

**1. CALL TO ORDER**

A meeting of the Waite Park City Council was held on Monday, February 17, 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 Norenberg, City Clerk Brenny, Finance Director Virnig, Police Chief Reznicek, Chief Aleshire, and City Engineer Blommel.

**OTHERS PRESENT**

Mike Linquist – 508 Kirkwall Drive, Waite Park, MN  
 Kurt Olson – 520 Sundial Drive, Waite Park, MN  
 Randy Volkmuth – 520 Sundial Drive, Waite Park, MN  
 Virginia Schreifels – 510 43<sup>rd</sup> Ave S, Waite Park, MN  
 Bob Zabinski – 2705 Co Rd 6, Waite Park, MN  
 Tim Jansky – 230 9<sup>th</sup> St S, Waite Park, MN  
 Kelly O'Hara – 2311 12<sup>th</sup> St S, Waite Park, MN  
 Sharon Schuldt – 2320 Co Rd 137, Waite Park, MN  
 Bernie Schuldt - 2320 Co Rd 137, Waite Park, MN  
 Matt Schuldt - 2320 Co Rd 137, Waite Park, MN  
 Colleen Orne – 1210 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave S, Waite Park, MN  
 Lori Hawkins – 1210 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave S, Waite Park, MN  
 Carl Berg (Trisko Representative) – 208 12<sup>th</sup> Ave S, St. Joseph MN  
 Jayme Thielen – 1180 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave S, Waite Park, MN

**2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE****3. PUBLIC INPUT****4. COUNCIL AGENDA**

Member Schulz moved to approve the agenda as presented, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

**5. CONSENT AGENDA**

- 5.A. Approve Minimum Fund Balance for Parkland Fund
- 5.B. Approve Street Painting Quote
- 5.C. Approve Temporary Lawful Gambling Application for Pius X St. Cloud
- 5.D. Approve 10<sup>th</sup> Ave Traffic Modeling and Reporting Study Agreement
- 5.E. 2026 Comprehensive Water Master Plan Update

Member Theisen asked to pull item A. Approve Minimum Fund Balance for Parkland Fund.

Member Starling moved to approve all other items, seconded by Member Blackburn. Motion carried unanimously.

Member Theisen said he did not like the idea of making a savings account out of the parkland fund. Member Theisen argued that council should raise taxes for a project, and then when the project is over or thought there should be more criteria in a policy that explained when the money could be spent.

## **5. CONSENT AGENDA (cont.)**

Public Works Director Schluenz advised that council should never take that fund down to \$0 in the event of an emergency. Schluenz said that the Park Board just wanted some direction with the parkland fund and this was discussed with the Finance Director.

Schluenz explained that if Council wanted to spend the whole fund balance, they still could. Member Theisen thought those cases for when to spend the money should be in a policy. Administrator Johnson clarified that any of those cases would come to Council for consideration and approval as the Park Board is an advisory board.

Administrator Johnson explained it similarly to the fund balance the City keeps overall to cover any expenses if something were to happen.

Finance Director Virnig said that she saw it as the Park Board wanting some more direction and guidelines to try to follow when looking at projects.

Member Schulz said that he didn't think that \$100,000 was a lot of money considering all the parks in the City and maintenance required of them.

Member Schulz moved to approve item A. Approve Minimum Fund Balance for Parkland Fund, seconded by Member Starling. Motion failed unanimously.

Member Schulz moved to change the recommended Parkland Fund balance minimum from \$100,000 to \$50,000, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

## **6. REGULAR AGENDA**

### **6.A. SUNDIAL DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS**

Mayor Schmitt read aloud the public hearing notice and opened the public hearing at 6:41pm.

City Engineer Blommel explained as part of the Statute 429 assessment process the City holds a public hearing on the proposed improvements. City Engineer Blommel gave a brief presentation and answered technical questions from those in attendance at the meeting. Property owners can provide input to the council regarding the need for the improvements. It was explained that the proposed improvements on Sundial include improving the road and storm sewer and adding sidewalks on both sides. Blommel explained that the new improvements (sidewalk, curb and gutter, and new storm sewer) are the amounts that would be assessed to property owners and the City would pay for the road improvements.

