

CITY OF ST. FRANCIS  
CITY COUNCIL AGENDA  
St. Francis City Hall 3750 Bridge Street NW  
December 1, 2025  
6:00 p.m.

**1. CALL TO ORDER/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

The regular City Council meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Mayor Mark Vogel.

**2. ROLL CALL**

Members Present: Mayor Mark Vogel, Councilmembers Kevin Robinson, Sarah Udvig, Amy Faanes, and Joe Muehlbauer.

Also present: City Administrator Kate Thunstrom, Deputy Administrator-City Clerk Jenni Wida, Assistant City Attorney Dave Schaps (Barna, Guzy & Steffen), Deputy Administrator-Public Works Director Paul Carpenter, Police Chief Todd Schwieger, Finance Director Darcy Mulvihill, and City Planner Beth Richmond (HKGi).

**3. APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: ROBINSON APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL AGENDA

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

**4. CONSENT AGENDA**

A. City Council Minutes - November 17, 2025

B. Dellwood River Park Habitat Enhancement

C. Park Commission Appointment

D. Facilities Technician – Update Job Description

E. River's Edge 8<sup>th</sup> Addition Financial Security Reduction

F. Acknowledgement for Raffle Permit

G. 2026 Business License Renewals

*Resolution 2025-57 Adopting the License Renewals for 2026*

H. Approve Hiring Community Development Specialist – Jackson Matthies

I. Payment of Claims

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: ROBINSON APPROVING THE REGULAR CITY COUNCIL CONSENT AGENDA

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

**5. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Barb Anderson came forward and thanked Public Works Staff for their work clearing the streets after the recent snow event.

Mike Rodger came forward and shared that he was reviewing the bills paid by the City this month. He asked about the amount paid for Metro West Inspections and what this was for. Finance Manager Mulvihill shared that this is the contract that they have for the Building Official.

Mr. Rodger said he thought this was what they paid the full-time Building Inspector for. City Administrator Thunstrom explained that they are under contract with Metro West for 50% of the plan review. She shared that they used Metro West for Vista Prairie since it is a State facility. She noted that the fees to Metro West are paid for by the permit.

Mr. Rodger asked if the developer pays the permit fees. Thunstrom said yes.

Mr. Rodger asked about the amount to Fergus Power Pump Inc. Public Works Director Carpenter explained that this is for the dewatering process, in which they remove the solids from the holding tanks at Public Works. He said this is done once per year.

Mr. Rodger asked about the legal fees paid to Barna, Guzy, & Steffen this month. Thunstrom explained that these bills are related to all civil and criminal matters being handled within the City.

**6. SPECIAL BUSINESS - NONE****7. PUBLIC HEARINGS****A. 2026 Proposed Budget Presentation****Resolution 2025-58 Certifying taxes payable in 2026****Resolution 2025-59 Adopting a budget for 2026**

Mulvihill reviewed the Staff report in regard to the 2026 proposed levy and budget.

Faanes asked if the tax capacity is all of the property values in the City added together. Mulvihill said yes and explained that it is a percentage of the estimated market value.

Faanes asked how the stormwater fee being added to the levy affected the taxes. Mulvihill shared that if they had not included the stormwater fees in the levy, then the overall increase would have only been 11.4%. She explained that they moved this from being a fee that all residents were charged and received notice of, to a levy-based cost.

Faanes asked why they lost LGA. Mulvihill explained that the State took it away from a lot of cities in order to balance its budget.

Mayor Vogel opened the Public Hearing at 6:27 p.m.

Pete DeBeux came forward and asked how tax capacity is determined. He said his tax capacity has not increased; however, his taxes are increasing by almost 15%. Mulvihill explained that this is determined by his property value. She noted that he loses part of his market value exclusion, which added to this increase.

Mr. Debeux noted that the tax capacity does not take into account people's abilities to pay this amount. He said he thinks this is excessive and unrealistic to increase by this much at a time, while all other costs are also increasing for residents. He shared his appreciation for the work done by the Council and Staff.

Tina Carroll came forward and asked what LGA covers. Mulvihill explained that LGA is Local Government Aid, which is a State program that goes into the general fund and can lower the levy.

Ms. Carrol asked if the abatement for Vista Prairie will stay at \$50,000 a year and how this affects the taxpayers. Mulvihill said this will not be staying at \$50,000 a year, as the maximum is \$200,000. She stated that it cannot increase over \$50,000 for 2026.

Ms. Carroll asked if the new homes that are being built are being put into the tax capacity. Mulvihill explained that if a house is done being built before July of a given year, then the value goes towards the next year's taxes. She noted that the levy does not change based on how many new homes they get in for the year.

