

**Harris City Council  
Regular Meeting Minutes  
Monday, March 9, 2026**

- I. **Call to Order:** Mayor Randy Carlson called the meeting to order at 7:00 p.m.
- II. **Pledge of Allegiance:** The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.
- III. **Roll Call:** Present: Mayor Randy Carlson, Council Member Chell Borash, Council Member Garret Pearson, Council Member Craig Moline, and Council Member Al Siedow. Absent: None. A quorum was present.
- IV. **Consent Agenda:** The following items were presented for approval under the Consent Agenda: February 9, 2026, Regular Meeting Minutes, February 26, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes, March 3, 2026, Special Meeting Minutes and Accounts Payable **Motion by** Pearson, **seconded by** Borash, to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. **All in favor.** Motion carried.
- V. **Public Comment:** A resident asked whether there was any item on the agenda regarding water and sewer. Mayor Carlson stated there was no water and sewer item on the agenda for that evening. He noted the appraisal requested by the City had been received that day, but it arrived too late to be placed on the agenda and would likely be reviewed at a future meeting after staff had an opportunity to examine it. Public comment was then closed.
- VI. **Regular Agenda:**

**A. Fire Department** - In the absence of Fire Chief Drew, council reviewed a request for emergency apparatus maintenance in the amount of \$3,592. The repair involved Engine 2, which had a discharge valve and discharge line freeze and crack after the truck had been parked outside during funeral services. It was noted that without repair, the truck would leak water when not in service. Council discussed the circumstances surrounding the damage and expressed concern that the issue may have been preventable. Motion by Pearson, seconded by Borash, to approve payment of \$3,592 for the repair to Engine 2. All in favor. Motion carried.

**B. Lindgren Plat Subdivision**

Nathan Feist presented the preliminary plat request for the Lindgren subdivision. He explained that the parent parcel consists of approximately 115 acres and is proposed to be subdivided into four parcels. The buildable lots would range from approximately 5.4 to 7.6 acres, with the balance of the parcel consisting largely of wetlands.

Mr. Feist stated that:

- The proposed lots would be served by private well and septic.
- There are no current plans to extend city water and sewer to the area.
- The Planning Commission held the required public hearing and voted to recommend approval to the City Council.
- Access would be by private road/shared driveway.
- A 66-foot access corridor was included so sufficient width would exist if future utility installation were ever needed.

Council discussed private road standards, county driveway permit requirements, culvert specifications, and whether the access corridor would accommodate future improvements if ever needed. Brian and Sonia Lindgren were present for questions. Motion by Siedow, seconded by Pearson, to approve the preliminary plat for the Lindgren subdivision. All in favor. Motion carried.

### **C. Solar Farm Interim Use Permit**

Nathan Feist presented the interim use permit request for a community-scale solar project located south of Highway 433 near Graffco. He explained the project involves two adjacent solar arrays operated by two separate owners on the same general site for financing and long-term ownership reasons.

Discussion included:

- The general location of the project on a larger parcel of approximately 45 acres
- The amount of land to be occupied by the solar arrays
- East Central Energy coordination
- The Harris substation's limited solar capacity
- Conditions included in the interim use permit
- Decommissioning requirements to ensure removal if the solar project is no longer in service

Mr. Feist reported that the Planning Commission held the required public hearing and recommended approval of the interim use permit with conditions.

Motion by Siedow, seconded by Moline, to approve both interim use permits for the solar project. Vote: Motion carried. Nay: Pearson, Borash.

#### **D. Utility Billing Reconciliation – Matthew Gehrke**

Matthew Gehrke appeared before the council regarding his utility billing reconciliation dispute. He stated that after reviewing his billing history with city staff, he believed the City had underbilled his household over several years due to a clerical error and later attempted to recover those charges through a back-billing process once a new meter was installed.

Mr. Gehrke referenced billing guidance he had reviewed and argued that:

- The City had underestimated his usage for an extended period,
- The estimates declined over time without notice to him,
- He was not adequately informed of the issue when it was discovered, and
- The billing adjustment should not have been sent to the title company during the sale of his home before the matter was resolved.

Council and staff discussed:

- The City's efforts over several years to replace the outdated meter,
- The homeowner's objection to the original meter type proposed by the City,
- The City's use of estimated billing after the older reading system became obsolete,
- The eventual installation of an alternate meter type acceptable to the homeowner,
- Whether the matter constituted a clerical error or an estimated billing reconciliation issue, and
- The need for the City to apply utility billing practices consistently among all residents.

No motion was made and no formal action was taken on this item.

#### **E. InControl Proposal for Submersible Level Sensor**

Council reviewed a proposal for replacement of a submersible level transmitter/level sensor as recommended by PeopleService. It was noted that some of the cost would effectively be offset by unused contract dollars from the prior contract year.