An open house was held on Thursday, February 5th to offer an opportunity to ask questions and see the assessments. We heard from 4 property owners in person.

- WACOSA welcomed the improvement citing the need for pedestrian facilities for the safety of their staff.
- Representatives from 520 Sundial Drive noted they did not believe that their business would receive any benefit from the improvements.
- Bernick's representative was present and discussed the opportunity to work with the City on some private improvements being considered on their site. Significant communication will be required to keep Bernick's operational during construction.
- Store House representative attended and was supportive of the project.

Following the public hearing the city council will have an opportunity to either approve the resolution to move the project forward or to provide other direction to staff. Council has 6 months from the date of the hearing to move the project forward or the hearing will need to be held again.

The preliminary assessment worksheet does not reflect any input from an appraiser. If the council elects to move the project forward, an appraisal report for the project area will be secured to evaluate the benefit received by the properties relative to the cost of the improvements. Any recommendations contained in the report will be reflected in the final assessments that will be presented at a hearing following the project's completion. That hearing will likely be in the fall of 2026 or early in 2027.

Randy Volkmuth, President of DJV Label (520 Sundial Drive, Waite Park, MN). Volkmuth explained what the business is – processing pressure sensitive labels primarily for the food industry all over the nation. They have a building of about 27,000 square feet. The company was started in 1976 and now has about 20 employees. It was explained that many trucks go to and from the facility to drop off materials and pick up product. There is a hope that the business would be considering an expansion in the coming years, but with the proposed assessments, they may not be able to expand. The business would see no material benefit from the improvements. They see the addition of sidewalks as an impediment and safety

## **6.A. SUNDIAL DRIVE IMPROVEMENTS (Cont.)**

hazard as it would be another thing the drivers would have to be cautious of pedestrians as they come and go from the facility. Randy is requesting that the Council reconsider the proposed sidewalk improvements.

Mike Linqvist (508 Kirkwall Drive, Waite Park, MN ) stated that previous Councils did not want to see sidewalks adjacent to the curb as it was more for the City to maintain. Linqvist didn't believe that road received much pedestrian traffic. It was believed that the drainage system currently along the road was adequate. Linqvist thought making the road wider could be a benefit. Linqvist said that the City put 3 businesses on that area that will not pay taxes and that was meant to be an industrial, commercial area. Linqvist asked if the City was going to bond for the project or if money would come directly from the taxpayers and asked if the City can afford these improvements. Linqvist said WACOSA is maybe the one calling for the sidewalks but does not see those individuals walking but instead needing a good crosswalk. Linqvist thought there should be a third lane, built for the new school going in and for the additional traffic of busing.

Member Schulz moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Member Theisen. Motion carried unanimously. Public hearing closed at 6:56pm.

City Engineer Blommel did add that no appraisals have been done on the properties, so the numbers that are being shown as proposed assessments are worst case scenarios. Blommel said the City was going to do appraisals on the properties which could reduce the assessment amounts.

City Engineer Blommel also explained that this project lined up well with the annual road improvement budget. Blommel said Sundial is not a State Aid roadway so those funds cannot be utilized. Blommel said that assessments would help the City stretch the dollars. Blommel did not want to speak on bonding, but this project was within the scope of the City road improvement budget. Finance Director Virnig said that, depending on the other proposed project, that bonding could be a possibility.

Member Schulz asked if it was necessary to have sidewalks on both sides of the road. It was thought that there was more pedestrian traffic on the south side of the road versus the north side. City Engineer Blommel said that was looked at and he studied the area first hand and viewed a lot more pedestrian traffic than he expected and everyone was walking on the north side of the road. Blommel said that with how the road and ditches are now, that would be more expensive to put in a sidewalk separated by a boulevard and Blommel said that the cost was not much different to add a sidewalk on both sides of the road.