Ms. Carroll asked how the tax capacity differs for residential properties and commercial properties. Mulvihill shared that commercial properties pay a higher amount. She noted that 40% of any new business goes towards the fiscal disparities amount. She added that businesses are also not eligible for market value exclusions.

Ms. Carroll asked how the increase in St. Francis compares to other cities in the County. Mulvihill noted that they have a larger increase than most other cities in the County; however, around 5% of the increase is due to adding the stormwater fee to the levy.

Ms. Carroll asked what projects they could hold off on completing to get these costs to come down.

Mark Marcket came forward and shared that his taxes have increased by over 20%. He noted that every other cost is already increasing so much and asked the Council to try to find some way to lower this budget.

James Calish came forward and shared that he purchased his home in 2012 for

around \$200,000, and his property value is now around \$550,000. He said his taxes increased 21.5% in one year. He noted that they have not made many improvements to their house, so it feels that they are being taxed on unrealized income. He encouraged the Council to look at cutting more from this budget.

Jason Lee came forward and shared that his property taxes increased by 21.7%. He shared that he built his home for \$200,000 around five years ago, and now it is appraised for \$583,000. He asked how much the stormwater fee is on each bill. Mulvihill explained that they used to send out separate bills for stormwater fees; however, they have not rolled this into the levy. She noted that the amount that someone pays in stormwater fees is based on the value of their home.

Carpenter explained that anywhere that water is shed is considered stormwater runoff. He noted that the city has to collect fees for this.

Mulvihill added that residents can contest their home values with the County if they disagree with their appraisal amount.

Tammy Devorak came forward and asked the Council what they would be doing to mitigate the tax increases in the future. She noted that residents will not be able to continue to afford these increases every single year.

Mike Rodger came forward and thanked the Council for their transparency throughout the budget development process. He said that the School District was not transparent. He noted that they need to start creating more revenue in the City to help bring these tax increases down. He asked what the plan is for the future to stop the bleeding and stop the constant tax increases.

Mike Powell came forward and said that the only people who are not complaining about their taxes this week are at Vista Prairie. He asked how putting TIF in place is going to help them in any way. He noted that businesses do not want to come to St. Francis, which is why they are struggling to sell land. He said the City is still building without the growth coming in. He added that he toured the water treatment plant, and it is a great facility; however, they did not need a facility this large in the City.

Joseph Morale came forward and asked the Council to have some fiscal responsibility. He shared that when he first moved to St. Francis, his taxes were very affordable; however, they are becoming increasingly unaffordable. He added that when he arrived this evening, the door to City Hall was locked and he needed to text a Councilmember to let him in.

Jordan Bowman came forward and shared that the median age of a first-time homebuyer is currently 40 years old. He said the St. Francis community is not supporting him in raising his young family. He asked if the Council would be able to reevaluate the increase. Mulvihill explained that the budget does not need to be

approved tonight; however, it does need to be set by the end of the month.

James Jones came forward and shared that he used to work for the County as an assessor, so he understands how property values are calculated. He said they need to do something to watch their spending. He said his taxes have gone up 30%, 20%, and 25% over the last three years, respectively.

Holly Bowman came forward and thanked the Council for all they did. She shared that her taxes have increased by \$700 this year. She asked the Council not to approve the budget this evening and to find items to be cut.

Mayor Vogel closed the Public Hearing at 7:09 p.m.

Faanes shared that this evening's meeting is being held at the exact same time as the meeting for Anoka County. She said she would like them to move this hearing to a Tuesday next year so that it does not conflict with the Anoka County meeting if any residents want to attend both meetings. She shared that her taxes are increasing by around 28% this year. She said that she agrees with all of the concerns of the residents shared this evening. She stated that she believes they should have cut more from the budget, and she will not be supporting it this evening. She explained that a lot of residents moved to St. Francis to have less government and more open spaces, and they are not getting that currently.

Muehlbauer explained that they cannot tailor the needs of the City to how every resident is doing. He noted that a lot of the services provided by the City are necessities, like the Police Department, Fire Department, Public Works plowing the snow, and others. He reiterated that part of this increase is due to adding the stormwater fees to the levy instead of billing this to the residents separately. He thanked Mayor Vogel for working so closely with the Staff to try to bring this budget down. He noted that every dollar spent by the City is attached to a service, and they need to decide which services are the most important. He shared that he voted yes on the new City Hall Fire Station building, and he takes full responsibility for this. He said that they have already worked closely with Staff to bring this budget down. He explained that they decreased the water rates many years ago, and this is why they are being hit so hard with the increase today. He shared that he is worried that if they make further cuts from this year's budget, it would just come back even worse in the future. He encouraged residents to contact the County if they have concerns about their property values.

