

CITY OF HERMANTOWN

City Council Meeting

Monday, April 20, 2026

6:30 PM Central

MEETING CONDUCTED IN PERSON

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; Joe Wicklund, Assistant City Administrator; Chad Ronchetti, Economic Development Director; Zach Graves, Fire Chief; David Bolf, City Engineer; Gunnar Johnson, City Attorney; Mark Gunderson, Deputy Commander

VISITORS: 28

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

3. **ROLL CALL**

4. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

5. **COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Correspondence 26-38 through 26-119 placed on file

6. **PRESENTATIONS**

A. **NorthStar Ford Arena Close Out**

John Mulder, City Administrator

(Pre-Agenda Only)

B. **Adolph Utility Extension – Economic Impact Analysis**

Chad Ronchetti, Economic Development Director

7. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Tom Bates 5369 Morris Thomas Road, Hermantown, MN – Spoke about concerns regarding noise produced from data centers. He stated that higher frequency sound can be filtered out but lower frequency, primarily below 200 hertz, is nearly impossible to stop. He expressed concerns for the quantity of fans and chillers data centers use and how much sound it will produce in a five-mile radius of Hermantown. He compared increase of sound

to motorcycles and a full orchestra. He shared ways that low frequency can be harmful such as, disturbing sleep, hypertension, heart disease, and increased stress hormones. He shared concern about the noise from the failsafe diesel generators data centers use, which would produce 130dbs per unit. He stated that an industrial corner in Hermantown may be a good thing but not with a data center, as it has more draw backs than other industries.

Susan Anderson 3959 Old Midway Road, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition to the proposed hyperscale data center. She stated she has been told not to worry about the data center since Minnesota has the best environmental regulations and protections in the nation. She shared cases from Minnesota within the last three years where companies were fined for waste water and air quality violations. She shared that the cases were not data centers, but companies who are supposed to follow Minnesota's environmental standards and didn't. She asked council if the data center was built would it be regularly and effectively monitored to confirm that it is within environmental compliance. She expressed concern that even if it was monitored once a year that is still a full year of pollution before it is noticed or turned in. She stated that environmental standards are only as good as the integrity of Google.

Dawn LePointe 4731 Portland Road, Hermantown, MN – Shared feeling envious of the towns and counties that have enacted temporary moratoriums on new data center projects. She defined a moratorium as a temporary prohibition not a ban, and shared that governing bodies are wise to notice a needed pause to study impacts and determine if a data center is appropriate. She questioned why Hermantown's values and priorities are different than the municipalities that are passing moratoriums. She asked Council to propose one- or two-year moratorium on hyperscale data centers in Hermantown. She spoke about Council members comments not really knowing what a data center was until it came to light. She stated that Council is responsible for making decisions that could likely be detriment of the community and can use a moratorium to learn important facts like the rest of the residents. She expressed she was pleased that the St. Louis County Board Commission listened to constituents and voted that proposed zoning amendments were inadequate. She spoke about the phrase sunk cost fallacy, where a person is reluctant to abandon a course of action because of how much they have invested into it when abandonment would be more beneficial. She stated that it is okay for Council to vote no and say no to city staff regardless of their investment. She stated that Council needs to act in the best interest of the community and the community of Hermantown refuses to be preyed upon.

Tim Resberg 3634 Midway Road, Hermantown, MN – Mentioned Director Ronchetti's presentation given and asked if the utility extension is for the new substation or data center. He shared he heard that the data center would pay for it to be put in but then the tax payers are going to have to pay to maintain it. He shared that he has worked on high voltage transformers and it is very hard to keep the noise down from them. He expressed concern about the data center creating pollution and dropping the values of tax payer properties in the surrounding areas. He shared they may have to blast bedrock to get footings of

buildings down and asked what will happen to peoples wells and houses if that's the case. He asked Council to think about its tax payers and community members.

Jonathan Thornton 5869 Hermantown Road, Hermantown, MN – Spoke regarding the Adolph Development Economic Impact Study that was shared by Director Ronchetti. He expressed frustration as a constituent that Director Ronchetti left after the presentation and that the word neighborhood was not mentioned. He shared that as a resident he expects Council to look out for their best interests and not trillion-dollar companies. He spoke regarding the AUAR scoping document and its mention of the 2045 Comprehensive Plan. He reminded Council that the 2045 Comprehensive Plan steering committee met for 18 months and the future urban services area in the SW corner was never mentioned once. He mentioned questions asked by Councilors during the pre-agenda meeting. He said it was good to ask why does the new AUAR appear to be authored by the City of Hermantown, not a consultant and why the data center was not mentioned as one of the five scenarios in the Adolph Development Economic Impact Study. He stated that there is a pattern of behavior by City staff to not include information on the data center to mislead constituents. He told Council that today would be a good day for the City of Hermantown to stop misleading constituents.

Owen Lyons 5143 W Arrowhead Road, Hermantown, MN – Spoke about concerns for the proposed data center. He shared that for an industrial site storm sewer is needed and relies on ponds. He asked what chemicals do the experimental ponds filter and if they are on alarms. He stated he used to build these buildings and spoke about the battery racks and generators that go into a single building. He shared that generators use anti-freeze and diesel while the chillers close loop system uses anti-freeze. He expressed concern for runoff into ponds and how the chemicals will affect surrounding residents' water as his grandkids live in that area. He stated that if Council okays this that Hermantown should be legally liable. He heeded Council to never trust corporations.

