



MINUTES

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

1. **Call Meeting to Order**

Roll Call

Members Present: Jen Melby-Kelley, Mike Laven, Dennis Dieken, and Mayor Najwa Massad.

Members Excused: Michael McLaughlin, Jessica Hatanpa, and Kevin Mettler.

Staff Present: City Manager Susan Arntz, Community Development Director Mark Konz, Associate Director of Public Utilities Kyle Hinrichs, Commander Justin Nuemann, and City Clerk Renae Kopischke.

Pledge of Allegiance

2. **Approval of Agenda**

Ms. Arntz asked that item 6.I. be removed as the plans have changed, and a variance is no longer needed. Mr. Laven moved and Ms. Melby-Kelley seconded a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

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

4. **Appearances, Recognition, and Proclamations**

Presentation of an Ambassador Award to Shari Dickerman.

5. **Public Open Forum (15 Minutes)**

Cindy Winters, speaking on behalf of Cindy Hagen, commented on construction on the Veteran's Bridge and other construction areas in town and the mobility issues. She noted the concerns as well with ice and snow. She indicated that she must find another route or remain home bound. She asked for a suggested safe wheelchair-accessible alternative for those that would typically have used the Veteran's Bridge.

Laurel Viera, mentioned the recent emergency ordinance and felt that it needs to be permanent. She referred to detention centers and how they were looking for places to locate and even though they might not come to Mankato, she felt that an ordinance would help.

6. **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. Dieken pulled item 6.H. Mr. Dieken moved and Mr. Laven seconded a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as amended. With all members voting in favor, the motion carried.

- A. Motion approving On and Off-sale Intoxicating and 3.2 Malt Liquor, Wine, Club, Sunday, Non-enclosed Premise (Patio), Culinary, Brewery/Taproom Liquor License renewals effective May 1, 2026, through April 30, 2027.
- B. Resolution considering bids on Capital Improvement Project 10839; Public Works Center Welding Bay Exhaust Improvements.
- C. Resolution considering bids on Capital Improvement Project 11100; Mayo Clinic Health System Event Center Arena Audio Replacement.
- D. Resolution accepting feasibility report and ordering project for Capital Improvement Project 11159; Fire Station 3 HVAC Replacement and Restroom Remodel.
- E. Resolution authorizing the selection of the Vetter Stone Amphitheater Construction Manager at Risk (CMaR).
- F. Motion approving Confined Space Consortium Agreement with RISE Building Products at 241 Mohr Drive.

- G. Motion approving Medical Director Agreement with MJM Medical Director Consortium and terminating the Medical Director Agreement with Mayo Clinic Health System.
- H. Mr. Dieken asked about the reverse osmosis process and noted the removal of some other contaminants. He wondered if it would allow for more use of the water from the rainy well system as opposed to the deep wells.

Mr. Hinrichs replied that the pilot would assist with letting us know if the water is compatible with the current drinking water source. He stated that ultimately it would allow for more use of the water. He noted the removal of more of the contaminants in the water (99%), which would allow a shift to more uses of the water. He added that the plan is to be finalized around October.

Mr. Dieken moved and Mr. Laven seconded a motion to approve the Resolution authorizing the bidding of the Water Treatment Plant Reverse Osmosis Pilot Study. The motion carried unanimously.

- I. ~~Set April 13, 2026, as the date of public hearing to review a variance request to increase the allowable lot coverage in the Central Business District Fringe from 75% to 77% (600 Block (even) of South Front Street); by request of Front Street Properties, LLC.~~ Removed with approval of the agenda.
- J. Set April 13, 2026, as the date of public hearing on an Ordinance amending Mankato City Code Chapter 17, Sec. 17.181(e) related to Services to consumers outside the city.

7. **Public Hearings**

- A. Mr. Konz reported on a request of Brett Skillbred to vacate the portion of Lind Street described as: All that part of Lind Street located west of Eighth Avenue and between Block 8 & 9, Columbia Park Addition (adjacent to 8th Avenue). He stated that the proposal is to construct 11 slab-on-grade twin-homes on an approximately 2.8-acre area. He noted that without the vacation of a portion of Lind Street, the applicant would not be able to develop the property as proposed. He added that the vacation area is the westernmost extent of Lind Street that was never developed as a roadway and is currently vacant.

Mr. Konz commented that the applicant has notified utility companies and received signatures from a majority of utility companies stating that they do not have utilities within the vacation area; thus, maintaining the area as public right-of-way for utility purposes would not be needed.

