

CITY OF HERMANTOWN

City Council Meeting

Monday, February 2, 2026

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; Alissa McClure, City Clerk; Eric Johnson; Community Development Director; Joe Wicklund, Assistant City Administrator; Chad Ronchetti, Economic Development Director; Brandon Holmes, Building Official; Jim Crace, Director of Public Safety; Zach Graves, Fire Chief; Trish Crego, Utility & Infrastructure Director; David Bolf, City Engineer; Gunnar Johnson, City Attorney

VISITORS: 20

1. **CALL TO ORDER**
2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**
3. **ROLL CALL**
4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

Mayor Boucher – Thanked the community for its response to the explosion at Green Acres. He expressed appreciation for the efforts of police, fire, medical personnel, and St. Louis County Emergency Management, noting that all contributions were valued and appreciated.

5. **COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Correspondence 26-02 through 26-03 placed on file

6. **PRESENTATIONS**

A. Financial Management Plan — Ehlers

Kevin Orme, Director of Finance & Administration
(Pre-Agenda Only)

B. Community Development Annual Report

Eric Johnson, Community Development Director
(Pre-Agenda Only)

7. PUBLIC COMMENT

Tom Bates, 5369 Morris Thomas Rd, Hermantown, MN – Spoke regarding the proposed hyperscale data center and expressed concern that the Council’s legacy could include environmental harm to Lake Superior. He questioned whether water used by the facility would be returned in better condition than it is taken and noted that water may be available from Sappi. He referenced a second potential data center location near Misty Morning Drive and commented on the Mayor’s handling of negative public discourse.

Sarah Lofald, 5502 Hermantown Road, Hermantown, MN – Acknowledged the Hermantown Fire Department and others for their response to the recent tragedy. She voiced opposition to the proposed data center, citing concerns related to conservation and environmental protection. She expressed unease about transferring undeveloped land to a large Fortune 50 company and stated that the process has felt manipulated toward acceptance. She asked whether the Council will listen if residents continue to show up in opposition.

Emma Richtman, 5215 Chris Drive, Hermantown, MN – Recognized the City’s response to the recent explosion and asked that space be held for Alex Pretti. She described a disconnect between the City and residents regarding the data center and expressed concern about a lack of dialogue and communication. She questioned whether any residents within 300 feet of the proposed project support it and asked why opposition from nearby residents does not carry more weight. She referenced the City of Eagan’s consideration of a moratorium on data centers and crypto mining and noted that Hermantown’s ordinances reference communication facilities but not data centers. She asked the Council to adopt a moratorium on data center exploration.

Joann Bates, 5369 Morris Thomas Rd, Hermantown, MN – Spoke regarding actions by ICE, describing them as a travesty. She urged the City Council to protect residents as able and suggested banning federal law enforcement agencies from using City-owned parking lots, prohibiting the use of masks, and restricting the Police Department from providing information to ICE. She asked the Council to consider where it stands on the issue.

Jeffrey Donahue, 5540 Pine Hill Road, Midway Township, MN – Stated that while the City seeks to enhance public services, there may be better options than the proposed “BlackRock” data center. He encouraged consideration of alternative tax revenue projects that would not negatively impact property values, light, or the quiet character of the area. He stated that an AUAR studies sites rather than projects and argued that an EIS is warranted given the scale of the proposal. He noted the facility would be one of the largest electric users in the state and among the largest businesses by square footage. He urged

the Council to pursue a project that would generate equal or greater tax revenue with fewer impacts.

Noel Donahue, 5540 Pine Hill Road, Midway Township, MN – Stated that although she did not want to attend the meeting. She expressed frustration that residents must address the issue and said she does not believe Hermantown residents should have to confront this situation. She stated she does not prioritize financial gain and feels resentful that she must spend time addressing the proposal rather than being home. She asked the Council to reconsider its actions.

Kathy Riddle, 3950 Old Midway Road – Spoke in opposition to the data center after reviewing research and listening to prior comments. She shared that she built her home in the mid-1970s and is a proud Hermantown resident. She expressed pride in the community's response to the recent catastrophe and noted her career at Hermantown schools helping families relocate. She stated that many families moved to Hermantown seeking a strong, rural community and questioned whether that would continue if the data center is built.