Robinson shared that Council and Staff have been working on this budget for the last nine months. He noted that if they wanted to decrease the budget, then they would need to remove funding for different services, which the residents wouldn't want either. He said that he voted in support of the City Hall Fire Station as it was a necessity that the Fire Department have a new facility. He stated that the Council does not have control over the increase in the cost of living. He said that he feels for all residents who are concerned about their taxes, as he also received the same

increase. He shared that the Council is trying to keep up with the requests of the residents for different services and amenities, but this costs money. He added that Vista Prairie reviewed an abatement, not TIF. He shared that there was a need for a facility like this, and he is glad to have it in the City.

Muehlbauer added that when they are looking at the County portion of their taxes, they need to take into account the population. He noted that St. Francis suffers sometimes since they are a small town with a small population. He said growth will help them, whether that is residential or commercial. He stated they need to look into more growth in the City.

Udvig acknowledged that this increase is painful to swallow. She said all of the Councilmembers are St. Francis residents and are experiencing the same increase as the rest of the residents. She stated that they could make cuts from the budget; however, this would be making cuts from necessary services and kicking the can down the road to be dealt with later. She explained that if they cut from the maintenance budget, then buildings will start to fail, and it will cost more in the long run to fix them. She said that anything that is cut from the budget will have an effect on a service that the City is currently providing. She stated that they may not have needed the City Hall Fire Station to be as large as it is; however, this building will help foster future growth that they need in the City. She shared that the Council listens to the requests of the residents, and when they are discussing these items, the residents do not often show up to these meetings, and they only show up when they see the increase due to paying for these requests. She encouraged residents to also voice their concerns with the County and the School District. She said that they can look at making cuts from the budget, but it will come at a cost.

Robinson added that they have 3,500 square feet available upstairs in the City Hall Fire Station that they added in anticipation of future needs. He said that they decided to add this as it would be much cheaper to do it at the time of build, rather than try to add it on at a later date.

Mayor Vogel shared that he believes that property taxes are one of the most regressive types of taxes. He said this is unfortunately not something that they can fix. He stated that Staff did their job in creating a budget that kept everything the same, which resulted in an 11% increase. He noted that his issue with this is that it passes the responsibility of this to the residents. He explained that Staff brought some budget cuts to the Council in Work Session meetings, which would not have resulted in any drastic decreases to property taxes. He said that he will be voting against this budget as it puts all of the responsibility onto the residents.

Muehlbauer noted that if they were to make cuts to this budget, which would only save the residents a few dollars a month, it would result in a decrease in services. He said that the hit that the services would take is often worse than the financial impact on individual residents. He stated the City is there to provide services to its residents, and if it decreases the funding of these services, then a strain will be put

on the departments, and the services will struggle.

Mayor Vogel said that not all of the items in the budget are directly tied to services, like the dog park, fencing, and benches, which are all in the 2026 budget.

MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: ROBINSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2025-58 CERTIFYING TAXES PAYABLE IN 2026.

Ayes: Muehlbauer, Robinson, and Udvig.

Nays: Faanes and Mayor Vogel.

Motion carries: 3-2

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: ROBINSON TO ADOPT RESOLUTION 2025-59 ADOPTING A BUDGET FOR 2026.

Ayes: Muehlbauer, Robinson, and Udvig.

Nays: Faanes and Mayor Vogel.

Motion carries: 3-2

## **8. OLD BUSINESS - NONE**

## **9. NEW BUSINESS**

A. 2025 Code Revisions – First Reading

Ordinance 352 - Modifying divisions 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and 9 in the zoning code

City Planner Richmond reviewed the Staff report concerning the 2025 code revisions.

MOTION BY: UDVIG SECOND: MUEHLBAUER TO ADOPT ORDINANCE 352 MODIFYING DIVISIONS 2, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, AND 9 IN THE ZONING CODE.

A roll call vote was performed:

Mayor Vogel	aye
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Councilmember Muehlbauer	aye
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Councilmember Robinson	aye
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Councilmember Faanes	aye
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Councilmember Udvig	aye
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Motion carried: 5-0

## **10. MEETING OPEN TO THE PUBLIC**

Tina Carrol came forward and shared that she agrees with Mayor Vogel that items like the dog park, fencing, and benches would make a difference if they were cut from the budget. She asked if the property where they put the dog park is a City owned property that is for sale. Thunstrom said this property is not for sale.

