

Harris City Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, August 11, 2025

- I. **Call to Order:** Mayor Carlson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance:** Everyone joined in the Pledge of Allegiance.
- III. **Roll Call:** City Clerk Shannon Geier conducted roll call. Present were Mayor Randy Carlson, Councilmember Craig Moline, Councilmember Chell Borash, Councilmember Al Siedow, and Councilmember Garret Pearson. Geier announced that a quorum was present.
- IV. **Consent Agenda:** Siedow made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of July 14, 2025, the Emergency Email Meeting Minutes of July 16, 2025, and Accounts Payable. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- V. **Public Comment:** Craig and Vicki Trytten, residing at 5052 440th St., along with Hannah Smith and Marvin of 5057 440th St., attended the meeting to voice their concerns regarding the current lack of maintenance on their road. Specifically, they noted that the stretch of 440th Street from its intersection with Fairview to its western end has not received any grading, weed cutting, or new gravel since the retirement of former public works employee Alan Teich. Upon investigation, it was found that this portion of the road had not been included on the Harris GIS as a city road. This oversight resulted in it being excluded from regular maintenance schedules. The city has agreed to correct the error in the GIS records and public works staff notified so that appropriate maintenance can resume.
- VI. **Regular Agenda:**
 - A. **Sheriff Thyen** – Chisago County Sheriff Brandon Thyen was present to review the city law enforcement contract with Chisago County and confirmed receipt of the approved agreement. Comparative statistics for all contract cities were presented, including 2024/2025 graphs detailing calls for service (CFS) by month, categories such as thefts, fires, burglaries, assaults, and suspicious vehicle/person activities reports. The report differentiated between CFS initiated by community calls and self-initiated field activity (SIFA), such as traffic stops, area checks, radar operation, business checks, and extra patrols. Analysis showed that CFS in Harris occurred at various times throughout the day, with no discernible pattern. For the first six months of 2025, over 500 CFS had already been recorded, indicating consistent activity every day and hour. Yet, the Harris contract of 48 hours per month averages only 1.6 hours of coverage daily by the Sheriff's Department. It was recommended that the city consider increasing contracted hours, as CFS are distributed across different times. By state statute, cities bear responsibility for providing law enforcement services, except under specific circumstances. If the city does not maintain a contract, the sheriff is limited to enforcing only those services mandated by law, meaning responses to incidents such as theft, shoplifting, property loss, or suspicious activity are not guaranteed. Providing more than the contracted 1.6 hours of coverage in Harris diverts resources from other townships, though Harris benefits from its central location within the northern part of the county, receiving incidental coverage as deputies travel to surrounding areas. Discussion included consideration of increasing law

enforcement hours and budgeting for future needs, with the city requesting annual provision of statistical graphs. The Sheriff suggested a gradual increase of contracted hours each year during budgeting cycles. Contracted hours vary across cities, with Shafer at 80 hours per month and Taylors Falls at 32 hours weekly; some cities adjust coverage seasonally.

Regarding license plate reader cameras, the County plans to install eight units, Rush City plans on seven units, with additional installations considered in Shafer and Stacy. These cameras, mounted on poles with solar power and equipped with motion sensors, scan plates to identify stolen vehicles or respond to amber alerts. Images are retained for 30 days and are only accessible with a case number; routine access is restricted. The system also supports traffic counts and operates on a rent-to-own basis from Flock Safety, costing \$3,000 annually plus installation. The program is expected to resolve approximately 10% of crimes and undergoes biennial audits for data practices. The city pays for rent and installation, and if a camera is damaged or stolen, the city is responsible, while the county manages audits. A trial period is underway with in-car cameras capable of reading license plates.