Member Starling moved to approve moving forward with the project by approving the resolution for Sundial Drive, seconded by Member Blackburn. Motion carried unanimously.

## **6.B. 23<sup>RD</sup> AVE IMPROVEMENTS**

City Engineer Blommel explained as part of the Statute 429 assessment process the City holds a public hearing on the proposed improvements. City Engineer Blommel gave a brief presentation and answered technical questions from those in attendance at the meeting. Property owners can provide input to the council regarding the need for the improvements. It was explained that the desire for this road was to extend utility services and improve the road.

An open house was held on Thursday, February 5th to offer an opportunity to ask questions and see the assessments. We heard from 4 property owners in person. There was consensus that the street work is very much needed, but there was not an agreement on the need for utilities. Blommel explained that the cost of the road improvements would be paid by the City and the addition of utilities is what would be assessed to property owners.

At the open house and a subsequent follow-up meeting, the developer of a large vacant parcel within the project area provided staff with additional information related to the 23rd Avenue utilities. The developer is exploring an alternative utility alignment that could serve both existing parcels and future development. Staff reviewed the concept and determined that additional analysis and concept development are needed. If the alternative is found to be feasible, it will be brought forward to the City Council for consideration.

Other Comments Noted:

## **6.B. 23<sup>RD</sup> AVE IMPROVEMENTS (Cont.)**

- Two businesses provided comments noting that their sewer and water are very minimal and they didn't believe there would be a significant benefit to installation given that low use.
- There is a benefit to getting rid of well and septic, but the benefit doesn't outweigh the cost.
- There is a significant opportunity for development following the installation of sewer and water.

City Engineer Blommel read aloud a letter received from Helen Trisko. In summary, Trisko expressed concern regarding the utility improvements and how it could negatively impact the housing development she is working on, on her adjacent properties to 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave. Trisko is requesting that the City pause approvals of construction activity until concerns can be discussed and resolved.

Blommel explained that he and Public Works Director Schluenz met with a representative of Helen Trisko regarding some things they are considering on their property that would potentially make the improvements on 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave premature. Following that meeting, staff's recommendation is to hold off on moving forward with improvements this evening until everyone can further explore the other developments. Schluenz reminded Council that they had 6 months after the public hearing to make any decisions regarding the improvements before they would have to start over with the process.

Following the public hearing, the city council will have an opportunity to either approve the resolution to move the project forward, provide other direction to staff, or allow more time for review. The City Council has 6 months from the date of the hearing to move the project forward or the hearing will need to be held again.

Mayor Schmitt read aloud the public hearing notice and opened the public hearing at 7:01pm.

Kelly O'Hara (2311 12<sup>th</sup> Street South, Waite Park, MN). O'Hara said that new roads are expected to last 15-20 years. The current road was put in 28 years ago by Dan Molitor. O'Hara thought the road was put in cheaply at that time. O'Hara agreed the road is very rough. It was stated that the road is narrow and the metro bus' are driving on the side of the road and busting up the sides. O'Hara said he does not see a need for water and sewer services. His business does not require a lot of water usage. He believed most properties had enough room to put in a secondary septic system if theirs failed. He does believe that the road should be made wider or at least considered.

Jamie Thelen (1180 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave S, Waite Park, MN) explained that his business is only a small shop that is not occupied very much. Thelen said he's been there 9 years and they've never had to pump the septic. They don't use a lot of water and do not have a lot of traffic. Thelen believes it's foolish to put that expense on the companies out there as most of them are very small.

Bernie Schuldt (2320 Co Rd 137, Waite Park, MN) is opposed to the road improvement as that would not benefit his building. He explained they are a small cabinet shop that employs 15 people. The business was started in 1959 and moved the business to its current location in 1971. He stated they do not have any issues with the water or septic. Schuldt said that per the information he received, they could receive an assessment of around \$90,000. He said that he wouldn't benefit from the road either as his driveway runs parallel to it.

