

CITY OF HERMANTOWN

City Council Meeting

Monday, November 17, 2025

6:30 PM Central

MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON & VIA ZOOM

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Present

Councilor John Geissler: Present

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Present

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Present

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Present

CITY STAFF: John Mulder, City Administrator; Eric Johnson, Community Development Director; Joe Wicklund, Assistant City Administrator; Jim Crace, Director of Public Safety; Trish Crego, Utility & Infrastructure Director; David Bolf, City Engineer; Gunnar Johnson, City Attorney

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL**

4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

5. **PUBLIC HEARING**

6. **COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Correspondence 25-684 through 25-699 placed on file

A. **25-694**

From: Dan Lessor, Mortenson Development, Inc.

To: Mayor, City Council, and Planning & Zoning Commission

Re: Application Removal

B. **25-699**

From: DSGW Architects & Kraus-Anderson Construction Co.

To: City of Hermantown

Re: Certificate of Substantial Completion — Arena

7. **PRESENTATIONS**

A. **2026 Budget**

Kevin Orme, Director of Finance & Administration

(Pre-Agenda Only)

B. Hawklane Business Park Update

John Mulder, City Administrator
(Pre-Agenda Only)

8. PUBLIC DISCUSSION

Jeffrey Donahue, 5540 Pine Hill Road, Midway Township, MN - Opposed to the proposed data center. Stated that nearly all residents contacted are against it and criticized the use of NDAs. Expressed concerns about the potential power consumption and environmental impacts, and questioned the council's knowledge of the project. Urged council and staff to resign.

Paul Buckentin, 3379 Stark Junction Road, Midway Township, MN - Stated he lives within a half-mile of the site and only recently learned of the project. Concerned about lack of communication to nearby residents and potential impacts on agricultural areas.

Ken Melanson, 5748 St. Louis River Road, Midway Township, MN - Lives approximately 600 feet from the proposed site and opposes the data center due to family health concerns and proximity. Expressed frustration over increased property taxes.

Cathy Kohlmeier, 5757 St. Louis River Road, Hermantown, MN - Opposed to the data center and criticized the influence of large corporations, NDAs, and zoning changes. Raised environmental concerns including wetlands, trout streams, and long construction impacts. Believes the location is inappropriate.

Derek Strom, 5853 Highway 194, Hermantown, MN - Expressed frustration with the council and stated the project is not supported by residents. Alleged lack of transparency and raised concerns about increased electrical costs and environmental impacts. Encouraged recalling council members and declared candidacy for the 2026 city council election.

Jim Klukkert, 206 North 11th Avenue W, Duluth, MN - Discussed heightened community emotions and a perception of lack of transparency. Believes councilmembers are well-intentioned but warned that continued pursuit of the project will damage public trust and political standing.

Thomas Cooper Bates, 5369 Morris Thomas Road, Hermantown, MN - Thanked council for their service but expressed concerns about noise from data center operations and backup generators, potential health impacts, and pollution.

Andy Pelland, 5831 St. Louis River Road, Hermantown, MN - Opposed to the data center and urged the council to stop pursuing it, stating the majority of affected residents do not want it.

Robert Kohlmeier, 5757 St. Louis River Road, Hermantown, MN - Stated the project does not reflect community values and suggested it be located elsewhere, such as on the Iron Range. Emphasized stewardship, environmental protection, and community trust.

Emma Rickman, 5215 Chris Drive, Hermantown, MN - Shared personal impacts of the project on her family and mental health. Expressed fears over environmental and quality-of-life changes and urged the council to reconsider the project and engage more directly with residents.

Clarissa Ek, 3505 Solway Road, Solway Township, MN - Opposed to the data center, citing lack of transparency, numerous hidden meetings, zoning changes, and environmental and health impacts. Accused the city of continuing the project against overwhelming community opposition.

Eric Enberg, 5425 Morris Thomas Road, Hermantown, MN - Discussed the potential for industrial waste heat reuse from the facility. Suggested the city claim rights to waste heat, install infrastructure for a future district heating system, and create a related working group.

Brea Schminski, 3483 Stark Junction Road, Midway Township, MN - Opposed to the data center due to potential long-term health risks, noise, environmental impacts, effects on wildlife, and lack of benefits for nearby residents. Requested the council vote no.

Jackie Dolentz, 5842 Old Highway 2, Hermantown, MN - Raised concerns about lack of transparency, long construction impacts, environmental risks, and uncertain job benefits. Questioned Minnesota Power's motives and impacts on rates. Opposed to the project.

Tim Resberg, 3646 Midway Road, Hermantown, MN - Noted canceled neighborhood meetings and expressed frustration over unanswered concerns regarding blasting, well impacts, property values, and increased taxes. Criticized the lack of information about building size and environmental effects.

Bruno Zagar, 4454 Maki Road, Brookston, MN - As an environmental specialist, urged a higher-level environmental review such as an EIS. Believes current review is inadequate for a project of this size and that a full review would protect both residents and city officials.

Megan Elling, 5969 Morris Thomas Road, Solway Township, MN - Argued the city altered zoning definitions and the comprehensive plan specifically to allow the project. Believes the data center is heavy industrial and inappropriate for the location. Raised concerns about procedural violations.

Sarah Lofald, 5502 Hermantown Road, Hermantown, MN - Expressed dissatisfaction with project handling, environmental impacts, and lack of early public involvement. Urged the council to engage with residents and reconsider pursuing the project.

Allison Zagar, 4454 Maki Road, Brookston, MN - Expressed concerns about water resources and environmental impacts. Shared personal experiences with lack of communication from government agencies and emphasized the regional importance of water protection.

