



MINUTES

**Mankato City Council
Regular Meeting
September 28, 2026 - 6 p.m.
IGC - Council Chambers**

1. **Call Meeting to Order**

Roll Call

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

Staff Present: City Manager Susan Arntz, Administrative Services Director Parker Skophammer, Community Development Director Mark Konz, City Engineer Cory Bienfang, Public Safety Director Jeremy Clifton, Construction and Facilities Services Director Jim Tatge, Civic Center Co-Director Eric Jones, and City Clerk Renae Kopischke.

Pledge of Allegiance

2. **Approval of Agenda**

Ms. Hatanpa moved and Mr. Laven seconded a motion to approve the agenda as written. The motion carried unanimously.

3. **Approval of Minutes**

Ms. Hatanpa and Mr. Dieken seconded a motion to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting of September 14, 2026, as written. The motion carried unanimously.

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

Alison Presita, resident of Trail Creek Neighborhood, stated that she is an occupational therapist with experience in chemical dependency and mental health. She expressed support for the purpose of Spirits at Rest but raised concerns about its proposed location and potential impacts on neighborhood safety, traffic, noise, and property values. She questioned the qualifications and local experience of the proposed operators, including those who would conduct

assessments and oversee treatment. She cited federal research indicating that treatment facilities should be appropriately integrated into communities. She concluded that the facility would disrupt the established neighborhood and presented a petition containing 87 signatures opposing the proposal.

Hunter Wanderscheid questioned whether the Spirits at Rest proposal provides enough information to meet Mankato's requirements for a conditional use permit. He noted a discrepancy between the applicant's claim that the proposed facilities are allowed in the B-3 district and the city's report stating they are not. He emphasized that the city must determine whether the proposed use is compatible with the district, will not negatively affect existing uses, and will protect public health, safety, and welfare. He argued that the proposal's compatibility should be supported by more than the assumption that it is similar to a clinic or apartment use. He commented on several unresolved issues that were identified, including lighting, landscaping, parking, fencing, and stormwater management. He clarified that they were not asking the Council to decide whether a substance-use facility is beneficial, but rather whether the applicant had provided sufficient information for the city to make the required findings.

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.I. Mr. McLaughlin moved and Ms. Hatanpa seconded a motion to approve the Consent Calendar as amended. With all members voting in favor, the motion carried.

- A. Motion approving Proclamation designating October 9, 2026, as Ageism Awareness Day in the City of Mankato.
- B. Motion approving Proclamation designating November 1, 2026, as Extra Mile Day in the City of Mankato.
- C. Resolution appointing Election Judges for the 2026 General Election.
- D. Resolution approving an Opioid Remediation Grant to the Travis James Gustavson Foundation for a Billboard that provides awareness, education, and serves as a resource for opioid use and addiction.
- E. Motion approving a license to encroach for the construction of a ramp at the property addressed as 727 South Front Street; by request of Goodrich Construction.

- F. Resolution authorizing the purchase of two 35-foot Class 700 Low Floor Heavy Duty Buses through the Washington State Transit Bus Cooperative Contract.
- G. Resolution authorizing the purchase of one 29-foot Class 700 Low Floor Heavy Duty Bus through the Washington State Transit Bus Cooperative Contract.
- H. Report on project and change orders 5 & 6 for Capital Improvement Project 11193; 2026 Resurfacing.
- I. Mr. McLaughlin wanted to highlight the item and recognize the work of staff and the Diamond Creek Home-owners Association. Mr. Bienfang reported on how the land was acquired and donated.

Mr. McLaughlin moved and Mr. Mettler seconded a motion to approve the Resolution approving the donation agreement and accepting the donation of Real Property, Blue Earth County PID R01.09.16.451.015. The motion carried unanimously.