He mentioned that the applicant met with Xcel Energy onsite to discuss their overhead utility pole, and it was concluded that the utility pole is not within the Lind Street right-of-way and is rather within the 8th Avenue right-of-way.

Mayor Massad opened the public hearing. There being no one wishing to speak, Mayor Massad closed the public hearing.

Mr. Laven moved and Mr. Dieken seconded a motion to approve the Resolution approving the vacation of a portion of Lind Street located between Blocks 8 & 9, Columbia Park Addition (adjacent to 8th Avenue). The motion carried unanimously.

8. **Licenses**

- A. Ms. Kopischke stated that the Mankato Department of Public Safety conducted tobacco compliance checks at S4L Mankato Inc., DBA Smokes for Less at 1130 South Riverfront Drive, using a controlled buyer under the age of 21, and in two instances on August 8, 2024, and on November 12, 2025, a store employee sold a tobacco product to the underage buyer without requesting identification.

Ms. Kopischke reported that recently, the city was informed by the Minnesota Department of Revenue that six boxes of filtered cigars were confiscated on November 7, 2025, as contraband under Minnesota Statute 297F.21. She indicated that the items were not returned, and an appeal was not filed, which was confirmed by the state. She explained that it is the responsibility of the store to check for stamps on all cigarettes and filtered cigars. She added that Minnesota Statute 297F.20, Subd. 5, states that "whenever a package of cigarettes is found in the place of business or in the possession of any person without a proper stamp affixed as required by this chapter, it is presumed that those cigarettes are kept there or held by that person illegally." She commented that a violation of Sections 297F.20 and 297F. 21 occurred.

Ms. Kopischke stated that the above violations represent three offenses within a 36-month period. She referred to Minnesota Statute 461.12, subd. 2 which sets out administrative penalties for violations occurring within 36 months. She noted that Minnesota Statute 461.19 makes it clear that the City Code can be even more restrictive, as it states, "Sections 461.12 to 461.18 do not preempt a local ordinance that provides for more restrictive regulation of sales of tobacco, tobacco-related devices, electronic delivery devices, and nicotine and lobelia products."

Ms. Kopischke referenced City Code, Chapter 6, which follows state law and recognizes violations of selling tobacco products of any state, federal, or local law as a violation. She mentioned that Section 6–108 states, “It shall be a violation of this section for any person to sell or offer to sell any licensed products: (1) to any person under the age of 21 years...(6) By any other means, to any other person, or in any other manner or form prohibited by federal, state or other local law, ordinance provision or other regulation”; thus, as a result, this is a violation that constitutes a penalty.

Ms. Kopischke summarized that under [MN Statute 461.12, Subd. 2](#) mandatory actions are required, including a \$1,000 administrative penalty, and a license suspension of no fewer than seven days; however, a longer suspension or revocation may also be considered. She stated that since this is the third violation, the license is being brought to the Council for review and formal action. The recommendation is for the \$1,000 administrative penalty and a suspension of 14 days: two seven-day suspensions.

Ms. Kopischke noted that for each offense, letters were sent to the licensee informing them of the violation, the associated administrative penalty, and the appeal process. Since this is the third violation, the license is being brought to the City Council for review and formal action.

Mayor Massad opened the public hearing.

Andrew Breaver, Attorney for Smokes for Less, commented on how the business takes their obligations seriously and explained what happened internally in reference to the violations. He was concerned that the Council's decision would affect employees and requested that, if there was an imposed suspension, that there be time allotted to allow for employee notification.

Mayor Massad closed the public hearing.

Brief discussion on the violations and the requested suspension.

Mayor Massad moved and Ms. Melby-Kelley seconded a motion to approve the Resolution related to the suspension and possible revocation of the Tobacco License for S4L Mankato, Inc, DBA Smokes for Less (which included two seven-day suspensions). The motion carried unanimously.

- B. Ms. Kopischke reported on the liquor violations that have occurred at Los Dos Primos, located at 2041 Blazing Star Drive, over the past 12 months.

Ms. Kopischke stated that the incident on May 1, 2025, involved underage possession and consumption of alcoholic beverages on the premises, use of fake ID's and 59 individuals being cited for underage consumption. She added that staff made no attempt to confiscate the fake IDs, stop serving alcohol, or contact law enforcement. She indicated that the operational breakdown followed a previous failed compliance check in November 2023 in which the Mankato Department of Public Safety proactively offered to provide alcohol server and fake ID training in both English and Spanish – a recommendation that Los Dos Primos declined. She noted that no appeal was filed, a \$1,500 civil penalty was imposed, and due to the number of violations, involving both operational and management-level failures, two strikes were issued to the liquor license. She indicated that following the above incidents, a problem-solving conference occurred on May 27, 2025, to discuss the strikes that were issued, and for all-staff training.