Sarah Lofald 5502 Hermantown Road, Hermantown, MN – Spoke about her comments from the last meeting regarding the ambiguity of updated AUAR, ordinances, and zoning. She expressed concern that changes were made to fit the data center and that city staff was manipulated by the developer. She shared frustration around the lack of public comment during the process and how the media was the one to break the news. She spoke about Council assuring citizens they were not approving a data center. She shared an email from January 2025 of a resident asking the Mayor and Eric Johnson if the company who wanted to purchase their land was going to build a data center and the cities response was only regarding wetland delineation despite knowing about the potential data center since September 2024. She spoke about a resident in April 2025 who directly asked multiple times if the Council knows anything about a data base and was told they don't know anything at this time about a data base. She stated comments that Council did not sign an NDA conceals the fact that two city staff sitting up with Council did. She shared that City claims they are working together to better serve the community and questioned who they

really are working with and serving. She asked Council if the residents of Hermantown show up at a city council meeting to oppose the development of a massive data center complex by Google, will they listen.

Emma Richtman 5215 Chris Drive, Hermantown, MN – Shared that it is encouraging to hear Councilors ask questions during Director Ronchetti's presentation. She spoke about the time commitment and sacrifices made to stopping the data center project. She shared that the community has had to become overnight experts on the subject to be taken seriously as their hopes are not good enough. She stated that the facts and studies they have shared are still not good enough to move the dial. She thanked her neighbors who are sacrificing their time to fight for their cause. She shared that ground has not broken but their wellbeing is already being impacted by the proposed hyperscale data center. She stated that they all have better things with their time than reviewing AUARs and asked Council if they have read the scoping document. She shared that she hopes and expects them to submit comments as it also impacts them as Hermantown residents. She emphasized that the people impacted by the project are not numbers and deserve to be treated with respect. She spoke about attending a County Commission meeting and feeling hear for the first time when there was discussion from commissioners and the tabling of an ordinance for further review. She told Council they have the power to exit this project at any time and to be loyal to their constituents who vote for them.

Alicia Navetta 5219 Wadena Street, Duluth, MN – Spoke about Googles first hyperscale data centers in Dalles Oregon built in 2006. She shared that in 2021 the city of Dalles was ordered to release water usage of the hyperscale data center and did not due to an NDA with Google claiming it was a trade secret. She shared that after settling a lawsuit it was revealed Googles hyperscale data center used 12% of the city's water in 2012 and the four standing data centers today use 40% of the city's water totaling 550 million gallons a year. She spoke about the city of Dalles having to acquire federal land to expand their reservoir, which Google is only covering a quarter and the rest is covered by loans and public water rates. She pointed out similarities of Dalles and Hermantown, both are small towns, have small budgets, and are working with tech giants. She stated the story of Dalles can be used to look 20 years into the future of Hermantown. She shared that a low job counts of 200 jobs across four hyperscale data centers when Google had originally promised 200 jobs per hyperscale data center. She expressed concern for the area's future consisting of more data centers, increased resource usage, and continued secrecy as NDAs are still affecting resident relationships. She told Council to look at the lessons from Dalles Oregon and say no.

8. **CONSENT AGENDA**

A. **Minutes** - Approval or correction of March 23, 2026 City Council Work Session Minutes and the April 6, 2026 City Council Continuation Minutes

- B. **Accounts Payable** - Approve general city warrants from April 1, 2026 through April 15, 2026 in the amount of \$639,836,96

Motion to the approve the Consent Agenda. 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

9. **RESOLUTIONS**

- A. **2026-41 Resolution Authorizing The Purchase Of A John Deere 325 G Tracked Skid Steer In The Amount Of \$74,500.00**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-41 Resolution Authorizing The Purchase Of A John Deere 325 G Tracked Skid Steer In The Amount Of \$74,500.00. 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. **2026-42 Resolution Authorizing The City Of Hermantown To Support St. Louis County For The 2027 Project CSAH 32 (Arrowhead Rd) Sidewalk, Curb & Gutter, & Storm Sewer**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-42 Resolution Authorizing The City Of Hermantown To Support St. Louis County For The 2027 Project CSAH 32 (Arrowhead Rd) Sidewalk, Curb & Gutter, & Storm Sewer. 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

C. **2026-43 Resolution Approving Change Order Numbers 36 & 37 (KA Change Orders #12 & #13) For The NorthStar Ford Arena As A Reduction In The Amount Of (\$246,238.91)**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-43 Resolution Approving Change Order Numbers 36 & 37 (KA Change Orders #12 & #13) For The NorthStar Ford Arena As A Reduction In The Amount Of (\$246,238.91). 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. **2026-44 Resolution Approving Pay Request Number 22 For The NorthStar Ford Arena To Kraus-Anderson Construction Company In The Amount Of \$267,072.77**

(motion, roll call)

Motion to approve 2026-44 Resolution Approving Pay Request Number 22 For The NorthStar Ford Arena To Kraus-Anderson Construction Company In The Amount Of \$267,072.77. 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

10. **RECESS**

Motion to recess at 7:34 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