

**CITY OF HERMANTOWN**

**City Council Meeting**

Monday, May 18, 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; Eric Johnson, Community Development Director; Joe Wicklund, Assistant City Administrator; Chad Ronchetti, Economic Development Director; Jim Crace, Director of Public Safety; Zach Graves, Fire Chief; Trish Crego, Utility & Infrastructure Director; David Bolf, City Engineer; Gunnar Johnson, City Attorney

**VISITORS:** 120

1. **CALL TO ORDER**

2. **CLOSED SESSION**

- A. Motion to close the meeting of the Hermantown City Council pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § Section 13D.05 Subd. 3 (b) per the attorney-client privilege for discussions with the City's litigation team regarding the lawsuits relative to Hermantown Road Assessments. Following this closed session, the Hermantown City Council will reconvene in an open session.

*(motion, roll call)*

Motion to close the meeting of the Hermantown City Council at 4:30 p.m. pursuant to Minnesota Statutes § Section 13D.05 Subd. 3 (b) per the attorney-client privilege for discussions with the City's litigation team regarding the lawsuits relative to Hermantown Road Assessments. 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

Motion to reconvene into open sessions at 5:13 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

3. **PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

4. **ROLL CALL**

5. **ANNOUNCEMENTS**

6. **COMMUNICATIONS**

A. Correspondence 26-207 through 26-326 placed on file

7. **PRESENTATIONS**

A. **2025 Audit Presentation**

Clifton Larson Allen LLP  
(Pre-Agenda Only)

8. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

Jim Klukkert, Duluth, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He urged Council to listen to public and vote no on the project. He expressed concern for the lack of women involved in Council and city staff.

Tim Kusnierek, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He expressed frustration with the course of action taken regarding the project.

Candi Mock, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. She expressed concern for red flags in the decisions made around the AUAR and 2045 Comprehensive Plan.

Peter Taylor, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He made recommendations to use separate consultants and experts on the project other than Googles. He shared concerns about needing to reduce noise emissions.

Motion to recess at 6:43 p.m. 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

Motion to reconvene at 6:46 p.m. 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

Sarah Lofald, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. She spoke about the large number of individuals who oppose this project that do not have the same confidence and flexibility to speak at and frequently attend meetings.

Rich Hilton, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He expressed that opinion of those who oppose the project and can't attend meetings shouldn't carry any less weight. He shared concerns regarding lack of open dialogue and discussion with residents.

JoAnne Bates, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. She urged Council to not approve tax abatements for Google. She expressed concerns for residents and lack of insurance construction jobs would be for local union workers.

Dennis Lofald, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the location for the proposed data center project. He shared the need to differentiate a data center and hyperscale data center in discussions. He emphasized that the project does not belong in the corner of Hermantown. He asked Council to stop the project if they can.

Tom Bates, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He shared he is uncomfortable with Googles using their AI resources to predict deals. He told Council that if they say no to the project the residents opposed will back them.

Doug Olsen, Hermantown, MN – Spoke concerns regarding broken processes with city and residents. He shared that Hermantown has the opportunity to show others how to develop a process to work together as a community. He suggested town halls to give residents time to hear and process facts and discussion.

Tim Resberg, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He shared concerns regarding city costs for maintaining new roads and the utility extension. He expressed concerns for residents of the rural area, such as decreasing land value and effects on well water.

Bob Kohlmeier, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He shared concerns that elected officials are not representing the community and residents that elected them.

Clarissa Ek, Solway Township, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. She urged Council to pay attention to the Fond Du Lac tribe comments given the land involved includes tribal water tributaries and sacred streams. She expressed concerns for future generations and the projects effects on them.

Derek Storm, Hermantown, MN – Announced that he will not be running for office and filing lawsuit City Council members regarding, false information, data requests, and the Cities storm water tax. He expressed frustration with current state of Council and city.

Maggie Hylton, Duluth, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. She expressed concern that there is not a way to hold companies like Google accountable and urged Council to reconsider the project.