Ms. Carroll asked why they cannot cut from the park budget and ask for community volunteers to help maintain the parks. She noted that this happens in other cities

across the country. She encouraged the Council to look into other opportunities to engage with the residents for volunteer efforts that could save the City money. She shared that it would be great to create a budget task force to help get community members involved and look for ways to decrease the budget. She asked the Council to stop selling properties for low dollar values and seek out businesses to come and buy land in the City instead of apartment buildings. She shared that she has been in communication with the County Engineer about the traffic studies for the Highway 47 project. She encouraged the Council and Staff to talk to the County Engineer about their plans for Highway 47. She said they need to push back on the County and MnDOT for this project if it is something that the City will have to put funds into.

Mike Powell noted that there is a roundabout proposed at Ambassador and Highway 47. He said they need to figure out how they will handle the traffic if they continue to send it down Ambassador.

Muehlbauer encouraged Mr. Powell to contact MnDOT and the County, as this is their project, and the City does not have jurisdiction.

Michael O'Neill came forward and thanked the Council for listening to resident concerns this evening. He shared that he previously served in the Coast Guard when they experienced a large budget cut that had many people worried about how they would continue to do their jobs at the current level. He said the Commander was confident that his men would continue to do the job at the same level, and they did just that. He asked the Council to take this message to heart.

## **11. REPORTS**

### **A. City Administrator's Report**

Thunstrom reviewed the Administrator's report. She shared that funds have been found to help with this project. She added that they have a tentative agreement for this with the Public Works team. She shared that the last meeting of the year will contain a lot of housekeeping items to wrap up the year.

Robinson asked if they would receive an annual report on the Liquor Store. Mulvihill said yes.

Robinson asked if there had been any update on the sale of cannabis drinks at the Liquor Store. Thunstrom explained that they are keeping an eye on this at the Federal level. She noted that the State will react to whatever decision is made at the Federal level. She said this will likely result in the need for some housekeeping changes to these ordinances as well.

Robinson asked if municipal liquor stores are denied the ability to sell these cannabis products, if they would still be allowed to have a municipal dispensary. Thunstrom explained that it is their understanding that dispensaries would still be



able to operate since they are selling the actual plant, and the only products that would be affected are those produced by manufacturing cannabis.

Robinson asked how these products have been affecting the Police Department and individuals whom they are finding impaired. Police Chief Schwieger said that they do not yet have good data on this. He stated they have seen a handful of impaired drivers who are under the influence of something other than alcohol. He added that they are not seeing an alarming increase in impaired individuals on the streets.

## **12. COUNCIL MEMBER REPORTS**

The Council shared the meetings and events they attended in the past few weeks, as well as highlighting upcoming events.

Udvig asked Staff if the Council can be made aware whenever there is a new business coming to the City. She noted that sometimes it feels that the Council is the last to know about new businesses coming to the City, and they can find out from residents or social media.

Robinson shared that he has been attending the Fire District meetings as they work on moving from the Fire Department to the Fire District to better align resources, save money, and make things more efficient.

Faanes suggested adding information on what new businesses will be coming to the City to the off-week memos. She thanked Staff for their work in putting this together.

Muehlbauer noted that this meeting is always hard on the Council, Staff, and residents when they discuss the budget. He suggested starting budget discussions as early as January next year. He shared his appreciation for everyone who attended the meeting this evening and shared their opinions. He encouraged residents to contact Staff at any time throughout the year when they have questions about different things.

Mayor Vogel shared his appreciation for the residents who came forward to voice their concerns this evening and thanked them for keeping things civil. He said that the hardware store was sold earlier today, and he is excited for the future of this building. He stated that he will be keeping the Council assignments the same for next year, with the exception of recommending Robinson serve as Mayor Pro Tem.

## **13. UPCOMING EVENTS**

December 06 - Bridge Church - Tree Lighting Ceremony - 4:00 pm

December 09 - Santa and the Fire Truck - 5:00 pm

December 15 - City Council Regular Meeting - 6:00 pm

December 17 - Planning Commission Meeting - 7:00 pm

December 24 - City Offices Closed

December 25 - City Offices Closed

**14. ADJOURNMENT**


MOTION BY: MUEHLBAUER SECOND: FAANES TO ADJOURN THE MEETING.

Ayes: Faanes, Muehlbauer, Robinson, Udvig, and Mayor Vogel.

Nays: None.

Motion carries: 5-0

There being no further business, Mayor Vogel adjourned the regular City Council at 8:18 p.m.

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Jennifer Wida, City Clerk