



MINUTES

**Mankato City Council
Regular Meeting
July 13, 2026 - 6 p.m.
IGC - Council Chambers**

1. Call Meeting to Order

Roll Call

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

Staff Present: City Manager Susan Arntz, Administrative Services Director Parker Skophammer, Community Development Director Mark Konz, City Engineer Cory Bienfang, and City Clerk Renae Kopischke.

Pledge of Allegiance

2. Approval of Agenda

Mayor Massad noted the addition of item 5.L. re the appointment of election judges for the 2026 Primary Election. Mr. Mettler moved and Mr. Laven seconded a motion to approve the agenda as amended. The motion carried unanimously.

3. Approval of Minutes

Mr. Dieken moved and Ms. Hatanpa seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of June 22, 2026, as written. The motion carried unanimously.

4. Public Open Forum (15 Minutes)

Amanda Burg stated that she is the owner and director of Mankato Chemical Health and the applicant for a conditional use permit. She noted that she has had the privilege of helping 100's of individuals and families begin the recovery journey and witnessed first-hand how treatment changes lives. She commented on how the individuals served are not defined by a diagnosis but are parents, veterans, teachers, young adults, etc. who have made the decision to seek

treatment and rebuild their lives. She mentioned how substance use disorder is recognized as a medical condition and individuals in recovery are actively seeking recovery. She touched on the law, the process and the proposal as well as how the facility would operate.

Donald Kusick commented that the neighborhood has concerns and noted that just because something can happen and is allowed doesn't mean it should. He mentioned how there was already crime in the neighborhood and how he had heard gun shots.

David Dittrich stated that he shares the southern property line with the property at Pohl Road. He referred to the condition that was added by the Planning Commission related to an eight-foot fence and requested that discussion be held further between the two property owners.

Jessica Windisch stated that she began researching Mankato Chemical Health, and she mentioned that when she contacted other organizations where they are located no one had heard of the applicant. She wondered about funding for the facility.

Charlotte Nefzger commented that she is in the backyard of where the facility is going to be located. She also expressed concerns about an eight-foot fence. She referred to the meeting that was held with the neighborhood and the applicant and how she made them feel. She felt that a traffic study needed to be conducted. She touched on a home evaluation study and wondered if something could be done.

Paul Fox asked that the item not move forward until more information has been obtained and vetted. He indicated that a traffic study needs to be done and noted issues with speed as well. He felt that residents should have been notified sooner and that notification should have included a larger area.

Aaron expressed his support for the data center moratorium and commented on the ways they are causing rapid changes within communities.

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. McLaughlin pulled item 5.B. and Ms. Hatanpa pulled item 5.F. Ms. Hatanpa moved and Mr. Mettler seconded a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as amended. With all members voting in favor, the motion carried.

- A. Resolution approving Opioid Remediation Grant to Connecting Through Courage for evidence-based family support programming and community stigma reduction education related to outcomes for individuals and families in the Mankato community.
- B. Resolution amending the city's fee schedule by establishing Administrative Penalties for Cannabis Violations.

Mr. McLaughlin stated that the city is required by state law to enforce cannabis regulations and noted that cannabis licenses are issued by the state. Mr. Kopischke explained that after the state issues a license, the license holder must register with the city, as the city is responsible for conducting annual compliance inspections. He asked whether the city receives any state funding to support these enforcement responsibilities. Ms. Arntz responded that cities were originally expected to receive a share of the cannabis sales tax revenue; however, when the legislature approved the 2025 budget, it changed the distribution so that the state retains 100 percent of the sales tax revenue.

Mr. McLaughlin moved and Mr. Mettler seconded a motion to approve the Resolution amending the city's fee schedule by establishing Administrative Penalties for Cannabis Violations. The motion carried unanimously.

- C. Resolution amending the city's fee schedule for Strike Reviews and Administrative Hearings, and establishing the hourly rate for Hearing Officers.
- D. Resolution adopting the Transit Safety Plan Update.
- E. Resolution approving the Final Plat review of Hiniker Parkway Subdivision; by request of the City of Mankato.
- F. Resolution accepting the feasibility report, ordering improvements, preparation of plans and specifications, and ordering advertisement for bids on Capital Improvement Project 11236; 2026 Rosewood Pond Outlet Improvements.