Isabella DiNapoli, 102 South 17th Avenue East, Duluth, MN - Opposed to the data center and expressed belief that the council is not listening to residents. Criticized NDAs and stated benefits do not outweigh the harms.

9. **MOTIONS**

10. **CONSENT AGENDA**

A. **Minutes** - Approval or correction of November 3, 2025 City Council Continuation Minutes

B. **Accounts Payable** - Approve general city warrants from November 1, 2025 through November 15, 2025 in the amount of \$844,293.00

Motion to approve the Consent Agenda. This motion, made by Councilor Geissler and seconded by Councilor Hjelle, Carried.

Councilor John Geissler: Yea

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Yea

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Yea

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Yea

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0

11. **ORDINANCES**

A. **2025-19 An Ordinance Amending Hermantown Code Of Ordinances By Amending Section 350, Accepted And Opened Streets And Roads**

(second reading)

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2025-19 An Ordinance Amending Hermantown Code Of Ordinances By Amending Section 350, Accepted And Opened Streets And Roads.

This motion, made by Councilor LeBlanc and seconded by Councilor Peterson, Carried.

Councilor John Geissler: Yea

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Yea

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Yea

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Yea

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0

- B. **2025-20 An Ordinance Renewing A Franchise Granted To Mediacom Minnesota, LLC To Construct, Operate And Maintain A Cable Television System In The City Of Hermantown; Setting Forth Conditions Relating To The Continuation Of The Franchise; Providing For The Regulation And Use Of The Cable Television System; And Prescribing Penalties For The Violation Of Its Provisions**

(first reading)

- C. **2025-21 An Ordinance Granting To Minnesota Power A Nonexclusive Franchise To Construct, Operate, Repair And Maintain In The City Of Hermantown, Minnesota, An Electric Distribution System And Transmission Lines, Including Necessary Poles, Lines, Fixtures And Appurtenances, For The Furnishing Of Electric Energy To The City, Its Inhabitants, And Others, And To Use The Public Ways And Public Grounds Of The City For Such Purposes; And Prescribing Certain Terms And Conditions Thereof**

(first reading)

Eric Enberg, 5425 Morris Thomas Road, Hermantown, MN - Asked how much revenue the city will receive from the utility franchise fee and suggested the city could negotiate higher amounts similar to larger cities.

- D. **2025-22 An Ordinance Imposing A Franchise Fee On Minnesota Power**

(first reading)

12. **RESOLUTIONS**

- A. **2025-171 Resolution Approving Pay Request Number 17 For The NorthStar Ford Arena To Kraus-Anderson Construction Company In The Amount Of \$727,401.87**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2025-171 Resolution Approving Pay Request Number 17 For The NorthStar Ford Arena To Kraus-Anderson Construction Company In The Amount Of \$727,401.87. This motion, made by Councilor Geissler and seconded by Councilor LeBlanc Carried.

Councilor John Geissler: Yea

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Yea

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Yea

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Yea

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0

B. 2025-172 Resolution Repealing An Assessment From Parcel No. 395-0010-05738 Related To Road Improvement District No. 541 & 542 (Hermantown Road & Bridge, And Old Midway Road)

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2025-172 Resolution Repealing An Assessment From Parcel No. 395-0010-05738 Related To Road Improvement District No. 541 & 542 (Hermantown Road & Bridge, And Old Midway Road). This motion, made by Councilor Peterson and seconded by Councilor Hjelle, Carried.

Councilor John Geissler: Yea

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Yea

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Yea

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Yea

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0

C. 2025-173 Resolution Approving The Removal Of Restrictive Covenants On City Of Duluth Owned Property And Placing Them On City Of Hermantown Owned Property

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2025-173 Resolution Approving The Removal Of Restrictive Covenants On City Of Duluth Owned Property And Placing Them On City Of

Hermantown Owned Property. This motion, made by Councilor LeBlanc and seconded by Councilor Geissler, Carried.

Councilor John Geissler: Yea

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Yea

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Yea

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Yea

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0

D. **2025-174 Resolution Approving The Release Of Memorial Associated With Parcel 395-0160-00030**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2025-174 Resolution Approving The Release Of Memorial Associated With Parcel 395-0160-00030. This motion, made by Councilor Hjelle and seconded by Councilor Peterson, Carried.

Councilor John Geissler: Yea

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Yea

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Yea

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Yea

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0

E. **2025-175 Resolution Authorizing The City Of Hermantown To Provide Municipal Support Of A St. Louis County Grant Funding Request Via The Minnesota Department Of Transportation Local Road Improvement Program Associated With The Reconstruction Of Ugstad Road CR 284 And Lavaque Bypass CSAH 48 As Part Of The Hawklane Business Park**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2025-175 Resolution Authorizing The City Of Hermantown To Provide Municipal Support Of A St. Louis County Grant Funding Request Via The Minnesota Department Of Transportation Local Road Improvement Program Associated With The Reconstruction Of Ugstad Road CR 284 And Lavaque Bypass CSAH 48 As Part Of The Hawklane Business Park. This motion, made by Councilor Geissler and seconded by Councilor LeBlanc, Carried.

Councilor John Geissler: Yea

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Yea

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Yea

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Yea

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0

13. **CLOSED SESSION**

14. **RECESS**

Motion to recess at 8:00 p.m. This motion, made by Councilor Hjelle and seconded by Councilor LeBlanc, Carried.

Councilor John Geissler: Yea

Councilor Andy Hjelle: Yea

Councilor Brian LeBlanc: Yea

Councilor Joseph Peterson: Yea

Mayor Wayne Boucher: Yea

Yea: 5, Nay: 0

ATTEST:

Mayor

City Clerk