- B. **Fire Department** - Fire Chief Drew Chapeau attended the meeting to present the written report. Hose testing was completed; one 50-foot section failed and will be discarded. Additional donations were received for the Polaris Ranger, though there remains a \$5,000 shortfall. Chief Chapeau requested that the remaining \$5,000 be allocated from Fire Department budget line 45 (heavy machinery) toward the purchase. Borash made a motion to approve the request. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. Upon receipt of all donations, the Relief Association will issue a check to the City, enabling the City to complete the purchase of the Polaris Ranger. Polaris will contribute \$5,000 and subsequently invoice the City for \$25,000 for the vehicle. Siedow made a motion to approve the purchase of the Polaris Ranger. Borash seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- C. **Water Tower Inspection** - Nathan Fiest from Bollig Engineering was present to advise the Council that the two-year coatings warranty on the water tower expires in September 2025 and would strongly recommend an inspection be done. Feist presented an estimate from KLM, a company that was part of the design and had done an inspection prior to the project. Siedow made a motion to hire KLM to perform a warranty evaluation and inspection at a cost of \$4,100. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- D. **Incentives available for developing 130-acre parcel (Shelander)** - Geier provided a written summary detailing the Shelander family's interest in developing their family-owned land situated east of Highlands of Harris. The Shelander family felt that developing the property with smaller lots could present an opportunity for the city to extend water and sewer services to the area. They also expressed interest in learning about potential incentives available from the city to support the development. The family's realtor, Ben Pigorsch of Weiss Realty, attended the meeting. Pigorsch recommended considering ten-acre lots, noting that prospective buyers in this region typically prefer larger properties. Geier advised the council that Richard Long has inquired whether his property along Holman could be subdivided into 1.5 or 2 acre lots, given its proximity to Pine Tree Estates, which

features smaller lots. The Mayor affirmed the Council's strong support for development and stated their commitment to work with property owners as much as possible.

- E. **Public Works – Written report.**
- F. **Gravel theft –** If it is determined that a resident of Harris has removed gravel from a City road for use on their driveway, the resident will receive a formal notice. Should this action be repeated, a charge of \$600 per load of gravel will be applied.
- G. **Rodent issues -** Matt Carlson, residing at 6825 Sunrise Road, attended the meeting to formally file a complaint regarding the presence of rats on his property. Although he has lived at this address for several years, this is the first instance in which his dog has killed rats in the yard. Upon removing a section of his porch, Mr. Carlson discovered a nest containing another rat and some corn, although he does not possess or use corn himself. It was noted that the neighboring property to the west houses horses and chickens and may potentially store or feed corn. The eastern adjacent house is currently vacant; it was near this side that Mr. Carlson trapped a rat. Councilmembers discussed the possibility that recent changes at the old feed mill could have displaced the local rat population. Alternatively, another resident may be feeding squirrels or birds with corn.

The City Clerk was instructed to draft a letter to the owner of the property with horses, advising them of the issue and requesting that all feed products be stored in sealed containers. Additionally, the chickens must be included in their permit. The council further addressed the topic of horses being ridden in city parks, emphasizing that any manure left behind must be properly collected and removed.

- H. **2025-04 Kennels Ordinance and Summary -** Carlson expressed several concerns regarding the proposed ordinance. He noted that it would require a license for owners of five or more dogs, but for those with over ten dogs, a state ordinance already applies; therefore, this local ordinance would affect only a limited number of individuals. He also raised questions about enforcement procedures and how these would be managed. Additionally, Carlson objected to the requirement for an annual veterinary inspection at the owner's expense. He referenced a previous dog training operation in Harris, which operated without such regulations at the time. In response, Geier emphasized the importance of having an ordinance in place to address potential complaints related to dog training or boarding facilities. Moline agreed, indicating support for adopting such measures. Siedow made a motion to table. Borash seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- I. **2025-05 Dog and other animal ordinance and Summary –** Carlson made a motion to approve Ordinance 2025-05 amending Chapter 90 entitled Dogs and Other Animals to remove Sections 90.02 - 90.07, 90.12 – 90.13, 90.15, and 90.21 – 90.22, and to amend Section 90.11; and approve summary publication of same. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- J. **AV for Council Chambers –** Forte visited the council chambers to inspect the AV system. During their visit, they successfully repaired the existing system. The company also provided a verbal estimate of \$10,000 for the purchase and installation of new microphones.