The proposal amount discussed was \$1,632, with additional field wiring and commissioning costs not included. Council discussed approving an amount not to exceed approximately \$2,000 to complete the work. Motion by Siedow, seconded by Pearson, to approve the InControl proposal and related work in an amount not to exceed \$2,000. All in favor. Motion carried.

## **F. Parks Mowing Cost Comparison**

Mayor Carlson presented a mowing cost comparison between the City performing mowing in-house and contracting the work to an outside vendor. He reported that S&S Lawn Care Service provided a quote totaling **\$25,938** annually for all parks, while the City's actual 2025 in-house mowing cost was **\$14,192**.

Council discussed the comparison and agreed that continuing to perform mowing in-house remained the lower-cost option.

No action was taken.

## **G. Purchase of Second Mower**

Council discussed the potential purchase of a second mower. Discussion included:

- Prior budget discussions about adding a second mower
- Equipment redundancy
- Reduced wear and tear on the existing mower
- Improved efficiency during periods of rapid grass growth
- Use of a narrower mower for cemetery mowing between headstones
- Potential allocation of cost between cemetery and parks/public works funds

Mayor Carlson requested authorization to research mower options and obtain quotes.

Motion by Siedow, seconded by Pearson, to authorize research and quote collection for a second mower. All in favor. Motion carried.

## **H. Summer Intern Program**

Mayor Carlson presented information on possible summer intern and youth employment programs that may reimburse a portion of wages. He stated that some programs may reimburse between 50% and 100% of wages depending on eligibility and program requirements.

Council discussed:

- Potential regional programs through nearby communities or job programs
- The need to move promptly if pursuing funding
- Potential duties including mowing and public works support

- The importance of job description wording depending on the grant source
- Estimated wage costs for a seasonal intern

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Borash, to proceed with exploring summer intern program options and related grant opportunities.

All in favor. Motion carried.

### **I. Church Mowing Request – Harris Covenant Church**

Mayor Carlson reported that Harris Covenant Church had asked whether the City would be willing to mow the church property for a fee after losing its regular volunteer mower.

Council discussed whether public equipment and staff could be used for a private nonprofit purpose and expressed concern about establishing a precedent for similar requests from other organizations.

No motion was made. Council consensus was not to move forward with the request.

### **J. Harris Club Lease of the Ponds**

Allen Siedow presented the Harris Club's request to lease the former ponds property for use as an event space for Harris Days and other community activities. He discussed long-term ideas including site improvements, leveling, shelter construction, vendor space, and future community event expansion.

Council discussion included:

- Potential benefits of creating a dedicated event location
- Desire by some members to keep Harris Days activities visible in the downtown area
- Future possible municipal use of the pond's property
- Whether long-term private investment in improvements would be practical if the City later reclaimed the property
- Lease length and termination provisions
- Alternative development possibilities for the site

No motion was made and no action was taken. Council indicated additional thought and discussion would be needed before proceeding.

### **K. Clerk Applicant Counteroffer**

Council reviewed the counteroffer submitted by Tanya Smolke for the City Clerk position. The counteroffer included:

- A 30-day probation period
- 80 hours of PTO
- A proposed start date of **March 23, 2026**
- Indication that she is fully trained in election administration and county permitting software

Council discussed the probation request and clarified that the City's normal review process would still apply. Council members expressed support for the candidate and recognized her prior experience.

Motion by Siedow, seconded by Pearson, to accept the counteroffer with clarification regarding the City's standard review timeline. All in favor. Motion carried.

## **Staff and Department Reports**

### **A. Public Works**

Public Works discussion included a request to retain additional tree cutting services for approximately four more days in order to complete work already underway, including road-related tree work. The additional estimated cost was \$1,600 at \$400 per day.

Motion by Pearson, seconded by Siedow, to approve an additional \$1,600 for four more days of tree cutting services. Motion carried.

Discussion on street sweeping, use the contractor from last year or contract with Rush City. Rush City is \$20 less per hour and we would like to explore a relationship with Rush City. Motion by Pearson, seconded by Borash, to approve a \$1,000 for street sweeping with Rush City. Motion carried.

Discussion on purchasing a Sod Rake, three quotes were given, Olsen Power \$17,000, Arnolds \$14,500 and Riggs for Less for \$11,900. Motion by Moline to purchase the unit from Riggs for Less for \$11,900, seconded by Carlson. Motion carried.

### **B. PeopleService Report**

### **C. Planning Commission**

### **D. Clerk's Report**

**E. Treasurer Report** – The treasurer requested council approval for the Fire Departments PO for Alex Air, the company that is used to service the Air Fill Station at the fire hall of \$1,500. Motion by Pearson, second by Borash, Motion carried.

**F. Mayor and Council Reports**

**Adjourn:** Siedow made a motion to adjourn. Moline seconded the motion. All in favor, motion carried. There being no further business, Mayor Carlson adjourned the meeting at 9:34 p.m.

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**City Clerk**

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**Randy Carlson- Mayor**

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**Date Approved**

DRAFT