- J. Resolution considering bids on Capital Improvement Project 11280; Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) Biosolids Hauling and Land Application.
- K. Resolution modifying the date of public hearing for Capital Improvement Project 11189; TH 169 Revitalization Project from September 28, 2026, to October 13, 2026.
- L. Resolution accepting feasibility report, ordering plans and specifications, and authorizing solicitation of contractor quotes for Capital Improvement Project 11264; Water Resource Recovery Facility (WRRF) Secondary Scum Pit Modifications.
- M. Resolutions for Hearing on Proposed Final Assessment:
 - 10994; Riverfront Drive Reconstruction
 - 11078; West 7th Street Reconstruction
 - 11114; Germania Park Phase 5 Reconstruction
 - 11120; Woodshire Drive Reconstruction
- N. Resolutions ordering preparation of Feasibility Reports for 2027 Capital Improvement Projects:
 - 11274; Rita Road Reconstruction
 - 11276; 2027 Resurfacing (Streets, Alleys and Sidewalks)
 - 11275; Mills Street Watermain Replacement
 - 11268; CSAH 16 (Stoltzman Road) Improvements
- O. Motion changing the date of public hearing to October 13, 2026, for the Tax Abatement and Business Subsidy Agreement.

- P. Set October 13, 2026, as the date of public hearing to review a variance to decrease the rear yard from 66 feet to 11.2 feet in the R-3, Limited Multiple Family Dwelling District; to review conditional Use Permit to construct and operate a 16-unit congregate micro-apartment addition (1429 3rd Avenue); by request of Kody Schendel.
- Q. Set October 13, 2026, as the date of hearing on an Ordinance amending Chapter 10 of Mankato City Code in the M-1, Light Industrial District related to allowed cannabis uses.

6. **Planning Commission**

- A. Mr. Konz reported that the proposal by Spirits at Rest is for a conditional use permit to construct and operate a 40-bed licensed residential substance use disorder treatment facility at 80 Power Drive in Mankato's B-3 Highway Business District. He stated that the approximately 20,915-square-foot facility would provide 24/7 residential treatment, including counseling, recovery education, peer support, recreation, meals, and supervised outdoor activities. It would not provide detoxification, hospital-level care, or services outside its state-licensed scope. He noted that the building would include bedrooms, offices, group rooms, a commercial kitchen and dining area, chapel, exercise and recreation spaces, nursing and staff areas, and an outdoor fenced recreation area. He indicated that the existing parking lot would be reused, with 69 parking spaces proposed, along with bicycle parking, loading access, municipal utilities, and onsite stormwater swales. He mentioned that the applicant also proposes extensive landscaping, berms, trees, and screening, although city staff identified additional requirements for year-round parking-lot screening and landscaping within parking islands.

Mr. Konz explained that because residential care is not specifically listed as a conditional use in the B-3 district, the city must determine whether the proposed facility is similar in character to permitted or conditional uses, such as medical clinics and apartments, and whether it would avoid detrimental impacts to health, safety, and welfare. He added that the applicant states that traffic, noise, lighting, and off-site activity will be limited through structured programming, controlled access, supervised client movement, scheduled admissions and visitation, and professional staffing. Traffic studies indicate that the project is below thresholds requiring a formal traffic impact study. He pointed out that Spirits at Rest, which has operated treatment and supportive housing programs in Montgomery since 2020, must obtain Minnesota Department of Human Services licensure before opening. He stated that the applicant also conducted neighborhood outreach, including an August 24 open house, direct communication with nearby residents, and a second informational meeting on September 10 following Planning Commission feedback. Community concerns have been submitted and addressed by the applicant, with a commitment to maintain ongoing communication with neighboring residents.

Ms. Hatanpa asked if there would be security on staff in addition to the nursing staff and wondered what would happen if someone tried to leave the facility.

Jeremy Gerres, representing Spirits at Rest, indicated that the door would be locked and there would be a plan to remove them from the site.