Member Schulz asked if he was opposed to the utilities or the road. Schuldt clarified that he was opposed to the whole project.

Member Schulz asked the previous individuals if they were opposed to the utilities or the road, both agreed the road needed to be redone, but opposed the utilities. Public Works Director Schluenz clarified that the road improvement would be paid for by the City, the only item that is proposed to be assessed are the utility improvements.

Colleen Orne Executive Director of Tri-Cap (1200 & 1220 23<sup>rd</sup> Ave S, Waite Park, MN). Orne stated that they do not need City utility services and they are likely the largest employer in the area. She stated the assessment would cause financial harm to the organization as they are a non-profit and they can't use certain funds for those types of needs; they are allowed a percentage for overhead costs, but if this is assessed, something else will have to give. They also recently built an 8-stall garage and planned extensively for that improvement with funding for the next 5 plus years. Part of that project was to move their well. Orne agreed that the road needs improvement. She agrees with the Metro Bus comment, and she said their buses transfer people as well. She's afraid this project could drain their reserves.

### **6.B. 23<sup>RD</sup> AVE IMPROVEMENTS (Cont.)**

Member Blackburn moved to close the public hearing, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously. Public hearing closed at 7:18pm.

Council chose not to take any action on this item.

### **6.D. PRELIMINARY AND FINAL PLAT – ZABINSKI ACRES PLAT 3**

This request has been submitted by Bob Zabinski to allow for review of preliminary and final plat of proposed Zabinski Acres Plat 3, a proposed new parcel in the A-1, Agricultural/Rural Residential District, to be located on the northern portion of what is currently the Zabinski property at 2705 County Road 6 and adjacent to the previously-approved Zabinski Acres Plat 2.

The applicant is pursuing potential sale of the property for eventual development for single-family home. Development of the home would not require specific approval provided it adheres to all standard applicable ordinances. No building permit could be issued for the property until the platting of the property occurs.

The preliminary and final plat of Zabinski Acres Plat 3 would separate a parcel of slightly less than 20 acres immediately to the south of the previously-approved Zabinski Acres Plat 2.

The property meets or exceeds all criteria for the Ag/Rural Residential district. A letter from Stearns County Highway Department regarding their conditions of approval due to its frontage along a County road have been received and are included as part of recommended conditions of approval.

The standard payment-in-lieu of parkland dedication for a single-family home is \$836 per parcel as established in the fee schedule.

Staff is supportive of the preliminary and final plats as-submitted.

The Planning Commission reviewed the request at their November 10th, 2025 meeting. No comments specific to the platting were received. Planning Commissioner Bob Zabinski and Planning Commissioner Tim Jansky abstained from vote and discussion due to their involvement with the request.

Staff recommends approval of the preliminary plat with the following conditions:

1. Property is subject to requirement for payment-in-lieu of Parkland Dedication, as established by adopted fee schedule, in the amount of \$836.00. Any required parkland dedication fees must be paid prior to affixing of City signatures upon the plat.
2. Property is subject to comments and requirements set forth by Stearns County Highway Department and associated certification of review as documented in their letter dated February 6, 2026.

Provided that condition of the preliminary plat is satisfied, staff recommends adoption of resolution approving the final plat.

Member Theisen moved to approve the adoption of the resolution authorizing preliminary and final plat of Zabinski Acres Plat 3 with the proposed conditions, seconded by Member Schulz. Motion carried unanimously.

### **6.E. REQUEST FOR VARIANCE – 9182 CO RD 138**

This request has been submitted by Virginia A. Schreifels Revocable Trust, for a variance from City Ordinance Section 52.11, Subd. 6 relating to minimum lot area in the A-1, Agricultural/Rural Residential District to reduce minimum lot area from 10 acres to 2 acres. The property is legally described as 56.67 acres, part of the South Half of Southeast Quarter of Section 22, Stearns County, MN. The property address is 9182 County Road 138.