- K. **City Hall IT Infrastructure proposal 2025** - City Treasurer Sue Riesing introduced a proposal from the current service provider to purchase three upgraded city office computers equipped with Windows 11, enhanced firewall protection, server capabilities, antivirus software, remote access, and PC monitoring, at an estimated cost of \$5,000. This upgrade is necessary due to Microsoft's discontinuation of support after October 2025. Carlson raised concerns that there are additional compliance requirements not addressed by the proposal. He noted the need for a separate server and suggested that alternative vendors could offer ongoing services, introduce new software, and provide support for the existing firewall. Additional points included that the .gov domain and other security issues remain unaddressed. Other providers would deliver continuous monitoring for prompt incident response and have more personnel available for support, unlike a single-provider setup. They offer route-based scheduling for responses to service calls. Carlson thought that addressing the city's needs involves more than simply purchasing new computers. Treasurer Riesing clarified that this proposal focuses on acquiring the initial updated computers and can be expanded in the future with any provider. She stated that many of the raised concerns are considered in this plan, and there is no long-term commitment required. The system is ready for implementation and is currently affordable. Additionally, she highlighted persistent issues with program crashes and stressed the importance of updating essential systems first. Previously, Carlson had presented three options, but the project was delayed pending a state grant, which was ultimately not approved. The alternative companies serve other local governments, with phase one costs ranging from \$15,000 to \$20,000, in addition to higher ongoing monthly expenses. Siedow moved to table the proposal pending further information. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- L. **Updating cemetery records** – Siedow made a motion to approve \$3,000 for Cemetery Caretaker Jim Goranson to document the existing headstones and markers at Oak Grove Cemetery for the purpose of accurately updating cemetery records. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- M. **2025-07 Resolution for Fiscal year 2026 Budget allocation** - Carlson recommended allocating \$142,900, identified as unallocated funds in the 2024 audit, for use in the 2026 budget. He also emphasized the importance of improving the city's revenue forecasting to enable a reduction in the tax levy. Riesing advised the council to exercise caution when spending funds designated for other accounts, noting that unknown sources—such as Small Cities funds, grants, insurance proceeds, permits, interest income, bonds, and abatements—are often earmarked for specific purposes and may not have been anticipated during initial budgeting. In response, Carlson acknowledged Riesing's concerns but stated that allocation decisions ultimately rest with the council rather than the treasurer. He pointed out that unless there is a resolution specifying these funds for a particular purpose, they remain classified as unallocated. It was also noted that the projects document may have been created retrospectively. Siedow proposed postponing discussion to obtain additional information. Carlson moved to table line items M and N until after the budgeting workshop to ensure more accurate figures are available. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- N. **Resolutions for earmark monies** – Tabled.

- O. **Budget workshop** – Reminder that a budget workshop is scheduled for Wednesday, August 13 at 5:00 p.m.

VII. **Staff/Department Reports:**

- A. **PeopleService Report** – Written report.
- B. **Clerk's Report** - Written report. Also, ECE contacted the City to request one escrow payment of \$2,500 for the total number of customers rather than \$2,500 for each customer being connected to fiber. Pearson made a motion to approve charging ECE a one-time escrow of \$2,500 for the total number of customers. The motion died for lack of a second. Siedow made a motion to charge ECE a \$2,500 escrow for each customer. Moline seconded the motion. The motion passed 4-1, Pearson opposed.
- C. **Treasurer Report** – Revenue Summary Update and Cash Investments.
- D. **Mayor and Council Reports** – Moline advised council there is a credit for lime at Bjorklund's and the team will be utilizing that lime to improve Stark Field.

- VIII. **Adjourn:** Pearson made a motion to adjourn. Borash seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. There being no further business, Mayor Carlson adjourned the meeting at 9:55 p.m.

City Clerk – Shannon Geier

Randy Carlson - Mayor

Date Approved