Ms. Hatanpa noted that the pond and drainage issues were among the neighborhood's highest concerns and asked whether the project timeline could be accelerated. Mr. Bienfang responded that the project had been identified as a priority. He provided an update on the bid package and the project's status, noting that the schedule was aggressive and that the goal was to complete the work this year.

There was brief discussion on the outlet and the possibility of a future project to remove sediment from the pond and complete downstream improvements, including cleaning and stabilizing the ravine. Those improvements are anticipated to occur in 2027–2028 as part of a phased approach.

Ms. Hatanpa moved and Mr. McLaughlin seconded a motion to approve the Resolution accepting the feasibility report, ordering improvements, preparation of plans and specifications, and ordering advertisement for bids on Capital Improvement Project 11236; 2026 Rosewood Pond Outlet Improvements. The motion carried unanimously.

- G. Report on project and change order 3 for Capital Improvement Project 11114; Germania Park Phase 5.
- H. Report on project and change orders 1 & 2 for Capital Improvement Project 11193; 2026 Resurfacing.
- I. Report on project and change orders 5 & 6 for Capital Improvement Project 11001; Land of Memories Trail.
- J. Report on project and change orders 7 & 12 for Capital Improvement Project 10884; Kern Bridge.
- K. Resolution authorizing application to the Minnesota Department of Public Safety for the 2027 Traffic Enforcement Grant Program.
- L. Resolution appointing election judges for the 2026 Primary Election.

6. **Planning Commission**

- A. Mr. Konz stated that River Bluff Cottages, LLC is requesting approval of a preliminary and final plat, along with an amended planned unit development (PUD), for the proposed River Bluff Cottages development on a 4.53-acre site along Sibley Parkway near the northern end of Rogers Street. He noted that the property, formerly the Hanson Concrete Plant, received approvals in 2022 and 2024; however, those approvals have expired. He indicated that the subdivision consists of one lot and one block and does not require any new public streets or right-of-way dedication. He added that existing easements for dike, drainage, stormwater, trails, and city relief wells will remain in place, and the proposed 20-townhome development is designed to avoid encroachments into those easement areas. He mentioned that updated engineering, grading, drainage, architectural, and site development plans have been submitted as part of the amended PUD application.

Mr. Konz indicated that the proposed PUD would allow flexibility such as a shared private driveway while providing public benefits, including redevelopment of a previously industrial site, preservation of the surrounding neighborhood character, additional market-rate housing, and open space for residents. He commented that the development includes 20 slab-on-grade attached townhomes with parking that meets city requirements, landscaped

common areas, a gazebo, and pedestrian access to the Sibley Parkway trail. He stated that the Planning Commission reviewed the proposal on June 24, 2026, and recommended approval of both the preliminary and final plat and the amended planned unit development.

Mr. Dieken moved and Mr. Mettler seconded a motion to approve the Resolutions approving the Final Plat of River Bluff Cottages and for an amendment to a previously approved Planned Unit Development (Outlot A, Sibley Parkway). The motion carried unanimously.

- B. Mr. Konz reported that the request is for approval to operate Mankato Chemical Health, a licensed outpatient substance use disorder treatment clinic, at 114 Pohl Road, a property currently occupied by Hope Interfaith Center, which will remain in the building until August 1, 2026. He noted that the proposed clinic would provide outpatient treatment only, with no residential component or overnight stays. He reviewed the services offered, including substance use assessments, individual and group counseling, intensive outpatient programming, relapse prevention, family support, care coordination, medication management partnerships, and wellness-based recovery services. He indicated that the clinic would be staffed by licensed professionals and administrative personnel, with no more than four staff members and ten clients onsite at any one time, all by scheduled appointment. He stated that operations would primarily occur during weekday business hours, with some early morning and evening appointments. He added that methadone and Suboxone would not be dispensed at the facility and that, although outdoor therapy and activities are proposed, they would not occur after dark.

Mr. Konz stated that the property is zoned R-1, Residential One-Family Dwelling District, where medical clinics are permitted through a conditional use permit. He explained that the proposal includes only limited site improvements, such as fencing, exterior painting, and parking lot striping, and that the existing parking supply is sufficient to meet code requirements if staffing remains within the proposed limits. He summarized the recommended conditions of approval, which address parking lot screening, a refuse enclosure, lighting, signage, traffic management, and neighborhood communication through a local contact hotline. He noted that staff determined the anticipated traffic volumes would be low and well within the capacity of adjacent roadways. He also stated that staff research found no evidence that outpatient substance-use treatment centers negatively affect nearby residential property values. He concluded that, following public testimony expressing concerns about safety, traffic, and neighborhood impacts, the Planning Commission recommended approval of the conditional use permit with conditions, including installation of fencing along the west and south property lines and permitting outdoor therapy activities.

