

Harris City Council
Regular Meeting Minutes
Monday, December 8, 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 Al Siedow, and Councilmember Garret Pearson. Councilmember Chell Borash was absent. Geier announced that a quorum was present.
- IV. **Consent Agenda:** Pearson made a motion to approve the Regular Meeting Minutes of November 10, Emergency Meeting Minutes of November 24, 2025, and Accounts Payable. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- V. **Public Comment:** None.
- VI. **Truth in Taxation:** Carlson opened the Truth In Taxation meeting at 7:02 p.m.
Resident Jerry Williams stated the taxes are too high. The Council explained that the initial preliminary rate of 10% has subsequently been reduced to a proposed rate of 8.04%. Carlson stated the actual impact on individual taxpayers is expected to be lower than an 8% increase due to the anticipated expansion of the building base within the municipality, which allows the total tax levy to be spread across a wider valuation. The taxes are also segmented and distributed across different property classifications such as farming, homestead, and non-homestead.
In response to an inquiry from a resident regarding the specific areas where the budget was reduced, Carlson explained that the primary reduction was allocated to Public Works, specifically citing a decrease in the budgeted amount for gravel used for road maintenance. He concluded by outlining the limited fiscal options available to the municipality: raising taxes or reducing public services.
Carlson closed the Truth In Taxation meeting at 7:06 p.m.
- VII. **Regular Agenda:**
 - A. **Fire Department** – Fire Chief Drew Chapeau attended the meeting to present the written report. Total calls to-date are 109, of which approximately eighty-four are medical or accidents.
The Engine 1 hose bed canvas has fallen apart and will need to be replaced. Siedow made a motion to approve the purchase from Wyoming Canvas at a cost of \$560. Carlson seconded the motion. Motion carried 3 – 1, Pearson opposed.
Siedow made a motion to accept the resignations of Michael Barrera and Corbyn Werhun from the Fire Department. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
 - FD Cell phone for Chief and iPad data service plan – Tabled.
 - Additional FF training needs – Tabled.
 - FD Radios – Tabled.
 - Med Compass- Fit Testing and Bound Tree EMS quarterly supplies – Siedow made a motion to approve the Med Compass fit testing at a cost of \$3,155. Carlson seconded the

motion. All in favor, motion carried. Siedow made a motion to approve the Bound Tree EMS quarterly supply order at a cost of \$497.68. Carlson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

- FD Emergency Fire Service Fee (34.10) and False Alarm Fee – To be added to fee schedule.

B. Water and Sewer to I35 -

- Feasibility Study - 2025-17 Resolution – Siedow made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-17, a Resolution for I-35 Utility Extension Project Feasibility Report. Carlson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- Cost associated with assessment – Tabled.
- Set up Public Hearing dates – Tabled.
- Potential ordering the improvement of project – Tabled.
- A special meeting is scheduled for Monday, December 22, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. to discuss costs associated with assessments and next steps.

C. Greg Twingstrom – Water and Sewer Assessment - Key Discussion Points:

- Project Funding and Costs:
 - The Mayor confirmed the city must allocate \$1.5 million for the project.
 - Twingstrom outlined current homeowner fees: Water Access Charge (WAC) of \$2,500 and Sewer Access Charge (SAC) of \$3,500, totaling \$6,000.
 - Moline provided a detailed cost breakdown based on a 45-foot utility line installation:
 - Utility lines: \$300 per foot, totaling \$13,500.
 - Well capped cost: \$6,000.
 - Assessment: \$33,500.
 - Total Estimated Homeowner Expense (Moline's figure): WAC/SAC (\$6,000) + Utility Lines (\$13,500) + Well Cap (\$6,000) + Assessment (\$33,500) = \$59,000 (plus ongoing utility fees).
 - Twingstrom estimated the private connection cost to the city system to be around \$15,000.
- Well Abandonment and Connection Mandates:
 - Twingstrom and an unnamed Resident questioned the requirement to abandon existing wells, especially for purposes like garden irrigation, given the significant cost.
 - The Mayor confirmed that under current regulations, wells within a specified distance of the project and within the wellhead protection area must be abandoned and that there is a municipal ordinance mandating connection to the city system.
 - Moline and Twingstrom argued that connection should only be required when existing systems fail or for new developments.
- Utility Fees and Usage Rates:
 - Twingstrom cited a current utility usage fee of \$300 every two months.
 - J. Williams noted a sharp increase in utility usage fees from \$99 to \$300.