The request is being made to accommodate creation of a new parcel of approximately 2 acres for purpose of splitting the existing home on the property onto its own parcel to facilitate sale/transfer to a family member of the applicant and facilitate Ms. Schreifels to move to a patio home within Waite Park, which the applicant has advised is a much preferable living arrangement for her. The proposed 2-acre parcel would be similar in nature to other preexisting parcels in the immediate vicinity, which is unlike other situations that have been previously reviewed where 5-acre parcels were considered in areas in which there were no immediately surrounding smaller parcels. Sizes of several immediately adjacent residential parcels include 0.64 acres, 0.58 acres, and 1.6 acres.

If the variance is ultimately approved by City Council, in this instance the creation of the new parcel can be executed administratively via staff in coordination with the applicant and their selected surveyor as only a single new parcel would be created and no building permit is needed due to the existing home. Future building permit requests may trigger requirement to plat at such time.

### **6.E. REQUEST FOR VARIANCE – 9182 CO RD 138 (Cont.)**

Given that the request is to grant accommodations for an immediate family member, and the hardship being imposed is beyond the scope of control of the applicant (i.e. natural aging processes), staff is supportive of the request. The 2-acre allowance instead of the 10-acre standard requirement is reasonable in staff's opinion, given the nature of surrounding properties in the vicinity along County Road 138 and is in line with previous accommodations for sub-10 acre parcel creation to accommodate family needs in other Ag/Rural Residential zoning district areas.

In staff's opinion, practical difficulties have been established and justification for the variance exists. Staff does not believe that the variance would impart special privilege to the applicant or property and does not feel that granting of the variance would be detrimental to surrounding properties or diminishes their use or value. Staff is supportive of the request and recommends approval.

The Planning Commission reviewed the request at their February 9th, 2026, meeting. No comments were received from the public except the applicant who provided a brief summary of information for the Planning Commission. The Planning Commission expressed some reservation with the potential establishment of precedent in recommending a 2-acre parcel but recommended approval of the request.

Member Theisen moved to approve the variance request as proposed and adoption of the resolution, seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

### **6.C. CONSIDER COMMUNITY PARK RENTAL FEE INCREASE**

Staff is seeking Council approval to increase the Community Park rental fees by \$10 beginning for the 2027 rental season. The proposed increase would adjust the resident rental rate from \$75 to \$85 and the non-resident rental rate from \$160 to \$170. The Park Board has reviewed the proposed adjustment and is recommending approval of this increase. This modest increase will help offset rising operational and maintenance costs associated with the facility while continuing to keep rental rates competitive and affordable.

Member Theisen stated he would rather double the fee for nonresidents and make it free for residents to use.

Member Theisen moved to deny the request. Motion died due to a lack of second.

Member Schulz moved to approve the Appendix B – Fee Schedule with the updates to the Community Park Rates as presented, seconded by Member Blackburn.

Ayes: Mayor Schmitt, Member Blackburn and Schulz

Nays: Members Starling and Theisen

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Motion carried 3-2.

### **6.F. APPROVE PURCHASE OF DELL LAPTOPS**

The Police Department has been having increasing problems with our current MDT laptops. The majority of them were purchased in 2020 and all but 4 are off warranty. We have been having various problems including the charging plates, battery life, bad USB ports, and a handful of other issues. Stearns County IT requested we look at purchasing new laptops due to the amount of issues we have had. The purchase would replace all the Officer's laptops. The remaining units (4) under warranty would be used by Records Staff. This purchase would come from the 2026 Budget Capital expenditure line item from the police department budget. This quote is noted on the MN State bid website as Dell contract list 236465. The quoted price is \$3,137.88 per unit with a total purchase price of \$69,031.60

Member Theisen moved to approve the purchase of 22 Dell Pro Rugged 14 Model RB14250 consistent with the Dell quote in the amount of \$69,031.60. Motion seconded by Member Starling. Motion carried unanimously.