Mr. Laven mentioned the previous use of the property and how the concerns he heard from the neighborhood were related to the number of trips increasing to 47 per day.

Brief discussion on the traffic, and it was noted that the Council had the ability to modify the conditions if they wished.

Mr. Mettler commented that he has spent much of his life working with individuals struggling with addiction and emphasized that they are not all criminals, even if criminal behavior may sometimes be associated with addiction. He stated that not everyone with an addiction is a criminal, noting that these individuals are our neighbors, family members, friends, and people deserving of support. He also stated that he lives on Pohl Road and acknowledged that the proposed facility would be in his front yard and something he would see every day. He commented on the condition of the building and expressed his belief that having a tenant would help improve it. He agreed that traffic on the road can be heavy but noted that it is a multi-use roadway serving a variety of purposes. He further observed that individuals actively using substances typically do not seek treatment at a treatment facility. He felt that there was a need and mentioned that there were over 15 sober houses in Mankato that most people do not know exist.

Ms. Hatanpa asked the applicant if she knew how many treatment patients were court ordered versus those just seeking active treatment. Ms. Burg replied that she didn't have the exact numbers but would guess it's about 50/50.

Ms. Burg noted that they have had a facility in Waseca since 2024, and they just opened the LeSueur location last month.

Ms. Hatanpa asked what recourse would be available if issues arose with the property. Mr. Konz responded that they would work with the applicant and the state to ensure any issues were addressed, noting that the facility is licensed by the state.

Ms. Hatanpa felt that the conditions could be modified to remove the outdoor activities and/or maybe modify the hours.

Mr. McLaughlin asked if a condition could be modified that would address the outdoor activities. He mentioned the possibility of a three-way stop at Pohl and Glenwood.

Ms. Arntz explained that the Council has the authority to add a stop sign tonight with approval; however, if the Council wished to have it further reviewed, she felt that the outcome might be the same as what was originally presented.

Mr. McLaughlin asked for clarification between sober homes and a treatment facility. Mr. Konz replied that sober homes do not always have to be state licensed and are more of a group residential setting where people support each other. He noted that the statute allows group homes to exist without a conditional use permit or city approval.

Mayor Massad mentioned her conversations with those in the neighborhood and how the unknown can be scary. She noted how there was another instance where there were concerns with a similar facility in 2015 located on Pfau Street and how she recently followed up and since then there has only been one call to the facility. She added that she also reached out to a few of the residents, and they indicated that they didn't even know that it was there anymore.

Discussion took place regarding the fence and the location as well as making modifications to the conditions of approval.

Mr. Mettler moved to approve the Resolution granting a Conditional Use Permit to allow a medical clinic in the R-1 (One-Family Dwelling) zoning district to serve adults seeking treatment and support for substance use and co-occurring mental health concerns at 114 Pohl Road. The motion included modifying Condition #2 to require the applicant to meet with neighboring property owners within 60 days to finalize the property's fence plans and modifying Condition #12 to add that outdoor activities be limited to Monday through Friday, from 8:00 a.m. to 6:00 p.m. Ms. Melby-Kelley seconded the motion. The motion carried with a vote of 7-1, with Ms. Hatanpa voting against.

7. **Public Hearings**

- A. Mr. Konz reported that Generation Properties, on behalf of property owner Tony Baumann, requested a variance from the Mankato City Code to reduce the required corner side-yard setback at 502 North 2nd Street from 10 feet to 5 feet, 4 inches in the O-R, Office Residential District. He stated that the variance would allow construction of a second-floor balcony on the residential portion of the existing Old Town Garage structure that would extend four feet toward Spring Street but would remain within the existing side wall footprint and would not impact the rear yard setback.

Mr. Konz explained that the property currently has an existing corner side-yard encroachment, with the structure located approximately 9 feet, 4 inches from the property line, and that the proposed balcony would further reduce the setback to 5 feet, 4 inches. He added that the property has unique conditions due to its historic development, small lot size, and existing mixed-use character. He indicated that the Old Town Garage was originally constructed in 1930 as a Skelly Oil service station and later adapted for automotive repair and residential use. He mentioned that surrounding properties in the area contain a variety of commercial, residential, and mixed-use structures with varying setbacks.

