

1. CALL TO ORDER

A meeting of the Waite Park City Council was held on Monday, January 12, 2026, beginning at 6:30 PM.

MEMBERS PRESENT

Members present were Mayor Schmitt, Members Blackburn, Schulz, Starling and Theisen

MEMBERS ABSENT**CITY REPRESENTATIVES PRESENT**

City Representatives present or on the call were Administrator Johnson, Public Works Director Schluenz, Planning and Community Development Director Noerenberg, City Clerk Brenny, Finance Director Virnig, Police Chief Reznicek, Chief Aleshire, and City Engineer Blommel.

OTHERS PRESENT

Ellen Hiniker – MGT Representative
 Brad Mockros – 37 Waterford Lane, Waite Park, MN
 Mike Pond – 129 6th Ave N, Waite Park, MN
 Tom Johnstone – 437 Wellington Circle, Waite Park, MN

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**3. PUBLIC INPUT**

Jamie Opper (228 5th Ave N, Waite Park, MN) expressed deep concern regarding the ICE activity in Waite Park and St. Cloud. Opper asked to know the views of the City and the public safety impact. Opper stated she believed there was a risk of people panicking and expressed concern for people getting hurt. Opper stated she understood that Waite Park is small municipality that probably couldn't do much, but stated we had to do something to keep all the residents safe. Opper stated there was a massive ICE raid at Star City Mall where individuals were detained. Opper asked for some assurance that the City of Waite Park is taking the situation seriously.

Christina Ringsmuth-Mohs (809 Popplewood Court, Waite Park, MN) stated she shared the same feelings as Jamie Opper. Ringsmuth-Mohs added that she thought the police officers do a great job and wants to see everyone be safe, not just individuals who are privileged. Ringsmuth-Mohs stated whether someone agreed with people being here illegally or not, this was not the way to get them out. Ringsmuth-Mohs stated it felt like Nazi Germany at this point.

Laura Ringsmuth (851 5th Ave S, Waite Park, MN) stated she has heard from people working in schools that they have been asked last names of students and their ethnicity and stated there is fear of the unknown. Ringsmuth expressed concern for the kids in schools whose parents might be taken away or putting kids in facilities.

Mike Pond (129 6th Ave N, Waite Park, MN) asked for a tabling on items H. and I. on the consent agenda regarding the proposed roundabout. Pond requested that each councilmember vote "no" on the items. Pond did not believe the City needs another roundabout. Pond thinks there should be more studies on 10th Ave and making it a 1-way heading east until 6th Ave N. Pond said that since the reason behind this is a carbon reduction project, he doesn't believe this will take care of it.

4. COUNCIL AGENDA

Member Theisen moved to approve the agenda with the addition of item H. Fire Captains on the Regular Agenda, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

5. CONSENT AGENDA

- 5.A. Approve Temp Gambling Application for INDY Foundation – February 12, 2026
- 5.B. Approve Temp Gambling Application for INDY Foundation – March 28, 2026
- 5.C. Approve Temp Gambling Application for St. John's Prep School – April 25, 2026
- 5.D. Approve Lower Potency Hemp Registration for A4 LLC
- 5.E. Approve Massage Enterprise License for Purely Radiant Aesthetics LLC
- 5.F. Approve MN Paid Leave Policy
- 5.G. Approve Resolution Accepting Donations to the City
- 5.H. Approve Resolution Supporting Grant Application for Carbon Reduction Program
- 5.I. Approve Resolution Supporting Grant Application for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program
- 5.J. Authorize Sale of 1996 SnoGo
- 5.K. Approve Purchase of (4) Public Works Trucks & Sale of (3) Public Works Trucks
- 5.L. Approve the Purchase of Sports Utility Vehicle & 4-Wheeler for Public Works
- 5.M. Approve Warming House Attendant
- 5.N. Approve 2026 Property-Casualty Insurance Renewal and Liability Coverage Waiver Form
- 5.O. Approve Flaherty & Hood Lobbying Proposal for The Ledge Amphitheater
- 5.P. Approve Partial Release of Lots of Loan Oak Townhouses

Member Theisen asked to pull items H. Approve Resolution Supporting Grant Application for Carbon Reduction Program, I. Approve Resolution Supporting Grant Application for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, J. Authorize Sale of 1996 SnoGo, K. Approve Purchase of (4) Public Works Trucks & Sale of (3) Public Works Trucks, N. Approve 2026 Property-Casualty Insurance Renewal and Liability Coverage Waiver Form, O. Approve Flaherty & Hood Lobbying Proposal for The Ledge Amphitheater and P. Approve Partial Release of Lots of Loan Oak Townhouses.

Member Theisen moved to approve all other items as presented, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

Member Theisen said regarding items H. Approve Resolution Supporting Grant Application for Carbon Reduction Program, and I. Approve Resolution Supporting Grant Application for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program that this is just for a grant application to pay for that project which goes along with the Hwy 23 project.

Member Theisen moved to approve items H. Approve Resolution Supporting Grant Application for Carbon Reduction Program, I. Approve Resolution Supporting Grant Application for Surface Transportation Block Grant Program, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

Member Theisen asked regarding J. Authorize Sale of 1996 SnoGo, K. Approve Purchase of (4) Public Works Trucks & Sale of (3) Public Works Trucks, that when the City sells something, if the Council could be made aware of what the items are sold for. Staff agreed that they would provide that information.

Member Theisen moved to approve items J. Authorize Sale of 1996 SnoGo, K. Approve Purchase of (4) Public Works Trucks & Sale of (3) Public Works Trucks, seconded by Member Schulz. Motion carried unanimously.

