended the city to consider being an Ally member, as many cities share borders and boundaries and law enforcement mutual aid in a way that is different for Mankato. She noted that the city could modify membership in the coalition in the future, and that Mankato would be the first city in Greater Minnesota to participate.

Mr. McLaughlin asked for an explanation of an Amicus Brief. Ms. Arntz stated that it is a "friend of the court" brief the Council authorized, where we can share impacts to the City of Mankato in response to the lawsuit involving the State of MN, City of Minneapolis and St. Paul v. Noem case.

Ms. Melby-Kelley moved and Mr. Mettler seconded a motion to join Cities for Safe and Stable Communities Coalition as an Ally. The motion carried unanimously.

6.A.

Ms. Arntz discussed the draft Emergency Ordinance which provides for requirements for Law Enforcement Agencies and Officers within the city. She indicated that the Council could consider the ordinance, with or without modifications, and that the emergency ordinance would expire on the 61st day from adoption, which would be midnight on Friday, April 24, 2026. She explained that if the Council desires to extend the ordinance, it will have to be considered on the April 14th Council Meeting, or it will expire on its own. If the council wants it as a permanent code, there are issues identified and will need time to address them. For example, language in the temporary code identifies anyone enforcing law enforcement activity must do three things, excluding undercover. She talked a little bit about BCA coming to Mankato etc.

Ms. Whitmore walked through the draft Ordinance language.

Ms. Hatanpa asked about what sort of facial coverings would be asked to be removed if a SWAT member were wearing a helmet or head gear, would they be asked to remove it or just the ski mask-looking face coverings? Ms. Whitmore stated that type of gear would be exempt from the ordinance if it is needed to perform their duties.

Ms. Melby-Kelly talked about enforceability being challenging and wanted to make sure the public was aware it is hard to enforce. She asked if this ordinance impacted federal funding, knowing that to date, the federal government has not had success with these tactics. Ms. Whitmore agreed with this statement. Ms. Melby-Kelly asked if the city was prepared for I-9 audits. Ms. Whitmore stated yes.

Mr. McLaughlin wanted to confirm Ms. Melby-Kelley's concern about federal retaliation. He inquired whether the various task forces and other undercover officers were exempt. Ms. Whitmore confirmed that the ordinance does confirm that they are exempted. He wanted to confirm the body-worn camera requirement for all the different agencies that enter Mankato, and with more law enforcement officers in Mankato in the future with the BCA coming. Ms. Arntz indicated that the city would publish it in the Mankato Free Press tomorrow and notify the agencies that we routinely work with and ask that they communicate with their staff. Mr. McLaughlin encouraged education of the ordinance as standard practice.

Mr. McLaughlin asked what the process would be if an officer was asked to comply and refused.

Mr. Clifton stated that the meaning and intention behind the ordinance is sound. When law officers are acting, we agree they should properly identify themselves. Challenges still exist for the non-routine partners knowing the ordinance exists. We will also review the best practices and challenges from the other cities that have implemented similar parts of this.

Mr. McLaughlin asked how the city would educate when an action happens, how we would we communicate or educate the public that the action was exempted. Ms. Arntz indicated that there wasn't a reporting mechanism for this kind of activity. Mr. McLaughlin asked about other examples that would exempt them from notification, similar to the federal exemption for use of license plates. Ms. Whitmore indicated that undercover was the only exception in the ordinance.

Mr. Laven stated that if the Council passes the ordinance, and it goes into effect tomorrow, he did not want us to take the opportunity to do education and wanted a citation to be issued immediately. Ms. Arntz asked for clarification of Mr. Laven's intent.

Ms. Hatanpa asked if we are able to seek compliance with the ordinance before citation. Stating that if the party was willing to comply, then we wouldn't need to cite them. If we don't get compliance, then we will issue a citation. Mr. Clifton reinforced the city's practice for seeking compliance. Mr. Laven clarified this was his intent.

Ms. Hatanpa reiterated that it was her desire for this to be done as an emergency ordinance and if it were intended to be a more permanent ordinance, to seek some feedback. Mayor Massad asked that information be brought back to the Council on how the ordinance is working and experiences from other cities.

Mr. McLaughlin moved and Mr. Mettler seconded a motion to pass the Emergency Ordinance Clarifying Requirements for Law Enforcement Agencies and Officers within the city. The motion carried unanimously.

Mr. McLaughlin asked for an update regarding the Leading Pedestrian Indicators. Ms. Arntz talked about recent discussions with our new engineers and having a new right of way team in place and would bring back information about this in the future. Ms. Hatanpa asked if an update could also be provided regarding Monks Avenue.

7. **Reports and Miscellaneous Business**

View all city committee meetings by clicking on our [City Calendar](#)

Work Session, March 2, 2026, 6 p.m., Minnesota River Room

Regular Council Meeting, March 9, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers (with EDA to follow if needed)

Regular Council Meeting, March 23, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers (with Work Session to follow)

8. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Melby-Kelley moved and Mr. Mettler seconded a motion to adjourn. With all members voting in favor, the meeting adjourned at 7:54 p.m.

Minutes Approved.

Mayor Massad

ATTEST:

Jennie Guererro
Deputy City Clerk