Mr. Konz stated that an administrative variance hearing was held on June 24, 2026. No members of the public attended the hearing other than the applicants, and no additional public comments were received regarding the request.

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

Ms. Hatanpa moved and Mr. Laven seconded a motion to approve the Resolution approving a variance to decrease the corner side yard setback from 10 feet to five feet, four inches (5'4") in the O-R, Office Residential Zoning District (502 North 2nd Street). The motion carried unanimously.

- B. Ms. Arntz reported that at the May 26 meeting, the Council reviewed information and discussed moving forward with an ordinance regulating the keeping of chickens within the city. She indicated that staff reviewed Chapter 4 of the City Code relating to animals and prepared a draft ordinance. She summarized the proposed changes, noting they would update animal-related definitions, including clarifying the definitions of "animal" and "non-domesticated animal," and add new definitions specific to the keeping of chickens. She noted that the ordinance would allow up to four hens on single-family residential properties, prohibit roosters and cockfighting, permit renters of single-family dwellings to keep chickens with the property owner's consent, and require a zoning permit for a chicken coop and run. She stated that the proposal also establishes standards for coop and run placement and size, including rear-yard location, minimum setbacks from property lines, and maximum size requirements based on the number of hens. She added that other provisions prohibit the sale of non-domesticated animals within the city, create exceptions for certain small pets, licensed research and veterinary facilities, service animals, and reasonable disability accommodations, and retain existing licensing requirements for animals kept in zoos, museums, or educational facilities.

Ms. Arntz further explained that, as previously discussed in May, violations of the ordinance would constitute violations of the City Code and are classified as misdemeanors under state law. She commented that if adopted, enforcement would primarily occur through administrative citations and civil fines under the city's administrative procedures, with nuisance abatement actions available through Civil District Court, consistent with other nuisance violations. She also referenced the prior discussion regarding rental property strike provisions, noting those provisions would not apply to violations involving the keeping of chickens but could be revisited in the future if necessary.

Mr. McLaughlin wondered what steps would be taken if there was a violation. Mr. Arntz commented that initially there would be contact with the owner and steps taken as necessary to gain compliance.

Ms. Arntz noted that the engagement and communications team was working on compiling information for the website, as well as an email for landlords, in the event the ordinance was approved.

Mayor Massad opened the public hearing.

Molly Smentek stated that she has always wanted to become a veterinarian and expressed her support for the ordinance allowing residents to keep chickens in Mankato. She explained that raising chickens would provide valuable experience working with farm animals and help her pursue her career goals. As a member of the 4-H Club, she added that keeping chickens would also give her the opportunity to exhibit them at the county fair.

Mayor Massad closed the public hearing.

Ms. Hatanpa moved and Mr. Laven seconded a motion to approve the Ordinance amending Chapter 4 of the Mankato City Code pertaining to the Keeping of Chickens in Residential Areas. The motion carried unanimously.

- C. Ms. Arntz reported that on June 22, the Council accepted a recommendation to hold a public hearing and consider an interim ordinance authorizing a study and establishing a temporary moratorium on data centers and high-impact utility consumers. She explained that the proposed ordinance was narrowly tailored to apply only to specifically defined data centers and high-impact utility consumers. Data centers are defined as facilities principally used for the storage, management, processing, or transmission of digital data, including associated infrastructure, but excluding computing facilities that are an accessory to another lawful principal use. High-impact utility consumers are defined as new or expanding commercial, industrial, or agricultural uses meeting one or more of the following thresholds: electrical capacity of at least 25 megawatts but less than 50 megawatts; projected average water use of 50,000 gallons per day or more; or development exceeding 450,000 gross square feet.

Ms. Arntz stated that the proposed interim ordinance would allow the Council time to review the city's regulations governing these uses without the time constraints of a pending development application. She noted that the moratorium would provide staff with the opportunity to evaluate potential impacts related to land use compatibility, utility infrastructure capacity and consumption, public services, environmental considerations, and other planning factors, and determine whether amendments to the city's zoning and development regulations are warranted. She added that the proposed moratorium would apply only to the narrowly defined use types and was not expected to affect the majority of commercial, industrial, or agricultural development projects.

Mr. Laven inquired about the cost of the study and the funding source. Ms. Arntz stated that the work would primarily be completed internally, with the possibility of some associated attorney fees.