Karen Harmon 5279 W Arrowhead Road – Asked who will own the proposed data center and why that information has not been publicly discussed. She stated that community members want to know who will own such a large project and asked when that information will be made available if it is not currently known.

Clarissa Ek 3505 Solway Road, Midway Township, MN – Echoed appreciation for the community's response to the recent tragedy and stated she is present to continue voicing opposition to the data center. She said that even with ongoing litigation, the Council can choose to walk away from the project. She stated she would see the facility from her backyard and learned of it through the news rather than direct outreach. She expressed concern about impacts to residential desirability and electrical grid usage. She encouraged continued research and consideration of long-term impacts, referencing the seventh-generation principle in decision-making.

8. **CONSENT AGENDA**

A. **Minutes** - Approval or correction of January 20, 2026 City Council Continuation Minutes and January 26, 2026 City Council Work Session Minutes

B. **Accounts Payable** - Approve general city warrants from January 16, 2026 through January 31, 2026 in the amount of \$4,943,242.19

Motion to the 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

9. **RESOLUTIONS**

A. **2026-15 Resolution Authorizing The Purchase Of A Pierce 110' Ascendant Aerial Apparatus In The Amount Of \$1,999,986.00**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-15 Resolution Authorizing The Purchase Of A Pierce 110' Ascendant Aerial Apparatus In The Amount Of \$1,999,986.00. 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. **2026-16 Resolution Approving The Terms Of Internal Loan In Connection With The Purchase Of A Ladder Truck Not To Exceed \$1,300,000**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-16 Resolution Approving The Terms Of Internal Loan In Connection With The Purchase Of A Ladder Truck Not To Exceed \$1,300,000. This motion, made by Councilor Peterson 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

C. 2026-17 Resolution Authorizing The Purchase Of Police Portable And Squad Radios In The Amount Of \$229,231.65

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-17 Resolution Authorizing The Purchase Of Police Portable And Squad Radios In The Amount Of \$229,231.65. 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

D. 2026-18 Resolution Authorizing And Directing The City Administrator And The Economic Development Director To Execute And Deliver A Business Development Infrastructure Application

(motion, roll call)

Sarah Lofald 5502 Hermantown Road – Stated that development of the area should proceed with cautious optimism. She referenced the site’s history as a former Superfund site designated by the federal EPA, noting the presence of hazardous materials and contaminated soils that previously prompted households to connect to City water. She stated the matter is serious and cited past estimates placing soil cleanup costs at approximately \$23 million in the 1980s. She urged that assurances be obtained from any developer prior to breaking ground to ensure mitigation of future pollution and stated these issues should be addressed before any application is considered.

Motion to approve 2026-18 Resolution Authorizing And Directing The City Administrator And The Economic Development Director To Execute And Deliver A Business Development Infrastructure Application. 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

E. **2026-19 Resolution Approving A Scope Of Work And Ordering Advertisement For Bids For The HVAC Control Upgrades**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-19 Resolution Approving A Scope Of Work And Ordering Advertisement For Bids For The HVAC Control Upgrades. This motion, made by Councilor Geissler 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

F. **2026-20 Resolution Authorizing The City Of Hermantown To Waive Municipal Consent To The Minnesota Department Of Transportation For The State Project 6908-72 On Trunk Highway 2 Resurfacing Project**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-20 Resolution Authorizing The City Of Hermantown To Waive Municipal Consent To The Minnesota Department Of Transportation For The State Project 6908-72 On Trunk Highway 2 Resurfacing Project. This motion, made by Councilor Peterson 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

G. **2026-21 Resolution Approving Wage Rates For Part Time Employees In 2026**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-21 Resolution Approving Wage Rates For Part Time Employees In 2026. This motion, made by Councilor Hjelle 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

10. **RECESS**

Motion to recess at 7:19 p.m. 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

ATTEST:

Mayor

City Clerk