Member Theisen asked regarding N. Approve 2026 Property-Casualty Insurance Renewal and Liability Coverage Waiver Form asked for that to be on the regular agenda item in the future.

Member Theisen moved to approve item N. Approve 2026 Property-Casualty Insurance Renewal and Liability Coverage Waiver Form, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

Member Theisen thought, regarding item O. Approve Flaherty & Hood Lobbying Proposal for The Ledge Amphitheater, that the City wasn't going to hire them again for lobbying services. Administrator Johnson said that she believed if the City was going to have any success in moving The Ledge project forward in the bonding bill, that Flaherty and Hood are helpful with that. Administrator Johnson said there is a lot of work on the backside of the bonding bill that would have to be done if Flaherty and Hood don't lobby on behalf of the City.

Member Theisen moved to approve item O. Approve Flaherty & Hood Lobbying Proposal for The Ledge Amphitheater, seconded by Member Blackburn. Motion carried unanimously.

5. CONSENT AGENDA (cont.)

Member Theisen asked regarding item P. Approve Partial Release of Lots of Loan Oak Townhouses, what that was about. Administrator Johnson said the City purchased that lot when they were going to put in a roundabout and the City has retained those lots in the event that idea comes back around. The homeowner's association reached out and asked to remove those lots from the association, but if the lots were ever to be sold and go back that they would fall back into the association.

Member Theisen moved to approve item P. Approve Partial Release of Lots of Loan Oak Townhouses, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

6. REGULAR AGENDA

6.A. CONSIDER AMENDED JOB DESCRIPTION FOR PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR AND HIRING AUTHORIZATION

With the upcoming retirement of the current Public Works Director, the city is preparing to initiate the recruitment process for this position. As part of this effort, staff have reviewed and updated the job description and are presenting the proposed revisions for Council consideration. The Public Works Director position is not part of the civil service system; therefore, the recruitment and hiring process is not subject to civil service requirements. Administrator Johnson said that the oversight of The Ledge would be removed from the Public Works Directors position and moved to the City Administrator job description. Also, they are adding that certain licenses can be obtained after hire. Public Works Director Schluenz explained that water and wastewater licenses can only be obtained after some experience working in the plant so someone might not be able to get it or have it immediately upon hire.

Member Schulz asked who performs the performance reviews. Administrator Johnson said that supervisors perform the reviews.

Member Blackburn moved to approve authorizing the hiring process for the Public Works Director and approve the amended job description for the Public Works Director to be effective at the time the new appointment is selected. Motion seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

6.B. CONSIDER FIRE CHIEF JOB DESCRIPTION AND HIRING AUTHORIZATION

The city council has approved in the 2026 budget adding a full-time Fire Chief. City council has reviewed the job description with city staff, and the job description is included for review and consideration. This position would be a civil service position, and the civil service board would be involved in the hiring process for this position.

Member Schulz said that he felt it was important that the job description list a bachelor's degree instead of an associates degree. Administrator Johnson said that they went with the associates degree based off other job descriptions she reviewed of other fire chiefs. Administrator Johnson said that the proposed job description says an associates degree is required, but a bachelor's degree is preferred and then also takes into account years of experience. Member Schulz did not feel an associates degree would be enough based on all the new rules and regulations from the State that this person will have to navigate.

Member Schulz moved to approve the job description with the change from an associates degree to a bachelor's degree, seconded by Member Theisen. Member Starling did not believe that a bachelor's degree would be necessary with the position and was concerned it would eliminate good candidates with more experience.

Ayes: Mayor Schmitt, Members, Blackburn, Schulz, and Theisen

Nays: Member Starling

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Motion carried 4-1.

6.C. CONSIDERATION OF RECRUITMENT SERVICES FOR PUBLIC WORKS DIRECTOR AND FIRE CHIEF POSITIONS

The city has two department level positions that will be open in 2026. The Public Works Director position opening will be the result of a retirement, and the Fire Chief position is a new full-time position that has been authorized by the city council as part of the 2026 budget. In consideration of these two positions as it relates to the hiring process, the city has used an outside search firm to assist the city with department level recruitment.

Staff sent out five requests for proposals to search firms and received three proposals for firms interested in assisting with both the public works director and fire chief positions. Each of these firms will be presenting their proposal to the city council at the work session ahead of the city council meeting. The city council will have the option to consider appointing one of these firms at the city council portion of the meeting. Council can also choose not to move forward as well. Presentations by three firms conducted during the work session prior to the meeting.

Member Schulz moved to approve MGT as the search firm to assist with the Public Works Director and the Fire Chief, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

7. COUNCIL/MAYOR

7.A. APPROVE BILLS; OTHER BUSINESS

Member Theisen moved to approve the bills as presented, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

8. ADMINISTRATOR UPDATE

Administrator Johnson said that the new I.T. Specialist was starting on January 20th.

February Council meetings are scheduled for February 2nd and 17th.

Steel Topping ceremony at City Hall is taking place on January 13th at 10am.

February 2nd Engineer Blommel said he would be presenting the feasibility studies for the street projects at the Council meeting.

February 5th is an open house at The Ledge from 4:30-7pm to talk about the proposed street projects and assessments.

February 17th would be the public hearings on the proposed street assessments.

Adjournment

Member Schulz moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously. Mayor Schmitt adjourned the meeting at 7:06pm.

Kenneth Schmitt
Mayor

Adrianna Brenny
City Clerk