

City Council Minutes
September 15, 2025

The Fergus Falls City Council held a council meeting on September 15, 2025, at 5:30 pm in the City Council Chambers. Pastor Nicholas Preston gave the invocation, and the Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Mayor Hicks called the meeting to order at 5:31 pm and the following council members were in attendance: Mortenson, Rachels, Kilde, Fish, Job, Kvamme, Leighton and Kremeier.

Open Forum

Scott Murray, 2406 Lakeview Drive asked for city assistance on a failing retaining wall and drainage issue that borders his property, and a city owned easement. He shared photos and his concern for the roadway and adjacent properties. City Engineer Kyle Meyer will assess the area and look for possible solutions.

Robyn Foss felt there are open meeting law violations as a sitting council member has been sending messages to other council members and members of the audience during meetings rebuking her comments during council meetings. She cited the meeting laws are meant to prevent decisions from being made outside the public's ability to see and hear information the council is sharing. Communicating with each other during a meeting is considered holding a separate secret meeting and asked the open meeting laws to be followed.

Paul Hicks thanked staff and downtown businesses for their assistance and partnership in Dandelion Days.

Approval of Agenda

A motion and second were made by Kremeier and Job approving tonight's agenda and the motion carried.

RTC Access Request

Bill Adams requested access to the RTC to film a documentary commissioned by Pioneer Public TV based on Susan Foote Durenberger's book The Crusade for Forgotten Souls. They will pay \$100 per hour for staff time and \$50 per hour for cleaning and expect to take a half a day for filming. Anyone entering the building must sign waivers and wear protective equipment. A motion and second were made by Kvamme and Kilde approving access to the RTC for this documentary television crew and the motion carried.

PI 5367 Bids

Bids were opened for PI 5367, the TH 210 utility reconstruction project. Three bids were received, and all exceeded the engineering estimate. The project needs to take place this fall prior to MnDOT's work on the roundabouts which are scheduled immediately in the spring. The low bid was from Flatland Enterprise in the amount of \$915,489.68 and their original bid did not include a non-collusion form, but they have since provided it. The City Attorney was consulted and does not believe this should preclude their bid. MnDOT's financial participation is \$771,517.82 and the city's share is \$143,971.86. \$70,000 of the additional funding will come from the water fund and \$74,000 from the sewer fund. Rachels offered **Resolution #162-2025** waiving the requirement of having the non-collusion form with the bid, since it does not affect the actual bid price, and awarding a contract to

Flatland Enterprises LLC in the amount of \$915,489.68 for PI 5367, the TH 210 utility relocation project, which was seconded by Fish and was adopted with Leighton voting in opposition.

PI 5855 Bids

Public Improvement 5855 is the alleyway and public parking lot improvements north of Lincoln Avenue. One bid was received, and both the base bid and alternates were significantly higher than the engineering estimate. The City Engineer suggested rejecting the bid and rebidding this winter in conjunction with the proposed work on Cavour Avenue. In the interim, the alley would be packed with gravel and maintained until the paving work can be done next year. Mortenson offered **Resolution #163-2025** rejecting the bids for PI 5855 which was seconded by Kremeier and was adopted.

Police Chief Swearing In Ceremony

Mayor Hicks swore in new Police Chief Justin Paul and thanked Kile Bergren for his 15 years of service as the Police Chief. Paul addressed the department and community, expressing thanks for the welcome he and his family have received and their excitement to join and support the community.

Proclamation: Constitution Week

Mayor Hicks read a proclamation declaring September 17-23 as Constitution Week

Consent Agenda

The following items were approved under **Resolution #164-2025** by Job: Motion approving the minutes from the September 2, 2025, City Council meeting and work session and the September 10, 2025, Committee of the Whole meeting. Motion approving the following licenses: Mobile Food Truck Miller Concessions (3 trucks); Excavator Shaw Excavating & Hauling Inc. **Resolution #165-2025** accepting the Construction and Maintenance Agreement between the City of Fergus Falls and Otter Tail Valley Railroad Company Inc and accepting funding agreement 1061011 between the City of Fergus Falls and MnDOT for City Project 9776, the Otter Tail Valley Railroad signal replacement project. **Resolution #166-2025** approving the fiscal years 2026 and 2027 Airport Maintenance & Operations Grant Agreement (1060312) with MnDOT. **Resolution #167-2025** declaring Unit #1, a 2001 Ford Windstar as surplus equipment and authorizing its disposal. **Resolution #168-2025** approving the submission of the Surface Water Inlet Protection Plan. Motion directing the City Attorney to draft amendments to Chapter 111, the tobacco ordinance. The resolution was seconded by Rachels and was adopted.

Ordinance 74, Tobacco

Ordinance 75, Eighth Series, Tobacco licensing was introduced by Kilde and declared to have its first reading.

Ordinance 69, Standalone Garages

Ordinance 69, Eighth Series, Standalone garages was introduced by Kremeier and declared to have its first reading.

Ordinance 73, Cannabis Businesses and Sales Hours

Ordinance 73, Eighth Series, Cannabis business and sales hours, was adopted by roll call vote.

2026 Preliminary Budget

Leighton offered **Resolution #169-2025** approving the 2026 preliminary budget in the amount of \$56,510,508, which was seconded by Job and adopted.

2026 Preliminary Levy

Leighton offered **Resolution #170-2025** approving the 2026 preliminary levy in the amount of \$9,279,000, which was seconded by Job and adopted.

Budget Public Meeting Date Set

Kilde offered **Resolution #171-2025** setting the 2026 budget and levy public meeting for December 1, 2025, at 6:00 pm in the City Council Chambers, which was seconded by Fish and adopted.

Economic Development Contract

While interviewing for the Economic Development Director Dr. James Leiman of Greenhouse South LLC offered his services as an Economic Development Consultant, rather than a city employee. Kvamme asked why the Personnel Committee is recommending an independent contractor vs. an employee and Rachels wanted assurance the Personnel Committee was united in their recommendation. Mayor Hicks said Leiman will focus on business retention, attracting new business and economic development initiatives. He felt this model offers a cost savings as the city is not hiring an employee and paying benefits. Job was impressed with the objectives and deliverables he set for himself and his work. Kremeier gave support for Leiman and his ability to produce major results for the community. Kilde said the Personnel Committee unanimously supports this contractor model. Mortenson said the Personnel Committee changed their position and he feels the contractor model is best for the city. He said hiring an individual of this caliber will work at a different level than just an employee of the city. Leighton agreed with Mortenson and felt the city, through a contractor, will be rewarded with future growth. Kilde offered **Resolution #172-2025** approving an economic developer contract with Green House South LLC (James Leiman), which was seconded by Kremeier and was adopted.

Resolution of Accounts

Fish offered a resolution authorizing the payments and claims in the amount of \$1,051,876.61, which was seconded by Rachels and was adopted.

Airport Name

The Airport Manager recommended changing the name of the airport from the Einar Mickelson Field to the Fergus Falls Regional Airport to simplify the call sign and to reflect the regional status the airport is seeking with the Perham airport and Otter Tail County. Mickelson would be instead acknowledged with a plaque inside the airport. Kilde offered **Resolution #173-2025** changing the name of the Fergus Falls Airport, which was seconded by Leighton. Kilde offered an amendment to work with the Heritage Preservation Commission to recognize Einar Mickelson's contributions to aviation by either naming the hangar or road after him and Kvamme offered a second. After a voice vote, Leighton voted no to the motion. A resolution to rename the Fergus Falls Airport and to add recognition of Einar Mickelson carried with Leighton abstaining.

The meeting adjourned at 6:31 pm

Lynne Olson