

**Regular Council Meeting
March 2, 2026**

The meeting was called to order at 5:30 p.m. by Mayor Tom Kloss.

Roll Call: Elaine Conrad, Deb Marsolek, Cleo Skroch, Linda Longmore, Randy “Bushy” Symicek, and Jason Ekern showed up at 5:46pm. 6 Present.

Others Present: Jim Woychik, Ron Zareczny, Officer Justin Zareczny, Danielle Zareczny, Cody Kabus, Bill Baxa, Zach Rastall, Rita Sunday, Brandi Berg, Kayla Mathson, Wayne Palkowski, Atty Rick Schaumberg, Chief Jim Waniorek, Diego Velasquez, Karen Sanchez, and Deputy Clerk Abby Bautch.

Proof of Public Notice: Mayor Kloss verified proof that public notice was given.

Approval of Agenda: Randy Symicek motioned to approve agenda, seconded by Cleo Skroch. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Minutes –February 2nd, 2026 & Special Council meeting February 25th, 2026

Motion to approve minutes from February 2nd, 2026 meeting by Randy Symicek, seconded by Linda Longmore. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Motion to approve minutes from February 25th, 2026 meeting by Deb Marsolek, seconded by Cleo Skroch. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Public Comments:

Council member Deb Marsolek addressed concerns regarding the City’s adherence to Roberts Rules of Order.

Licenses and Permits:

C. Crebo-Operators- Elaine Conrad motioned to approve, seconded by Linda Longmore. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

G. Pape-Operators- Elaine Conrad motioned to approve, seconded by Cleo Skroch. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

L. Halling-Building Permit- Deb Marsolek motioned to Deny building permit, seconded by Linda Longmore. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Knights of Columbus-Picnic March 27,2026- Randy Symicek motioned to approve, seconded by Cleo Skroch. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Knights of Columbus-Picnic April 11, 2026- Elaine Conrad motioned to approve, seconded by Cleo Skroch. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

SS Peter & Paul Catholic School-Picnic March 14, 2026- Cleo Skroch motioned to approve, seconded by Elaine Conrad. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Street Superintendent Report:

Bobcat Quote-Mayor Tom Kloss reported on behalf of Street Superintendent Eric Theisen, who is on vacation for the week. He reviewed the equipment quotes Eric obtained from Komro for the purchase of a new bobcat with trade-in of the City's existing s590 model.

- **S590 Bobcat:**
 - Quote: \$58,233.00
 - Trade-in value for current S590: \$30,000.00
 - Komro discount: \$11,896.40
 - **Final total:** \$16,336.60

- **S566 Bobcat:**
 - Quote: \$76,505.00
 - Trade-in value for current bobcat: \$30,000.00
 - Komro discount: \$20,665.60
 - **Final Total:** \$25,839.40

The purchase cost would be shared equally between the city and Water & Sewer. Council member Jason Ekern arrived during this discussion.

Linda Longmore initially motioned to proceed with the purchase contingent upon Water & Sewer approval but subsequently rescinded her motion.

Linda Longmore motions to go with the S590 model from Komro contingent upon Water & Sewer approval. Seconded by Elaine Conrad. Roll call vote-Conrad-Yes, Marsolek-Yes, Skroch-Yes, Longmore-Yes, Symicek-Yes, Ekern-Yes. Ayes 6 Nays-0. Motion carried.

Front Door Quote-Mayor Tom Kloss reported that Street Superintendent Eric Theisen had obtained two quotes for the replacement of the City Hall front door. Miemietz Construction submitted a quote for \$6,400.00, while La Crosse Glass & Overhead Door submitted a quote for \$6,920.60.

Motion by Cleo Skroch to accept the Miemietz Construction quote of \$6,400.00. Seconded by Deb Marsolek. Roll Call Vote- Marsolek-Yes, Skroch-Yes, Longmore-Yes, Symicek-Yes, Ekern-Yes, Conrad-Yes. Ayes-6 Nays-0. Motion Carried.

Police Department Report: Police Chief Jim Waniorek reported that the new dash cams will be installed on March 24, 2026, by Axon.

Swearing of New Officer-Police Chief Jim Waniorek swears in Justin Zareczny with the oath of office, officially appointing him as an officer of the Independence Police Department. Mayor Tom Kloss welcomed Officer Justin Zareczny to the City of Independence.