Mr. Gerres noted that occupants of the facility would either self-check themselves or be court ordered. He commented that assessments need to be made prior to admittance to the facility; however, they could also be made at the facility. He explained staffing over a 24-hour period.

Ms. Hatanpa asked what would happen if there were issues and several police calls. Mr. Konz stated that the conditional use permit could be reviewed and amended, if needed, to include additional items.

Mr. Mettler asked if there were any major issues with sober housing or any outpatient facilities, such as the crime rate going up, police calls, etc. Mr. Clifton noted that the issues would be different based on what would be required with the facility.

Mr. Gerres indicated that they wouldn't take anyone registered as a predator. He mentioned that when someone wants to leave the facility it is typically because they are looking for a fix. It was noted that the nearest facility is in Shakopee or about an hour south of Mankato.

Brief discussion on the predator offense levels, the security plan, the layout of the facility as well as the assessments and screening process.

Mr. Mettler moved and Mr. Laven seconded a motion to approve the Resolution approving a Conditional Use Permit to allow a licensed residential substance use disorder treatment facility in the B-3, Highway Commercial District (80 Power Drive); by request of Spirits at Rest. The motion carried unanimously.

7. **Council Business**

- A. Mr. Jones recommended that Ribfest continue to be held downtown rather than at the Vetter Stone Amphitheater. He cited the local economic impact, noting that nearly all food vendors were located within 25 miles of Mankato and six of the eight bands were from Mankato. Proceeds from the Best Use of Barbecue voting supported the Southern MN Children's Museum.

Mr. Jones noted that the downtown, food-focused format aligns with Ribfest's origins in 1998 and may provide a more sustainable model given that entertainment costs have doubled over the past six years. He indicated that many remaining national Ribfest events are held at casinos, which benefit from additional revenue sources.

Mr. Jones stated that the community feedback was overwhelmingly positive, particularly regarding the event's return to its original downtown location. Concerns included alcohol being carried outside the beer garden and restrictions on bringing chairs into the beer garden. He also noted that keeping Ribfest downtown provides increased summer traffic and an opportunity for downtown bars and restaurants to benefit from the event.

- B. Mr. Tatge provided an update on the Vetter Stone Amphitheater project and recommended proceeding with construction of a permanent stage house, permanent seating, and purchase of a back-of-house trailer. It was noted that due to budget constraints, the proposed storage building will be deferred to a future budget year, tentatively 2029.

Mr. Tatge indicated that the total revised project cost is \$3,256,928, funded through Riverfront Park Capital, a sales tax transfer, and the 2027 operating budget. He noted that the stage house and site improvements are estimated at \$2,693,315, permanent seating at \$367,890, and the trailer at \$195,723.

Mr. Tatge reported that value engineering was used to reduce stage house costs following higher-than-anticipated bids. He stated that staff recommended that the Council authorize agreements with Knutson Construction for the stage house and site improvements, Dant Clayton for bench seating, H2I Group for chair-back seating, and Satellite Shelters, Inc. for the back-of-house trailer.

Mr. Laven moved and Ms. Hatanpa seconded a motion to approve the Resolutions considering bids for Capital Improvement Project 11212; Vetter Stone Amphitheater Improvements. The motion carried unanimously.

8. **Reports and Miscellaneous Business**

Mr. Dieken provided an update from the September 22, 2026, Public Safety Advisory Committee meeting related to the review of Mankato Department of Public Safety Police Policy 414, Immigration Enforcement.

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

Community Investment Plan Open House, October 1, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers

Regular Council Meeting, October 13, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers (with EDA and/or Work Session to follow)

Regular Council Meeting, October 26, 2026, 6 p.m., Council Chambers (with Work Session to follow)

9. **Adjournment**

There being no further business, Mr. Mettler moved and Mr. McLaughlin seconded a motion to adjourn. With all members voting in favor, the meeting adjourned at 7:51 p.m.

Minutes Approved.

Mayor Massad

ATTEST:

Renae Kopischke
City Clerk