



AGENDA

**City Council Work Session
Monday, March 2, 2026 at 6 p.m.
Minnesota River Room**

1. Discuss Alternative Plan for Ribfest 2026
2. 2026 Legislative Priorities
4. Adjournment



AGENDA RECOMMENDATION

City Council Work Session

1.

Meeting Date: 03/02/2026

Agenda Item:

Discuss Alternative Plan for Ribfest 2026

Recommendation/Action(s):

Provide feedback about proposed plan.

Summary:

As the Council is aware, construction is planned to take place at the Vetter Stone Amphitheater this summer, affecting RibFest. As was previously directed, staff have developed a plan for 2026 that would create a two-day festival on the Grand Lawn featuring music and BBQ.

- Use the Grand Lawn in front of the IGC, the entire block of Hickory Street, and potentially the parking lot between the IGC and US Bank near the Brett's building. This footprint would be almost the exact same as it was from 1998-2009.
- Market the event as a return to our humble beginnings, reusing the original "Hickory Street RibFest" name, and bring back the classic original logo.
- Create an event that has minimal net cost, other than food/beverages, depending on the availability of local/regional talent.
- Focus on food with BBQ-based food trucks and vendors from around the state of Minnesota. Staff have had well received conversations with multiple local food trucks when asking for feedback on the concept and confirming if there would be availability this late in their seasons schedule.
- Engage local and regional bands, as it was in the beginning.

We are currently targeting Friday, August 7 through Saturday, August 8, moving to a two-day model. The event would open at 11:30 a.m. on Friday August 7 to capitalize on the downtown workday lunch crowd and continue until 10:00 p.m. Saturday would follow the same timeline.



AGENDA RECOMMENDATION

City Council Work Session

2.

Meeting Date: 03/02/2026

Agenda Item:

2026 Legislative Priorities

Recommendation/Action(s):

Provide feedback on draft priorities.

Summary:

With the recent commencement of the 2026 State of Minnesota session, we updated the draft of the City of Mankato's legislative priorities for the 2026 session. We will take feedback and bring the finalized plan with consideration of adoption at the March 9, 2026, Council Meeting.

Within the plan, we have updated the language relative to the bonding request. As the Council is aware, we previously had a request for funding for the Southeast Water Quality Project. The project is an important project for the City as it was originally proposed to improve drainage in the southeast portion of the City, including a large agricultural area outside of City limits that drains to Rosewood Pond.

The project has continued to receive significant community interest, and the City has explored several funding opportunities to help move needed improvements forward. This project was added to the City's list of projects to submit to the State for bonding funding in 2026. However, recently, the City engaged a real estate professional to re-initiate negotiations with the owners of the needed properties. Despite strong efforts, the property owners are not currently willing to sell the property proposed for the project.

As a result, in December 2025, the City applied for a grant from the MPCA to reevaluate the Southeast Wetland Restoration Project and to explore alternative improvements and approaches to achieve the same drainage results. We expect the MPCA to award successful applicants in early spring. If awarded, this study would be completed by the end of 2026. In the meantime, the city is commissioning a review of Rosewood Pond this winter to identify potential improvements to address flooding concerns on Rosewood Pond. We would bring recommended improvements that could be considered in 2026 as this plan is completed.

Considering the ongoing uncertainty regarding the practical feasibility of the Southeast Wetland Restoration Project as it is currently proposed, Staff is recommending that it be removed from this year's request to the State for bonding and continue to develop this project and address some improvements in the near term.

Attachments

2026 Legislative Priorities

City of Mankato 2026 Legislative Priorities



Each legislative session the City of Mankato identifies topics that affect local government, which are typically controlled by the state legislature, known as the city's legislative priorities. The City works with state lawmakers each year to share information about how each of the topic areas affect Mankato and the services the city provides to residents and works with state and regional partners to advocate for changes that benefit Mankato and its residents.

The proposed 2026 legislative plan outlines those key policy priorities and goals that the City of Mankato intends to pursue, guiding decision-making on legislation, budgeting, and resource allocation to address the community's needs and improve the quality of life for residents, acting as a roadmap for the city's legislative future development and governance.

State Bonding Request

- The City of Mankato **seeks** \$1,265,100 in state capital bonding as part of a \$25,302,000 total estimated construction costs for an Air Traffic Control Tower that is serving the Mankato Regional Airport. This critical safety improvement is necessary for one of the busiest airports in Minnesota, serving flight training, business travel, charter services, and recreation. The airport has about 100 based aircraft, including single- and multi-engine planes, jets, and helicopters.

Affordable/Life Cycle Housing

- Mankato **supports** housing that is affordable and appropriate for people at all stages of life.
- Mankato **supports** funding for development and operation of a 24/7 shelter. A variety of housing opportunities are important to the economic and social wellbeing of our region. The City's Housing Action Plan directs development of more shelter beds and developing housing that has a lower barrier for access.
- Mankato **supports** continued funding for cities to create housing that meets a community's needs, specific to each community.

Local Government Aid Formula

- The City of Mankato **supports** any revisions to the LGA formula that includes to the greatest extent possible:
 - Reduced property tax rate disparities among Minnesota cities.
 - Allocations based on city tax base and need.
 - Utilization of the most up-to-date demographic and financial data for state and local governments.
 - Provide for equitable access to essential city services across the state.
 - Include no separate LGA allocations based on geographic location or population.
 - Reduce yearly fluctuations in aid.
- The City of Mankato **supports** the long-term annual funding goal by identified state policymakers to fully fund the needs identified by the current LGA formula.
- The City of Mankato **supports** the Governor and legislature implementing annual inflation and population growth adjustments to the LGA appropriation.
- City of Mankato **opposes** artificial, non-formula limits on aid for individual cities or groups of cities. Additionally, the City of Mankato opposes using LGA as a tool to coerce or influence cities on policy decisions that local control does not agree with.