- The Mayor stated that if no action is taken on the project, usage rates will rise by 3% annually.
- Development and Economic Concerns:
 - Twingstrom and Moline expressed skepticism about future development, noting that nearby cities (Rush City, North Branch) have undeveloped land despite having infrastructure.
 - Siedow countered that without proceeding, the city risks losing economic opportunities to Rush City and North Branch and that infrastructure extension to the freeway is necessary for future growth.
 - Mayor noted that 14 existing residential and business properties are slated for hooking up, with no new business commitments yet.
- Policy and Ordinance Discussion:
 - Moline argued that forcing connections when current systems are functional is unreasonable and sets a concerning precedent, comparing it to eminent domain.
 - The Mayor stated the intention is to maintain homeowner affordability while imposing higher charges on businesses.
 - Twingstrom directly asked the Mayor if they would find these conditions acceptable if they were personally affected. The Mayor replied, "No."
 - Twingstrom and the Mayor discussed a potential alternative: amending the ordinance to require connections only upon property sale or system failure. Twingstrom indicated this would be satisfactory.
- Infrastructure and System Condition:
 - The Mayor emphasized that the water and sewer systems are aging, expenses are increasing, and without expansion, the city lacks a plan to address these challenges. Additionally, forgoing grant funding would mean homeowners bear the full cost of a new municipal well. Pearson questioned whether that was a fact because he had not heard that before. Joe Janson from Rural Water was present and confirmed that if you shut down the grant, odds are you will not receive grant funding again.
 - Twingstrom questioned the necessity of an easement through their front yard, which the Mayor attributed to the county easement being insufficient.
- Action Items/Next Steps (Implicit):
 - The Council to consider amending the municipal ordinance to require connections only upon property sale or system failure.
 - Further study/determination regarding the project scope and best course of action (as noted by the mayor).

D. Looping -

- Discussion of CDSR Funds – Tabled.
- Task Order for PER – Tabled.

E. KLM Service agreement for water tower, for 10 yr plan – Council requested two more bids.

F. **Potential Zoning maps** – Tabled.

G. **2025-16 Resolution LRIP** – Pearson made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-16, A Resolution for the 2025 Local Road Improvement Program Funding from MnDOT for Construction of City Street Improvement Project. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

- MN Department of Transportation Affirmation of Non-collusion – Council approved, Affirmation of Non-collusion.
- MN Department of Transportation Conflict of Interest – Council approved, no Conflict of Interest.

H. **Water tower valve leak repair update** – Carlson is working with Drip Drop Plumbing to get an estimate.

I. **Sale of property on 438th PID 14.00445.30** – Siedow made a motion to approve the sale of city-owned property on 438th for \$45,000. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. The closing is scheduled for 12/22/2025.

J. **Feed Mill purchase** - The mayor reported having spoken with the realtor representing the feed mill property regarding a potential sale to the City. The owners would consider a prompt sale if an offer were submitted, as they are currently evaluating demolition options and associated legal fees. Should the City acquire the property, it would become eligible for grant funding to assist with environmental remediation, which is not accessible to the current owners. The market value is estimated at \$110,000, with a potential offer in the \$45,000–\$50,000 range.