Jonathan Thornton, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He shared concerns about the numbers and financing of the proposed project. He expressed concern regarding the lack of answering questions about property tax. He asked Council why they would let a trillion-dollar company get a 2.5% rate. He emphasized that trust with local government has been shattered.

Steven Newland, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. He shared that projects like this often create fewer jobs then promised. He expressed concern that a data center in Hermantown will affect the cities identity and appeal.

Emma Richtman, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. She expressed frustration regarding the Councils decision to go forward with an AUAR over an EIS after residents concerns and pending lawsuit. She shared that if Google prides themselves in sustainability and low impact on the environment they should support

an environmental review. She shared concerns about Google being held accountable and what stress will the city have maintaining their new infrastructure.

Karen Harmon, Hermantown, MN – Spoke about attending a Carlton County Commission meeting. She shared how wonderful it was for everyone to talk with each other, ask questions, and listen. She questioned whether this project would have the same results if conversations with the community happened sooner.

Barbara Opal, Duluth, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. She shared the sunk cost fallacy with Council and urged them to make the right decision to determine the best course of action for the future regardless of the amount of effort put in.

Dawn Lapointe, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed data center project. She discussed many concerns about the proposed agreements with Google regarding the need for job protection, decommissioning bonds, contamination liability, third party audits, water consumption caps, utility rate stabilization, road repair funds, and lack of enforcement.

## 9. **MOTIONS**

- A. Motion to approve or deny the following new liquor license application effective June 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027 contingent upon complete applications being received, successful background checks and license fees being paid in full:

Hermantown Tavern, LLC | 4767 W. Arrowhead Road | On-Sale Intoxicating/Sunday  
(*motion, roll call*)

Motion to approve the new license application effective June 1, 2026 through June 30, 2027 contingent upon complete applications being received, successful background checks and license fees being paid in full. 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

## 10. **CONSENT AGENDA**

- A. **Minutes** - Approval or correction of May 4, 2026 City Council Continuation Minutes

- B. **Accounts Payable** - Approve general city warrants from May 1, 2026 through May 15, 2026 in the amount of \$705,005.95

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

## 11. **RESOLUTIONS**

- A. **2026-48 Resolution Accepting Large Specific Project Scoping Document and Authorizing The Preparation Of The Draft Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) Document For The Section 31 Hermantown Industrial Project**

*(motion, roll call)*

Councilor LeBlanc asked if there were separate environmental review processes and permits that happen outside of the AUAR. Councilor Hjelle asked who determines an update to the AUAR. Councilor Geissler asked how it is ensured that all comments are introduced and reviewed in the draft AUAR.

Nick Rhinehart, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed resolution. He spoke about consultant’s response to public comment such as the sculpting of the size of the area and lack of project clarity.

Sarah Lofald, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed resolution. She spoke about concerns with the first and current AUAR process and lack of project details. She shared that the city should prepare a full environmental impact statement after developer has completed a project description.

Rich Hilton, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed resolution. He questioned if the city changed its zoning and ordinance to fit the current project and avoid an EIS and proceed with an AUAR. He expressed concern regarding environmental impacts of data centers.

Julie Ernst, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed resolution. She expressed concerns that comments responses were not carefully considered and gave examples of responses that felt dismissive or not meaningful.

Jonathan Thornton, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed resolution. He expressed concern about misleading statement regarding number of comments made. He also expressed concern regarding time line in which comments were reviewed and published for Council to review.

Doug Olson, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed resolution. He expressed concerns regarding processes at the city.

Emma Richtman, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in opposition of the proposed resolution. She expressed concern about the planned use being BLM while still being a residential area. She asked what the timeline between current and future planned use is.