Ms. Kopischke commented that recently, the city was informed by the Minnesota Department of Public Safety – Alcohol and Gambling Enforcement Division that Los Dos Primos on December 2, 2025, obtained alcoholic beverages from another alcoholic beverage licensed retail account for resale at their location in violation of Minnesota Statute Chapter 340A.415 and Minnesota Rules Chapter 7515.0520. She stated that no appeal was filed, a \$500 civil penalty was imposed, and the liquor license was suspended for a period of three days: from Thursday, January 8, 2026, to Sunday, January 11, 2026. She added that this incident constituted a third strike being issued.

Ms. Kopischke summarized that the above incidents demonstrate multiple, significant violations of the Minnesota State Statute and Mankato City Code, including, Minnesota State Statute § 340A.503, underage consumption, entry into a license premise, and provision of alcohol to underage individuals; and Mankato City Code Sec. 3-160(8)(d), requiring responsible alcohol service, and ensuring staff are properly trained and knowledgeable of regulations.

Ms. Kopischke touched on Minnesota Statute [§340A.415](#), which authorizes the City Council to review, and revoke or suspend, a city-issued liquor license for violations of state laws or city ordinances relating to alcoholic beverages, the operation of the licensed establishment, or non-compliance with its Liquor License Agreement, as well as Mankato City Code, [Sec. 3-164](#), which states that a third strike within a twelve-month period requires review by the Council, which may impose suspension, revocation, or additional conditions upon the liquor license.

Ms. Kopischke concluded that based on the violations, the recommendation would be for payment of the penalty fee of \$2,000, and the suspension of the liquor license for a minimum of seven days, with the condition that if there is a fourth penalty before the expiration of the strikes at midnight on May 1, 2025, the license is revoked.

Mayor Massad opened the public hearing. There being no one wishing to speak, Mayor Massad closed the public hearing.

Brief discussion on the violations and the imposition of a suspension and/or revocation of the license.

Ms. Melby-Kelley moved and Mr. Dieken seconded a motion to approve the Resolution related to the seven-day suspension of the Liquor License for Los Dos Primos Corp, DBA Los Dos Primos (including if there is a fourth penalty before May 1, 2026 that the license is revoked). The motion carried unanimously.

9. **Council Business**

- A. Mr. Neumann stated that the Minnesota Lights On! program provides repair vouchers that law enforcement agencies may distribute to motorists in lieu of citations for certain vehicle equipment violations, such as defective headlights, taillights, or brake lights, which allow eligible drivers to obtain repairs at participating auto repair centers at no cost to the driver. He noted that the program is designed to improve roadway safety, strengthen community-police relationships, and assist drivers who may face financial barriers to vehicle repairs.

Mr. Neumann indicated that the Mankato Department of Public Safety previously participated in the Lights On! voucher program for several years until it was paused by Lights On! in July 2025 due to funding limitations. He mentioned that Lights On! MN has since secured additional funding and recently reopened the program for participating agencies. He explained that to rejoin the program, participating agencies must enter into a participation agreement with Lights On! MN and pay a one-time operational fee of \$500 to support program administration; however, voucher repair costs are funded through the Minnesota Department of Public Safety Office of Traffic Safety.

Mr. Neumann reported that through participation in the program, the Mankato Department of Public Safety will receive 100 repair vouchers to distribute to motorists within the community. He added that each voucher allows motorists to obtain vehicle lighting repairs at participating auto repair centers, with repair costs covered up to \$250.

Mr. Neumann concluded that participation in the program reflects the city's continued commitment to balancing enforcement with problem-solving and community partnership.

Mr. Dieken moved and Ms. Melby-Kelley seconded a motion to approve the Resolution authorizing the City of Mankato to enter into a Participation Agreement with Lights On! MN and to participate in the Minnesota Lights On! vehicle repair voucher program. The motion carried unanimously.

B. Report on "State of the City" by City Manager Susan Arntz.

10. **Reports and Miscellaneous Business**

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

Work Session, April 6, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers

Regular Council Meeting, April 13, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers (with EDA to follow if needed)

Regular Council Meeting, April 27, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers (with Work Session to follow)

11. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Melby-Kelley moved and Mr. Dieken seconded a motion to adjourn. With all members voting in favor, the meeting adjourned at 7:04 p.m.

Minutes Approved.

Mayor Massad

ATTEST:

Renae Kopischke
City Clerk