Ms. Hatanpa noted the one-year timeline. Ms. Arntz responded that she anticipated the topic would be discussed during several work sessions, beginning with a review of the engagement plan. It was noted that the moratorium is limited to 12 months, providing time to study the issue, review existing regulations, and consider potential code amendments.

Ms. Arntz noted that Blue Earth County and North Mankato have also been considering similar ordinances.

Mayor Massad opened the public hearing.

David Turner, Southern Minnesota Clean Energy Board, stated that they are holding an information session at Grace Lutheran Church on July 25, and they have invited other cities to share their experiences. He asked the city to say no to any non-disclosure agreements.

Jacob Bauman stated he was supportive of the moratorium. He commented on negative effects and increased energy costs.

Louis Schwartkopf commended the city for being a good steward of the city's resources. He mentioned the definition of high utility customer and the figures used for electricity that reflect hyper-scale data centers. He suggested the figures reflected be reviewed.

Ms. Arntz noted that the reason the figures were used is because they are what is used in an Environmental Assessment Worksheet for the city, as the city does not regulate power. She added that the threshold of what is allowed to be regulated as onsite power generation is within the parameters, meaning anything above or below is outside the city's scope. She mentioned that we are only trying to manage the elements that are within the city's purview.

Mr. Schwartkopf reiterated a previous comment made and agreed that the city should not sign any non-disclosure agreements as there are other cities that have, and the residents were not included in any of the decisions. He provided several examples, and felt confident that this was something that Mankato would avoid. He reminded the Council of the event being held on Saturday, July 25, from 1 to 4 p.m. at Grace Lutheran Church related to data centers.

Stacey Karels, Mankato Building and Construction Trades Council, commented on behalf of the trade men and women and encouraged the Council to be open to bringing data centers into the community. He mentioned how data centers increase the local tax base, create jobs for construction of the facility as well as bring jobs to the community. He felt that the moratorium was not needed.

Levi Leskey appreciated that a moratorium was being considered to gather more information and facts. He commented on how developments are affecting the local economy. He touched on current trends and mentioned power grid shutdowns and cyber-attacks.

Drew Campbell spoke in favor of the moratorium to further study and obtain information related to data centers. He mentioned how he has served with several organizations and how there's a lot of information out there that people do not know. He commented on labor and how jobs and development are needed but not at the expense of not having enough resources.

Jason Lindahl, Pine Island resident, stated that he grew up farming and emphasized the importance of supporting agriculture in the same manner as other businesses. He commented that Pine Island has a limited business tax base and expressed the opinion that restrictions on certain types of businesses have contributed to an imbalance in the city's tax base. He disputed comments suggesting that Pine Island had been coerced, stating that the statements were inaccurate and that the city's intent was to pursue opportunities to expand its commercial tax base.

Sabri Fair supported the moratorium; however, he felt that the high utility user definition didn't do enough to protect the community. He believed there were gaps in the language and mentioned how multiple data centers could be allowed. He touched on the importance of water conservation measures and provided examples from other communities where the information was skewed. He provided examples where he felt that a hyper-scale user would still be allowed. He mentioned economic impact and how it does not stay within the community.

Ava Corey-Gruenes requested that the moratorium be amended to incorporate the adjustments recommended by Mr. Fair. She also asked that the County consider zoning amendments during the review period that would prohibit hyper-scale data centers indefinitely. She stated that she had conducted extensive research on hyper-scale data centers and their potential public health and environmental impacts, including effects on air, water, energy use, ecosystems, and agriculture. She urged the Council to consider uncertainties surrounding the purpose of such facilities and the potential for significant harm. She requested that any regulations adopted following the study period be based on research and community input rather than financial interests.

Mayor Massad closed the public hearing.

A brief discussion took place related to the definitions.

Ms. Melby Kelley moved and Mr. Mettler seconded a motion to approve the Interim Ordinance authorizing a Study and Imposing a Moratorium on Data Centers and High Impact Utility Consumers. The motion carried unanimously.

8. **Council Business (None)**

9. **Reports and Miscellaneous Business**

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

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

Regular Council Meeting, August 10, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers (with EDA and/or Work Session to follow)

10. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Ms. Hatanpa moved and Ms. Melby-Kelley seconded a motion to adjourn. With all members voting in favor, the meeting adjourned at 8:34 p.m.

Minutes Approved.

Mayor Massad

ATTEST:

Renae Kopischke
City Clerk