

Dassel, MN

Regular City Council Meeting

Minutes

Monday, July 21, 2025 at 6:00 pm

1. Call to Order

Minutes:

Meeting called to order by Mayor Lalone at 6:05 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Mayor Lalone

b. Roll Call

Council members Gaertner, Landrus, Suchy, Thurn & Mayor Lalone

Minutes:

Members present: Gaertner, Landrus, Suchy, Thurn & Mayor Lalone
Members absent: None

Community members present: Roger & Sandi Toft, MaryAnn Krol, Janice Pederson, Donna Mattson, David Johnson, Ray Zimmermann, Beth Janish and Bill Ward.

2. Approval of Minutes for City Council meeting June 16, 2025, Red Rooster Committee May 6, 2025,

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Landrus to approve the minutes as presented.
Motion carried.

3. Public Hearing(s)

a. Public Hearing for the Vacation of Drainage and Utility easements in Highland Circle.

• Minn. Stat. § 412.851 governs vacation of public right of way, detailed below by the League of Minnesota Cities: o When it is in the public interest to do so, cities may abandon ownership or control over all or any part of land set aside, dedicated, or used as streets or alleys. State law sets the exclusive process for a statutory city to abandon a street, road, alley, or public way. Minn. Stat. § 412.851. o A statutory city may also vacate any publicly-owned utility easement or boulevard reserve in the same way streets or alleys are vacated by the type of city involved. o In statutory cities, the resolution ordering the vacation must pass by a four/fifths vote of all the members of the council. This means there must be four affirmative votes on a five-member council. Minn. Stat. § 462.358, subd. 7. o The steps for a statutory city to vacate a street or alley are as follows: ♣ The council may initiate the action by resolution, or a majority of property owners who abut the land to be vacated may petition for this action. ♣ The council must hold a public hearing on the proposal, following two weeks published and posted notice. ♣ The city must provide written notice to each affected property owner at least 10 days before the hearing. If the street is within a plat, all property owners within that plat should be considered as affected property owners.

Minutes:

Mayor Lalone opened the Public Hearing at 6:08 pm.

City Planner Sarah Swedburg addressed council and expressed that the Public Hearing is specifically for the vacation on the utility easements and the PUD Amendment and Lot Line Adjustment will be addresses later in the agenda.

Swedburg gave an overview of the request. The original plat allowed 4–5-unit townhomes and one multifamily in the middle lot, in 2017 an amendment was approved to allow 10-2-unit townhomes. The applicants are now wanting to

construct single family homes instead of townhomes. Since the owners are requesting lot line adjustments to enlarge the 8 lots, we are also needing to vacate the drainage and utility easements to the portion of lot 29 at the back of these parcels to be enlarged.

Swedburg noted that all of the requests would need to be approved in order for it to work. No one from the public was there to speak at the public hearing. Mayor Lalone closed the Public Hearing at 6:18 pm.

4. Open Forum

(The City Council invites residents to share new ideas or concerns related to city business; however, individual questions and remarks are limited to three (3) minutes per speaker. No City Council action will be taken, although the Council may refer issues to staff for follow up or consideration at a future meeting. The Mayor may use discretion if speakers are repeating views already expressed or ask for a spokesperson for groups of individuals with similar views. Speakers should state their name and home address at the podium before speaking.)

Minutes:

Beth Janish, representing the Cokato-Dassel Lions and Rotary with a beautification proposal to the city. They have around \$12,000.00-\$13,000.00 along with access to grant monies. They would like to do a seating type structure in the green space outside of City Hall, similar to the ones in Cokato and Hutchinson. The project does not need to be the umbrella concept; it could also be a pergola or some other design. The space would become city space that the city would be responsible for maintaining. They would like the structure to be along Hwy 12 so people could see it while driving through town.

Bill Ward member of the Dassel Heritage Preservation Commission (Ordinance 156 Historic Preservation.) proposed to council that he would like to let the commission put on hiatus for now and potentially permanently. In 5 years only 4 properties have been added to the HPC, only 1 of those being a private residence. Ward states it is becoming more difficult to maintain membership.