If the City does not proceed with the purchase, the owners intend to demolish several buildings on the site, excluding the pole shed, in February or March. By purchasing the property, the City would gain control of its future use, including the possibility of extending the roadway to the north and selling lots on the parcel. Charles Burdick of StreetFront Development advised moving forward with the acquisition. The property comprises approximately 4.7 acres; however, extending the road would require securing an easement through a neighboring parcel, and existing property lines, which follow the river, must be clarified.

Siedow inquired about the feasibility of purchasing the property for \$45,000, constructing a roadway, and subsequently selling two lots, and raised questions about funding sources and the necessity for a swift turnaround. The Department of Natural Resources would need to be involved due to wetlands and potentially hazardous waste concerns. Pearson noted that the City is already managing several ongoing projects. Moline questioned purchasing the property “as is” due to the associated risks, including buried concrete and the need for soil borings. Moline also recalled prior activities on the site and, along with Pearson, advised against pursuing the acquisition at this time.

It was agreed that the discussion would be recorded in the meeting notes, and no purchase offer would be made for the feed mill property.

K. **Christmas outlet repair estimates** - Christmas lights cannot be installed on five poles – one has no outlet and four other outlets are non-functioning. East Central Energy (ECE) is responsible for the poles/infrastructure. At this time, the poles are not metered. An engineer

from ECE is scheduled to meet with the mayor to discuss the next steps and the metering requirement.

- L. **2025-13 Resolution to move unallocated fund balances** – Pearson made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-13, a Resolution Committing Unallocated General Fund Balances to the Appropriate Fund Balance and Classification. Siedow seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- M. **2025-14 Resolution authorization of preapproved disbursements** – Moline made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-14, a Resolution for Authorization of Preapproved Disbursements. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- N. **2025-15 Resolution Final property tax Levy** – Pearson expressed concerns that the Fire Department (FD) increased their salary by 8%, as the department consistently exceeds its budget each year, indicating that the current budget may not be realistic. The Mayor noted that the FD's expenses are aligned with other departments, but Geier pointed out that the wages for the chief and assistants are higher than those at comparable departments. Pearson mentioned ongoing maintenance costs above the annual allocation and highlighted an additional \$15,000 being added to wages. Moline expressed that it is unacceptable to continually approve these overages without accountability. Siedow suggested the need to analyze solutions, and Moline emphasized the importance of saying no when resources are low. He recalled previous situations where staffing was reduced, yet fire services remained effective, stating that without proper accountability, financial strain will persist.

Moline asserted that service would still be maintained even with a budget reduction. The Mayor remarked that avoiding action is not a solution, prompting Moline and Pearson to question the purpose of budgeting. The Mayor clarified that the current discussion pertains to the levy, not altering the overall budget.

Moline suggested reallocating funds from salaries to equipment maintenance. The Mayor indicated the importance of consulting with the FD regarding any proposed shifts in funding. Pearson asked whether departmental permission is required, and Siedow stated that communication is necessary. Pearson inquired about the timing, to which Geier responded that changes can be made at any time. The Mayor emphasized that although funds are budgeted, there has not yet been a requested salary increase, and the Treasurer advised that if budget adjustments are intended, they should be implemented as soon as possible, before the FD accesses the allocated funds.

Moline made a motion to approve Resolution 2025-15, a Resolution Adopting the 2026 Property Tax Levy in the amount of \$844,716.55. Siedow seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- O. **Harder Assessment resolution** - The property was sold, but the outstanding deferred assessments were not collected at the time of closing. City Treasurer Sue Riesing is actively collaborating with the closing company to rectify this oversight. The buyer and the seller are currently finalizing a repayment agreement to satisfy the full amount of the outstanding obligation. The repayment agreement appears imminent.
- P. **MN Paid Family Leave Policy** – Siedow made a motion to approve the City of Harris Minnesota Paid Leave Policy. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