Jim's Vacation- Police Chief Jim Waniorek Requested permission to carry over 20-30 hours of unused vacation time, noting that he had been the only officer on duty for a period of time. Motion by Deb Marsolek to allow Chief Jim Waniork to roll over his leave hours to be used by December 31, 2026. Seconded by Jason Ekern. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Old Business

Elk Rod & Gun Club Kids Contest- Mayor Tom Kloss informed the council that Mike Blaha was unable to attend the meeting but had requested the use of the old fire station on Friday May 8, 2026 and Saturday May 9, 2026 for storage related to the Elk Rod & Gun Club event. Police Chief Jim Waniorek stated he had no concerns with the request but asked that the club designate a single point of contact for coordination. Motion by Cleo Skroch to allow the Elk Rod and Gun Club to use the old fire station as requested. Seconded by Randy Symicek. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Independence Opera House/Friends of City Hall-Bill Baxa reported that he previously submitted the 2025 financial statements in January and is here to answer any questions council has. Council member Deb Marsolek requested a fee schedule for the Opera House rentals. Bill Baxa stated that the rental rates are as follows:

- **Opera House Deposit:** \$1000.00 (money is given back if Opera house is left clean)
- **Private Event Rental:** \$600.00
- **Public Events:** No Charge
- **Lake View Room:** \$100.00

Mayor Tom Kloss inquired about microphone availability for the event scheduled on May 13, 2026. Bill Baxa confirmed that American Flag bunting will be installed in the Opera House.

Hi-Crush Whitehall LLC-Attorney Rick Schaumberg distributed the proposed letter and accompanying spreadsheet, prepared with assistance from the City's Engineer, outlining the financial assurance City requests from Hi-Crush Whitehall LLC in the amount of \$689,252.50. Motion by Randy Symicek to approve letter and authorize Attorney Rick Schaumberg to send it Hi-Crush Whitehall LLC. Seconded by Deb Marsolek. Motion carried unanimously by vote of acclamation to approve.

Historical Society/City Hall Basement Update- James Woychik reported that the emergency lighting and fire extinguishers have been installed in the City Hall basement. Jim Woychik requested a copy of the signed contract between the Historical Society and the City. Woychik also noted ongoing issues with wasps in the basement and discussed challenges related to moving a large bookcase down into the basement.

Sesquicentennial Celebration- Mayor Tom Kloss reported that preparations for the event are progressing and nearing finalization. He noted that tickets for the Mayor's Dinner, scheduled for May 13, 2026, at the Opera House, have begun to go on sale, although they have not yet been formally advertised.

Veteran's Park- No one was present at this time.

Library Update- Kayla Mathson provided an update on the progress of the new Library. Kayla also reported that she was honored to attend Governor Evers' State of the State address as hid guest and was invited to join him for dinner at the Governor's residence.

Block 1 Alley- Mayor Tom Kloss reported that the project has been sent out for bids again, with certain costs reduced to evaluate potential pricing changes. He noted that the project was previously quoted at over \$150,000 last fall. Updated bids are expected to be received within the next couple weeks.

Markham Addition Lots- Realtor Brandi Berg presented the accepted offer for lots 32-33 and informed the Council that an additional offer had been submitted for lot 34. She provided an offer-to-purchase document to help the Council better understand how such offers are processed. Brandi requested guidance on how the Council wishes to handle offers submitted through outside agents—specifically, whether the agent's commission should be taken out of the existing 5% and contracts amended accordingly, or whether the Council Prefers an alternative approach. She also requested access to the previous settlement statement to assist in making a more informed decision.

Ferguson Apartments-Attorney Rick Schaumberg reported that, upon review, no easement exists for maintaining the drainage ditch or the retention ponds located near Ferguson Apartments.

Lake Dredge Pile/Seeding- Council member Randy Symicek reported that once the road bands are lifted, the lake dredge pile will be leveled and may be seeded. However, because multiple companies continue to remove material from the pile, seeding may need to be delayed.

Flower Hanging Baskets- Council member Deb Marsolek presented a quote from Larkin Valley Greenhouse in Blair, WI for 24 (15-inch) hanging baskets at a cost of \$50 per basket, totaling \$1200.00. City Clerk Dawn Smieja provided an additional quote from Melissa Wilttrout, who supplied the baskets the previous year; she quoted 24 (16-inch) baskets at \$65 each, totaling \$1560.00. A final quote was submitted by Laura Reinders of Oak Hill Greenhouse, offering 24 (16-inch) baskets at \$75 each for a total of \$1800.00, or 24 (20-inch) baskets at \$100 each for a total of \$2400.00.