Geissler asked: Do we go and talk to the government agencies for discussion or just interpret and build in to AUAR. Eric – Yes, we can speak to them this is scoping process. G asked if they are just approving scoping document

Motion to approve 2026-48 Resolution Accepting Large Specific Project Scoping Document and Authorizing The Preparation Of The Draft Alternative Urban Areawide Review (AUAR) Document For The Section 31 Hermantown Industrial Project. 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

**B. 2026-49 Resolution Clarifying Motion To Table Resolution 2026-45**

*(motion, roll call)*

Councilor Geissler had questions regarding the jobs tied to the abatement agreement and school tax being paid. Councilor LeBlanc asked if someone from the school district can come in to explain budget and how the money would be used.

Sarah Lofald, Hermantown, MN – Expressed concerns about Council not being prepared and having a lack of knowledge of process. She expressed concerns regarding outdated and incorrect information in the proposed agreements that were tabled.

Emma Richtman, Hermantown, MN – Asked if proposed agreements that were tabled remain unchanged or if the material would get updated with new documentation to be brought forward after AUAR is complete.

JoAnne Bates, Hermantown, MN – Spoke about concerns regarding money for the school and asked Council to follow through with Councilor LeBlanc's recommendation to have someone from the school district come in to make more sense of what will be done.

Motion to approve 2026-49 Resolution Clarifying Motion To Table Resolution 2026-45. 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

C. **2026-50 Resolution Authorizing The Purchase Of A Towmaster T-16T Trailer In The Amount Of \$25,920**

*(motion, roll call)*

Motion to approve 2026-50 Resolution Authorizing The Purchase Of A Towmaster T-16T Trailer In The Amount Of \$25,920. 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

D. **2026-51 Resolution Authorizing And Directing Mayor And City Clerk To Execute An Acceptance Of Easement Agreement To The City Of Hermantown For Parcel 395-0010-04405 To From Minnesota Power For The Hermantown Lightning Drive Improvements And Trail Project**



*(motion, roll call)*

Motion to approve 2026-51 Resolution Authorizing And Directing Mayor And City Clerk To Execute An Acceptance Of Easement Agreement To The City Of Hermantown For Parcel 395-0010-04405 To From Minnesota Power For The Hermantown Lightning Drive Improvements And Trail Project. 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

- E. **2026-52 Resolution Receiving Preliminary Engineering Report And Calling For A Public Hearing For Road Improvement District No. 548 (The Reconstruction Of Stebner Road (MSAS 103) Between Morris Thomas Road And Maple Grove Road In Sections 23-26)**

*(motion, roll call)*

Motion to approve 2026-52 Resolution Receiving Preliminary Engineering Report And Calling For A Public Hearing For Road Improvement District No. 548 (The Reconstruction Of Stebner Road (MSAS 103) Between Morris Thomas Road And Maple Grove Road In Sections 23-26). 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

- F. **2026-53 Resolution Approving Preliminary And Final Plat Of Hawkline Business Park And Imposing Conditions On The Final Plat**

*(motion, roll call)*

Sarah Lofald, Hermantown, MN – Spoke in favor of the proposed resolution. She shared the history of the brownfield site. She urged Council to get assurances from developers for prevention of decontaminating environment.

Kathryn Sarnecki, Saint Paul, MN – Spoke in favor of the proposed resolution. She shared clarification of the environmental process due to the land being a superfund and noted that the MPCA is over seeing the process.

Motion to approve 2026-53 Resolution Approving Preliminary And Final Plat Of Hawklane Business Park And Imposing Conditions On The Final Plat. 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

G. **2026-54 Resolution Authorizing And Directing Mayor And City Clerk To Execute And Deliver Purchase Agreement For Fireworks From Flashing Thunder Fireworks**

*(motion, roll call)*

Motion to approve 2026-54 Resolution Authorizing And Directing Mayor And City Clerk To Execute And Deliver Purchase Agreement For Fireworks From Flashing Thunder Fireworks. 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

12. **RECESS**

Motion to recess at 9:05 p.m. 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

ATTEST:

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Mayor

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City Clerk