

City of Nashwauk
May 27, 2025
City Council Meeting

Mayor Heyblom called the meeting to order at 5:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers of City Hall. Mayor Heyblom led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Members present: Councilor David Bruns, Councilor Tom Martire, Councilor Sheila Jensen, Councilor Terry Sullivan, Mayor Greg Heyblom.

Also present: Administrator/Clerk April Kurtz, Police Chief Lee Longoria.

Public Comment

County Commissioner Casey Venema was present to share that the Itasca County Board of Commissioners awarded the bid for the ambulance subordinate service district to North Memorial. North Memorial was the only company to submit a bid, and the bid came in at the County's estimates of around \$650,000 for the first year with 5% increases over the next two years. As for how the levy will be administered, Venema said he is advocating for a flat rate across all properties. He shared that Bigfork Ambulance has been watching what has been going on with the Nashwauk Ambulance Service. Bigfork Valley Hospital is going to take over the ambulance service. Venema shared how the County will be supporting them.

Commissioner Venema said that during the County Board meeting held earlier that day, the City of Grand Rapids asked the County to help support the library with another \$350,000 annually. There were 200 people in attendance in favor of the County supporting the library. Their annual budget is \$1,000,000. Attendees provided statistics that more people than just Grand Rapids residents use the library.

Adoption of Agenda

*Motion by Councilor Sullivan, seconded by Councilor Jensen to adopt the agenda of the May 27, 2025, City Council Meeting.

Ayes: all present. Motion carried.

Approval of Consent Agenda

*Motion by Councilor Bruns, seconded by Councilor Martire to approve the consent agenda as follows:

a. Approve the minutes of the May 13, 2025, City Council meeting; minutes of the May 6, 2025, Special City Council meeting; minutes of the April 29, 2025, Special City Council meeting.

b. Approve claim register #5272025 Claim 1 in the amount of \$41,302.87.

c. Approve claim register #5272025 Claim 2 in the amount of \$22,151.39.

Ayes: all present. Motion carried.

Unfinished Business

Small Cities Development Program

No update.

East Itasca Joint Sewer Board Update

There was no quorum at the last East Itasca Joint Sewer Board meeting, but the attending members heard an update from the consultant Community Resource Development. If a bonding bill is passed, the Lone Pine Township phase II project would be a 2026 construction project.

Public Safety Building follow-up

No update.

Hazardous Buildings

The asbestos testing occurred at 211 Central Avenue. The Court upheld the Order for the 206 3rd Street building.

Day of Action

Administrator/Clerk Kurtock updated that there are 30 residential projects and 7 city projects for Day of Action. So far there are 150 volunteers signed up, with a goal of 200 total.

Upstairs City Hall Kitchen Upgrade

Mayor Heyblom presented the quote again for the upstairs kitchen upgrade, which was from Delich General Contracting LLC in the amount of \$10,113. He said that the Mason's would be contributing \$5,000 toward the purchase. Councilor Bruns asked for a layout for the kitchen. Mayor Heyblom stated that the layout would be the same as the existing layout. Councilor Sullivan stated there are a lot of repairs that need to happen within City Hall and those things need to be prioritized. Councilor Sullivan discussed the budget, and he said he assumed that the Council passed a balanced budget, but the Council passed a deficit budget for 2025 utilizing the general fund surplus to support the 2025 expenses. He outlined additional items that the Council has approved thus far this year that have been outside the budget, which have contributed to additional deficit spending and the Council has not been keeping track of those expenses. Councilor Sullivan stated he went back and looked at the financial advisor's recommendations and one of those recommendations was that there should be half of the city's budget in reserves, but no one is keeping track of the reserves. He stated the City is spending itself into a problem and spending money that does not need to be spent.

Councilor Jensen said that she was surprised to learn previously that there were unpaid Community Development requests, which Mesabi Metallics had not submitted to the City. She wanted to know why they were behind on payment of those requests. Administrator/Clerk Kurtock explained that the Community Development agreement was two-fold. The city receives an automatic payment every month in the amount of \$15,000 and those checks have been received through April 2025. The agreement also outlines another \$15,000 per month by request for a specific project. Those payments have not been consistently made and there are 9 unpaid projects.