Local Sales Tax

- The City of Mankato **supports** Local Sales Tax (LST) as an option for cities to diversify their revenue streams to fund public improvements and capital replacement projects. The City of Mankato supports:
 - Modifying state law so that LST proposals do not require the approval of special legislation by the legislature of the Governor.
 - Legislation allowing cities to enact or continue a LST by a public referendum at either a general or special election.

- Modifying state law to ensure that LST is an appropriate funding mechanism for all city owned assets including parks, roads, buildings and other city capital infrastructure.
- The City of Mankato **opposes** additional Local Sales Tax (LST) oversight, and funding restrictions. The City of Mankato opposes:
 - Proposals to offset LGA or other local revenue streams by a local sales tax.
 - Requirements that require a city to seek the permission of other regional local governments including other cities, counties or townships.
 - LST provisions that require a city to share sales tax revenue with other local governments whether regionally or on a statewide basis.

Local Decision Making

- Mankato **supports** the ability of local officials to make decisions on behalf of their community in matters related to how the community is shaped, in the financial ability of the community to govern itself, and in the ability of local officials to act flexibly to address unique or changing local conditions and circumstances. Regulatory changes that erode the City's authority or create additional mandates can increase local costs and typically come without corresponding funding. New unfunded mandates potentially increase property taxes and user fees and may impede our ability to fund traditional service needs.
- Changes in local control can also prevent the City Council's ability to effectively safeguard the interests of our community. The public has charged these officials with decision making on their behalf; changes that affect this trust and responsibility should not be considered lightly. We recognize that there are issues that need a broader, state-wide approach. To allow for greater collaboration and flexibility in providing local services, Mankato **supports** the removal of barriers or hurdles to cooperation and coordination between cities and other units of government or entities. Mankato supports cooperation by the various levels of government to discuss and plan together changes in policies and regulations vs. just being decided and handed down. We believe this work is done best together.

Municipal State Aid for City Streets

- Cities with populations greater than 5,000 receive some state aid through the Municipal State (MSA) formula, as well as the Larger Cities Assistance Account. The City of Mankato **supports** investment in these programs to ensure that funding keeps pace with the significant needs across the state. Moreover, because MSA dollars are limited to only a portion of a city's street system, substantial funding for the Larger Cities Assistance Account is essential. Under current law, Larger Cities Assistance is projected to grow to \$47.4 million annually by 2033. The legislature must not unwind this dedicated funding in future years before it is fully implemented to fund budget shortfalls elsewhere.

Transportation

- Mankato will partner with MnDOT and North Mankato on redevelopment of the 169 Corridor through our communities in 2027 and 2028. The City has been a partner with the state and county in identifying the transportation needs that benefit the community and greater region. As a growth center and regional commercial and tourism destination, a comprehensive and sustainable road improvement plan is desired. Mankato **supports** funding for the identified needs for State Trunk Highway 169 which benefits the entire region.
- Mankato **supports** legislative changes to support traffic enforcement on state trunk highways of all state laws, specifically the state's traffic noise complaint. The current practice pushes enforcement of the matter on the municipality. Further, the City **supports** allowance for the City to produce signs, meeting state standards, for ordinances the statute requires it create to enforce matters that the state chooses to push onto the municipality.
- Mankato **supports** the legislation funding priorities for transportation related items that:
 - Creates a sustainable and consistent funding plan for MnDOT road projects.
 - Improves the surface condition, alignment, access, and safety of the roadway and highway corridors in Mankato.
 - Increases funding to offset the burden placed on cities for improvements completed on state and county highways within City limits.
 - Continues funding for the Transportation and Economic Development program.

CITY OF MANKATO SUPPORT OF OTHER POSITIONS

In addition to the initiatives contained in this platform, the Mankato City Council generally supports the legislative recommendations of the organizations in which it holds membership, including, but not limited to:

- League of MN Cities
- Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities

The City Council may choose to take a different position on individual items within the platforms of these and other organizations whose platforms they generally support. The City Council may also consider additional positions in response to issues that emerge during the legislative session.

LEGISLATIVE GUIDING PRINCIPLES

These legislative guiding principles provide a foundation for the specific initiatives and support items that are included in the 2025 State Legislative Platform. As dynamic as the legislative session can become, these tenets inform the City's response to legislative proposals as they are introduced and move through the process.

MANKATO-FIRST FOCUS

- Prioritize support for legislative proposals that clearly improve how government works and serves City of Mankato community members, businesses, and non-profits.

RESPONSIBLE, RESPONSIVE GOVERNMENT

- Support local authority to define local priorities.
- Pursue policy that is not impinged by excessive, unnecessary regulation.
- Tend to ongoing maintenance and planning for future infrastructure needs.
- Advance information/data technology and ongoing updates that support program integrity and efficient service delivery.
- Engage in good stewardship of natural resources and our environment.
- Encourage inter-governmental collaboration built on the goals of improving performance, increasing efficiencies and building trust across programs, agencies, and communities.
- Communicate openly with the public and operate transparently.

STABLE, SUFFICIENT, FLEXIBLE FUNDING

- Respect local government control of their resources and budgetary processes.
- Acknowledge city costs for existing or new state mandates.
- Support innovations in the delivery of mandated service.

For more information about the City, visit our web site at www.mankatomn.gov. To discuss these legislative priorities please contact Susan Arntz, City Manager at 507-387-8695 or sarntz@mankatomn.gov or Parker Skophammer, Director of Administrative Services at 507-397-8739 or pskophammer@mankatomn.gov.