- Q. **Cemetery Policy** – Siedow made a motion to approve the Oak Grove Cemetery Policy update. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- Lot Price and Perpetual Care Price – Perpetual Care Price to be added to Fee Schedule.
- R. **Annual Designations** – The Council reviewed the annual designations and suggested Bollig Engineering as the City Planner. Bids were received for the City Official Newspaper from Isanti-Chisago County Star and the County News Review. The Council opted to retain the Isanti-Chisago County Star. Mileage will be based on the 2026 IRS Rate. The designations will be updated and brought back to the January meeting for final approval.
- S. **PC Terms of office (Shari)** – Carlson made a motion to appoint Shari Denny to another three-year term of the Planning Commission. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- T. **4th Quarter Staff recognition event on Dec 18th** - Moline made a motion to approve the 4th Quarter Staff recognition event on December 18th. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- U. **Holiday Season office hours (Dec 22-Jan 2)** – The Holiday season (Dec. 22 – Jan. 2) office hours will be posted as by appointment only.
- V. **2026 Meeting calendar and 2026 Holiday calendar** – Informational.
- W. **Clerk's review** – Pearson made a motion to approve a 5% merit wage increase for City Clerk Shannon Geier. Carlson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- X. **Fee Schedule** - The Council reviewed the current fee schedule and proposed several changes. Key amendments include the removal of the Dog License Fee, while the Animal Permit fees will increase: the single permit to \$10 and the multiple permit to \$25. Hourly rates for staff time are also set to increase, with the City Clerk, City Treasurer, Project Manager, and Fire Chief Inspections rising to \$50, and Public Works increasing to \$100. New fees are proposed for the Fire Department (FD), specifically a \$500 FD Fire Service Fee, a \$50 FD False Alarm Fee, and a \$35 per event per person FD Special Event Fee. Furthermore, the Right-of-Way Application Fee will increase to \$150, a \$250 Perpetual Care fee will be added, and a price for decommissioning solar installations remains to be determined. Geier has been tasked with consulting with Bollig Engineering to evaluate potential changes to the Engineering Design Standards document, as well as the Water and Sewer Trunk Area Charges per acre. The final, updated fee schedule will be presented to the Council for approval at the January meeting.
- Y. **Low Potency edibles registrations applications** – Siedow made a motion to approve the Lower-Potency Edible Retailer registrations for the Fuse, Harris Bottle Shop, and Magnum2 LLC. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.
- Z. **Resignations** – Siedow made a motion to accept the resignations of City Clerk Shannon Geier and Office Assistant Diane Miller effective January 2, 2026. Moline seconded the motion. Motion carried 3 – 1, Pearson opposed.

VIII. **Staff/Department Reports:**

- A. **Public Works** – Written report. The city tractor requires major repairs due to the failure of the reverse gear mechanism. The repair process requires the removal of the cab and is billed at \$150 per hour for an undetermined duration. Initial attempts to secure a repair

estimate were challenging: The preferred shop named Allstate Repair, James Guy was identified for the repair, John Deere declined to provide an estimate without an on-site inspection, and other repair facilities consulted indicated they were currently too busy to take on the work. Although the repairs will exceed the current year's budget, it was affirmed that the tractor is worth the investment in necessary repairs.

The accumulator for the grader's braking system requires replacement. This repair is covered under warranty. However, the city will be responsible for the mileage charges incurred by the service truck traveling to the site to complete the repair.

Pearson made a motion to approve tractor repair at a cost not to exceed \$3,000 and grader repair, not to exceed \$1,000. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

B. **PeopleService Report** - Written report.

C. **Planning Commission** - Written report.

D. **Clerk's Report** - Written report. The gambling permit applications for the NB Hockey Association and the American Legion have been submitted. Pearson made a motion to approve both permits. Siedow seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried.

E. **Treasurer Report** - Written report.

F. **Mayor and Council Reports** – None.

IX. **Adjourn:** Siedow made a motion to adjourn. Pearson seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. There being no further business, Mayor Carlson adjourned the meeting at 10:15 p.m.

City Clerk – Shannon Geier

Randy Carlson - Mayor

Date Approved