

**City of Ottertail
Regular Meeting
City Hall Thursday, November 20, 2025 – 5:30 PM**

Council Members Present: Mayor Ron Grobeck, Michael Windey, Elizabeth Augustus, and Jerry Martin
Council Member Absent: Jill Carlson
Staff Present: Amanda Thorson, Clerk-Treasurer; Patty Hensel, Deputy Clerk; Justin Lohse, Maintenance Coordinator, Bob Schleman, City Engineer, and Joe Ahlfs, Fire Chief.
Others Present: Whitey Schuett; Chad Koenen-Henning Advocate; Sam Ruppert, Apex Engineering,

PUBLIC HEARING

Mayor Grobeck opened the public hearing at 5:30 pm and all recited the pledge of allegiance.

Tax Abatement for Habitat for Humanity – Clerk Thorson presented a Housing Tax Rebate application submitted by Fergus Falls Area Habitat for Humanity for the property located at 439 E 2nd Street, Parcel ID 74-000-990-792-000. After Council review of the application, questions were discussed.

Variance Request – Whitey Schuett – A variance request was received from Whitey Schuett, 337 Three Cross Rd (Parcel 74-000-10-3335-036), seeking approval to allow a water connection on a substandard lot created by variance in January 2021. The Council discussed whether the recorded restrictions placed on the parcel at the time of its creation should be amended to permit water service. Council members had several questions and concerns regarding the basis for the request, the identified need for water on the property, and whether Mr. Schuett was aware of the recorded restrictions when he purchased the parcel in the summer of 2021. Lengthy discussion was held between the Council and Mr. Schuett.

Council Member Martin made a motion to close the public meeting. Council Member Windey seconded the motion. Motion carried. The public hearing was closed at 5:57 pm.

REGULAR MEETING

Mayor Grobeck opened the regular meeting at 5:57 pm.

Resolution 2025-35 - The council had no further discussion regarding the Tax abatement for Fergus Falls Habitat for Humanity @ 439 2nd St E. Motion by Council Member Augustus, seconded by Council Member Martin, to approve Resolution 2025-35 authorizing a property tax abatement for Habitat for Humanity. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

Resolution 2025-36 - Motion by Mayor Grobeck to approve Resolution 2025-36, modifying the 2021 recorded variance restrictions to allow a water connection on the substandard parcel. The new variance permits water service to an *outside hydrant only*, to be used for fire protection and irrigation purposes. Council outlined the following conditions for allowing water service on the parcel:

1. The building is limited to a storage structure only; no dwelling, habitable space, or commercial use is permitted.
2. No interior plumbing fixtures, restroom facilities, private wells, or subsurface sewage treatment systems are allowed; water service is limited to an outside hydrant only.
3. All previously recorded 2021 restrictions remain in effect except as modified by Resolution 2025-36.

4. The City will require a shut-off valve or access point at the property line and the installation of a City-owned water meter.
5. All approved conditions must be disclosed by the seller to any prospective buyer prior to transfer of ownership.

Council Member Augustus seconded the motion. Voting yea: Council Members Augustus and Windey, and Mayor Grobeck. Voting nay: Council Member Martin. Motion carried.

Council Member Augustus made a motion to approve the consent agenda with additions; Council Member Windey seconded the motion. All voted in favor, motion carried.

- a. Approve Minutes 10-16-2025 Regular Public Hearing
- b. Approve Minutes 10-16-2025 Budget Planning
- c. Approve Minutes 11-6-2025 Work Session State & Federal Funding
- d. Annual Winter Contract Agreement & Annual Mowing Agreement- Ottetail Aggregate
- e. Approve Renewal 2026 Liquor Licenses: The Williams Company & Margie’s Diner (On-Sale & Sunday Sale Liquor), The Otter Supper Club, Thumper Pond LLC & The Woodshed Bar & Grill (Combination Sunday, Off-Sale/On-Sale), Ottetail Liquors (off-Sale) contingent on all forms and fees filed and paid
- f. Health Insurance renewal increases BCBS 2026
- g. Approve Internal Transfer Ottetail Community Development Fund for 2025
- h. Approve Resolution 2025-37 2026 Water Rate Increase
- i. Approve Resolution 2025-38 Accepting Donations to the City
- j. Approve Resolution 2025-39 2026 Fee Schedule
- k. Approve Resolution 2025-40 Writing off Delinquent Accounts
- l. Approve Resolution 2025-41 Decertifying Certain TIF parcels in No. 1-3
- m. Monthly Financial Reports
- n. Monthly Schedule 1
- o. Monthly Permit Report
- p. Monthly Services Sold Report (Water Fund)
- q. Approve claims 5284-5321 for \$112,089.95 with additions and approval to pay late coming invoices

REPORTS

Fire Department-1) Deputy Clerk Hensel reported on behalf of Fire Chief Ahlfs there were 8 medical calls and 1 fire call. **2)** Mark Stien is a week away from completing first responder training.

City Hall-1) Request for Clerk & Deputy Clerk to attend MCFOA Region Meeting in Vergas. Council agreed to allow Clerk Thorson and Deputy Clerk Hensel to attend Region Meeting December 11 in Vergas and close the office at 10:00am. **2)** Request to close December 24 @ noon and Friday December 26. A Motion by Council Member Martin and seconded by Council Member Augustus, to close City Hall at noon December 24th and December 26. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

OTCEPAC- Council Member Windey – no report.