## **6.G. CONSIDER AMENDMENTS TO THE FIRE CHIEF JOB DESCRIPTION**

The city council approved the job description for the Fire Chief full-time position. As part of this approval, the city council approved amending the job description by changing the education requirement from a two-year degree to a four-year degree. With this change, the job description was reviewed again by Baker Tilly and this change moved the position from 460 points to 500 points and from pay grade 10 (\$99,277.25-\$133,276.80) to a pay grade 11 (\$106,474.85-\$142,939.37). These changes were also discussed with MGT, our recently hired search firm, to determine whether they had any concerns with this change as it relates to finding qualified candidates. They support the changes and believe this will not be a factor in limiting our candidate pool.

Administrator Johnson clarified to Council that they already agreed, made a motion and approved changing the education requirements from 2 years to 4 years. What is being considered tonight is the job description with the change to the job description with the change in points. Johnson said if Council wants to go back to a 2-year degree, Council would have to rescind the motion that changed from a 2 year to a 4 year and then approve the job description as it was presented originally. If Council wants to move forward with the 4-year degree, the job description needs to be approved with the new points associated with that requirement.

Member Theisen said that when Council agreed to change the education requirements was not aware that it would change the points by 40 and change the pay grade.

Member Schulz moved to approve the proposed job description with the 4 year degree requirement and the updates to the pay grade from a 10 to an 11. Motion dies due to a lack of a second.

Member Schulz asked Council if they knew the difference in requirements and education between a 2-year degree and a 4-year degree. Schulz stated there was a lack of specificity in a 2-year degree. Member Schulz thought this was a very technical position and thought they would be watering it down with only requiring a 2-year degree.

Administrator Johnson said, generally the more money you pay the better market you get. You would also like to believe you will get a higher caliber candidate.

Member Theisen said you could argue that if you go back to a 2-year degree requirement you could be opening the pool of candidates. Administrator Johnson said you could get candidates that have a 2-year degree and more experience and you might get more undesirable candidates that they will have to weed through.

Member Schulz argued that a 2-year degree lacked specificity and was generalized knowledge, versus a bachelor's degree has more specialized information where you go deeper into the subject. Member Schulz said that during the original conversation, Chief Aleshire also agreed that a bachelor's degree would be more beneficial.

Member Blackburn clarified that bachelor's degree is a 4-year degree that includes 2 years of general education and then 2 years of specialized classes, the same 2 years you would get with an associates degree. Member Schulz did not agree with that.

Administrator Johnson clarified that the job description stated education in related fields were preferred, which could include fire science or a managerial type of education. Johnson said that the job description did ask for 5 years of related job experience.

Member Blackburn said he is also fine with requiring a 4-year degree but wanted to have the conversation because he didn't want to cut the City short on potential applicants.

Administrator Johnson said that Council should not be looking at the cost from grade 10 to 11, which is about a \$7,000 difference. She urged Council to not decide based on that. The goal is to get the best candidate here to deal with a tough situation and make tough decisions.

Member Schulz said this is going to be a very technical position and this person has a lot of work to do to build this department up so we can try to break away from needing St. Cloud's help with assisting.

**6.G. CONSIDER AMENDMENTS TO THE FIRE CHIEF JOB DESCRIPTION (Cont.)**

Schulz thinks someone with a 4-year degree will be better suited to speak about the issues, connect with the community and plan.

Member Starling believes the vast knowledge needed for the position will be learned on the job and not in school.

Member Schulz moved to approve the Fire Chief job description with the proposed amendments, seconded by Member Blackburn.

Ayes: Mayor Schmitt, Members Blackburn and Schulz

Nays: Members Starling and Theisen

Abstain: None

Absent: None

Motion carried 3-2.

**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****Adjournment**

Member Starling moved to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Member Schulz. Motion carried unanimously. Mayor Schmitt adjourned the meeting at 7:52pm.

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Kenneth Schmitt  
Mayor

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Adrianna Brenny  
City Clerk