Motion from Elaine Conrad to go with Larkin Valley Greenhouse for the quoted price of \$1200.00 for 24 hanging baskets. Seconded by Deb Marsolek. Roll call vote-Skroch-Yes, Longmore-Yes, Symicek-Yes, Ekern-Yes, Conrad-Yes, Marsolek-Yes. Ayes-6 Nays-0. Motion Carried.

Council member Deb Marsolek will contact Malinda Nuenschwander of Larkin Valley Greenhouse to inform her that the City has selected their business to provide the hanging baskets.

New Business

Central Builders- Mayor Tom Kloss reviewed the site plan submitted by Central Builders. Chris Demulling from Central Builders is inquiring whether the City would grant a variance for the project. The Council expressed general consensus in favor of granting variance.

AED-Mayor Tom Kloss reports that the AED at four seasons park was not working so City Clerk Dawn Smieja looked into replacement parts and presented a quote from Grainger for replacement pads and battery pack for \$537.25. Mayor Tom Kloss and his Wife Donna Kloss will be donating of an AED to the City Hall.

Motion by Jason Ekern to approve the order for replacement parts for the EAD at Four Seasons Park from Grainger. Seconded by Cleo Skroch. Roll call vote-Longmore-Yes, Symicek-Yes, Ekern-Yes, Conrad-Yes, Marsolek-Yes, Skroch-Yes. Ayes-6 Nays-0. Motion Carried.

Humane Society- Rita Sunday of the Trempealeau County Humane Society, accompanied by Realtor Brandi Berg, presented a mockup illustrating the potential development of a Humane Society facility in Independence. Brandi Berg reviewed the anticipated benefits of establishing both a Humane Society and a dog park within the City. They will return to next Council meeting with additional site options for consideration.

Mayor Tom Kloss requested Council consensus to return to Public Comments to address Cafeteria El Molinito, as the business owners were present. The Council expressed general consensus to proceed.

Public Comments: Cafeteria El Molinito LLC- Owners of Cafeteria El Molinito, Diego Velasquez and Karen Sanchez distributed a letter outlining their intent to convert the existing business location into a bar and grill. The Council requested that the owners prepare a comprehensive plan detailing the proposed opening date, hours of operation, and overall business intentions. This item will be revisited at the next meeting.

Mayor Tom Kloss requested Council consensus to return to Old Business to address Veteran's Park, as Wayne Palkowski was now present. The Council expressed general consensus to proceed.

Old Business: Veteran's Park- Wayne Palkowski provided an update on the project. He reported that 100 memorial stones have been ordered. The second statue for the park has also been ordered, and efforts are underway to secure donations for the third statue.

Committee Reports:

Ambulance- Cleo Skroch provided an update on the recent Ambulance Committee meeting and annual report.

Water & Sewer- Council member Jason Ekern reported ongoing issues with Water & Sewer bills due to complications at the Post Office. He noted that the Water & Sewer Commission is exploring the potential purchase of a new truck. Jason also stated the Facility Plan with Davy Engineering is progressing and is currently under review by the DNR. Additionally, he confirmed that the new water rate was approved and will increase by 3% effective April 1, 2026.

Street- Council member Randy Symicek reported that bids for the ally project are still pending. He also provided an update regarding his recent meeting with Davy Engineers concerning the dam.

Correspondence:. None to report.

Approval of Invoices and Payments:

Motioned by Randy Symicek to approve; seconded by Elaine Conrad. Roll Call Vote. Symicek-Yes, Ekern-Yes, Conrad-Yes, Marsolek-Yes, Skroch-Yes, Longmore-Yes. Ayes- 6 Nays-0, Motion Carried.

Future Agenda:

- Bobcat Quote
- Historical Society/City Hall Basement Update
- Library Community Center
- Sesquicentennial Celebration
- Veterans Park
- Block 1 Alley
- Hi-Crush Whitehall LLC/Sand Mine
- Markham Addition Lots
- Lake Dredge Pile/Seeding
- Central Builders
- Humane Society
- Cafeteria El Molinito LLC

Future Meeting Dates:

Council Meeting April 6th, 2026 @ 5:30 PM

After having completed all matters before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 7:51 PM.

Abby Bautch, Deputy City Clerk