Councilor Bruns said it was a generous offer from the Masons to pay for part of the upstairs kitchen project, but stated he didn't think the project matched up with the needs of the city. Councilor Jensen disagreed that it was a generous offer because if the Masons wanted a kitchen upgrade for a kitchen that they mostly only used, then they should pay for the entire project. Councilor Martire said that some expenses come up before a budget is established. Councilor Jensen countered and said that it made sense to fund an emergency expense outside of the budget, but this kitchen upgrade was not an emergency purchase. She stated that once Mesabi Metallics was operating, additional revenue would be coming to the city, and it would be more appropriate to consider a project like this when there were additional funds.

Mayor Heyblom took exception to the statement that the Mason offer wasn't generous, and he noted that he was a Mason at Nashwauk Lodge. Councilor Jensen said it was inappropriate for him to be the mayor and within the Mason's leadership to bring the quote forward. Mayor Heyblom stated it was

inappropriate for Councilor Jensen to contact an attorney earlier in the year while there was an investigation going on.

Ultimately, the Council determined to revisit the kitchen upgrade in the future.

Department & Committee Reports & Requests

Police Department

Police Chief Longoria stated he was looking for guidance related to a few ordinances, which were recreational motor vehicles, recreational camping vehicles, and animal control. He provided some recommendations for change within the recreational vehicle ordinance, which included a route, limiting speed for recreational vehicles and snowmobiles to 10 mph in city limits, making hours of operation the same for all recreational vehicles, and sign placement identifying the route. The Council voiced support for the proposed changes. The recreational vehicle and snowmobile ordinance would be merged for ease of use and enforcement. The proposed changes would be brought forward for Council's consideration and then posted.

Regarding recreational camping vehicles, Chief Longoria asked if there could be a resolution if a resident could not park theirs on the street or front yard. Councilor Bruns pointed out that he pays for year-round parking and that is a solution for people. The Council overall agreed and did not feel it was a City problem to figure out where people could park their own recreational camping vehicles.

Regarding the animal ordinance, Chief Longoria stated that the ordinance does not directly state how many animals one residence can have, but it defines a kennel as 3 or more dogs, which are prohibited. He cited an issue with a rental property, which he believed had 8 dogs. He stated that there are a few households that do have three dogs, and he wanted to know how far the Council was willing to go with enforcement. The Council extensively discussed the limit on dogs and believed that if people already had three dogs they could be grandfathered in, but once one dog passed, it could not be replaced. However, there seemed to be a 3/2 split in favor of allowing three dogs instead of two.

Councilor Sullivan stated that he did research on pet ownership prior to the meeting. He said statistically 73% of households have pets, but there were only 150 households in Nashwauk with licensed pets, which meant that over half of the households with pets did not have licensed pets. He stated that other cities are getting rid of license requirements because rule followers are paying but the non-rule followers were not. He suggested an animal control fee that everyone pays through their utility bill and if there is no pet in the household, then they sign an affidavit and wouldn't have to pay the fee. Or, he suggested, the license requirement could be abolished because half of the households were not compliant so clearly the Council didn't care. Chief Longoria agreed that pet licensing doesn't bring the value that it was originally intended to bring.

Councilor Jensen said that the City of Coleraine has clearer language and clearly defines the pet allowance. Chief Longoria said he would review the Coleraine ordinance and bring forward proposed changes.

Councilor Sullivan said that there was an email from a resident who suggested calendar parking year-round and he wanted to know how Chief Longoria felt about that suggestion. Chief Longoria stated it was not something that he recommended. He has also spoken with the street department, and they don't think it is an issue that needs to be addressed throughout the summer.

Councilor Sullivan stated that the crosswalks needed to be repainted on Central Avenue and 1st Street. He asked for signage on Central for pedestrians. Administrator/Clerk Kurtock stated that the County had provided a template that needed to be followed for Central Avenue, as it was a County road. The County was not willing to paint the crosswalks. As for signage in the roadway bringing attention to crosswalks, Councilor Martire said it depended on the width of the street and if it was wide enough to allow traffic plus signage to be placed in the crosswalks.

Mayor and Council Updates

Councilor Bruns said that regarding the 3rd of July car show, the past participants were given gift cards for attending; however, this year they would be doing trophies for five different categories, like mayor's choice award and firemen's choice award.

Adjourn

The meeting was adjourned at 6:58 p.m.

City Administrator/Clerk/Treasurer