Ottetail Tourism Board – Council Member Carlson – no report.

Public Forum and Comments – no comments.

Engineer’s Agenda

- a. **Ottetail Ave & China Street Reconstruction 2026**

A Motion by Council Member Martin and seconded by Council Member Augustus, for Mayor Grobeck and Clerk Thorson to sign the proposal for services prepared by Apex regarding Ottertail Avenue and China Street Reconstruction planned for 2026. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

A Motion by Council Member Martin and seconded by Council Member Windey, for approval of Resolution 2025-42, for preparation report on improvement to China Street and Ottertail Ave. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

- b. **Water Tower Warranty Work – Update:** Engineer Schleman reported Osseo has been in email contact with Clerk Thorson and indicated they will be coming the spring of 2026 to complete the water tower work.
- c. **Lead Service Line Inventory and Replacement –** Engineer Schleman reported there has been recent revisions to the EPA’s lead and copper requirements. An inventory must now be completed for both the public and the private portions of the service laterals. To date, 11 lines in Ottertail have been identified as having lead or galvanized materials. It is anticipated that 100% of the costs associated with replacing these lines, both public and private, will be covered by the PFA through a grant.

Old Business

- a. **Fire Hall Expansion Meeting Review –** Clerk Thorson reported that a proposed blueprint for the fire hall expansion was reviewed at the Fire Hall Expansion workshop. Some minor changes will be made to the plans before final approval. The next step will be to discuss funding options for the project. Several suggestions were presented, including fundraising, a local sales tax, or issuing a bond. Clerk Thorson will contact Todd Hagen for possible assistance with the financial aspect of the project. Clerk Thorson will look at the steps involved with ½ sales tax.
- b. **Approve Staff Salaries & Compensation for 2026 -** Motion by Council Member Martin, seconded by Council Member Augustus, to approve the 2026 staff paygrade increase with 5% COLA. All voted in favor. Motion carried. Motion by Council Member Windey, seconded by Council Member Martin, to approve the 2026 medical benefit package, including an additional \$100 per month for staff enrolled in a family medical plan, and full coverage for Clerk Thorson under the \$2,700 high-deductible plan effective December 2025 upon plan renewal. All voted in favor. Motion carried.
- c. **Chicken Ordinance –** Council reviewed and discussed proposed Ordinance 2025-03, an amendment to the animal ordinance to include regulations for keeping chickens. Clerk Thorson will make the recommended changes for Council review at the December Public Hearing.

NEW BUSINESS

- a. **Perham Area EMS Donation Request –** tabled as there are too many unanswered questions.
- b. **Otter Tail County Traffic Marking 2026 –** Motion by Council Member Augustus; seconded by Council Member Windey to approve Resolution 2025-43 for OTC to bid out traffic marking at TH 108 and Maple Ave to Lake Ave, including 2 crosswalks, parking, and curbs. All voted in favor, motion carried. Clerk Thorson will investigate markings on Bay View to be done by the City.
- c. **Otter Tail County Seal Coat 2026 –** At this time it appears no seal coat is needed for 2026.
- d. **ARCH Insurance Proposal for MN Paid Leave Coverage** Motion by Council Member Augustus, seconded by Council Member Windey, to approve the agreement from Arch Insurance for the City to provide Minnesota Paid Leave coverage through a private carrier. The motion includes City payment of the premium for staff, council, firefighters, and election judges, and authorizes Clerk Thorson to sign the Arch Insurance agreement on behalf of the City. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

- e. **Update Personnel Policy** – Clerk Thorson provided a breakdown of the needed updates to the Personnel Policy, including added language for MN Paid Leave, revised language to Comp Time and to include paid holiday of Good Friday (4hrs) Christmas Eve (4hrs) and Columbus Day (8hrs). Motion by Council Member Martin; seconded by Council Member Augustus to approve updates to the personal policy. All voted in favor, motion carried.
- f. **Community Center Clean Out & Carpet Cleaning** – Motion by Council Member Windey, seconded by Council Member Augustus, to authorize staff to obtain a carpet cleaning service for the Community Center. All voted in favor. Motion carried.
- g. **Purchase Agreement – Habitat for Humanity** Motion by Council Member Martin, seconded by Council Member Windey to approve the Habitat for Humanity Big Build Application for lot 439 2nd St E PID# 74-000-99-0742-000. All voted in favor. Motion carried.
Motion by Council Member Windey, Seconded by Council Member Augustus to allow Mayor Grobeck and Clerk Thorson to sign the builder’s agreement and for the Habitat for Humanity lot 439 2nd St E PID #74-000-99-0742-000 and for the attorney to move forward with the purchase agreement. All voted in favor. Motion carried.

Correspondence/Meetings/Training/FYI-reminders/Local Events

- a. City Hall Closed November 27th & 28th - Thanksgiving
- b. TNT Hearing 6:00 pm on December 18, 2025
- c. Tri-City follow-up meeting December 8 in Henning

Council Member Augustus made a motion to close the meeting. Council Member Martin seconded the motion. Motion carried. The meeting was adjourned at 7:22 PM.

Respectfully,

____s/s_____
Amanda Thorson
Clerk-Treasurer
Prepared by D. Clerk Patty Hensel

____s/s_____
Ron Grobeck
Mayor