Kurt Greenley stated the State and Federal Government issued the City the status of Certified Local Government with the State Historic Preservation Office. If the city decides to eliminate the HPC they would lose options for grant funding. Issues with maintaining 5 members on the commission has been and continue to be an issue. Greenley does not believe the benefits of being part of the HPC benefits the city enough to continue. Putting the commission on hold he believes sends the wrong message and he recommends having the State remove the city's certification, which will give the city the option to reapply in the future. Another option would be to renegotiate the terms of the ordinance and see if the State would allow a board of 3, which is what is currently on the board. At this time 1 member needs to be from the Meeker County Historical Society, and that is the missing member on the board.

Administrator Eckerly asked what would happen to the properties given the historic status and Greenley stated they would lose their recognition.

David Johnson, 130 Linart Ave. addressed council on the concerns of doing the Breeds Park bathroom project and the library project without having the available funds prior to the start of the projects. Johnson also stated if the HPC wants to disband he believes they should be able too. He also stated that with the Highland Circle property, he hopes council takes into account what the current residents thoughts are on the project.

Johnson spoke as the Fire Chief stated in regard to the Highland Circle PUD he doesn't believe 3" off the property line should be allowed. He has concerns about sending firefighters in between the buildings in the case of a fire.

Mary Ann Krol, 125 Highland Circle. Krol is concerned for how the single-family home lot are going to affect the twin home lots next to her. If those lots are changed in the future she has concerns with the risks of fires and other issues. Krol has concerns with her insurance company raising rates with the change.

Janice Pederson, 127 Highland Circle. Pederson expressed her concerns about the aesthetics of the neighborhood, would like to see some continuity.

Planner Swedburg addressed council and residents stating the developers will need to build in compliance with the state building code. Residents asked why the developers had not shown up for either of the meetings and it was clarified that they were aware of the meetings and time.

Donna Mattson, 129 Highland Circle. Mattson stated the county assessor told her that their townhomes are too close together and expressed concerns if there is a fire in a neighboring unit, her unit and all the others would catch fire as well and they were told when they purchased their home the PUD would be for 55+.

5. Additions or Omissions to Agenda

Minutes:

Motion by Landrus, seconded by Suchy to approve the agenda with the addition of 9g. Discuss the Dassel-Cokato Lions & Rotary Picnic table project. Motion carried.

6. Consent Agenda

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Landrus to approve the Consent Agenda. Motion carried.

- a. **Payment of Claims in the amount \$457,289.01**
- b. **Approve hiring of Desirae Nelson and Kent Shaker as part-time Liquor Store Clerks at \$12.00 per hour pending background check.**
- c. **Accept resignation of Alyssa Carlen part time Liquor Store Clerks effective June 28, 2025.**
- d. **Accept resignation of Dakota Cadorette part time Liquor Store Clerks effective June 8, 2025.**
- e. **Approve the Street Closing Application for Saturday, August 30, 2025, from 4:00 p.m. to 8:00 p.m. from 2nd St N to 3rd St N on Atlantic Avenue for Red Rooster City Festival.**
- f. **Approve Al Sexton to the Planning Commission until Dec. 31, 2026 and Isaac Nelson until Dec. 31, 2027.**

7. Council & Committee Reports

- a. **Red Rooster Committee meeting June 17 & July 15, 2025 - Amy Gaertner**

Minutes:

Council member Gaertner reported on the last Red Rooster Committee meeting sharing that things are moving forward. Gaertner stated that city staff has been doing a lot of work. Administrator Eckerly stated the committee is in need of 35-40 volunteers to help with the events. The committee was unwilling to move the weekend, even though a company was willing to donate the chicken. Administrator Eckerly and City Clerk Bergum cannot do all of the planning and

volunteers are needed otherwise the future of the event is uncertain. The Bike Ride and Walk/Run were in jeopardy of not happening because of lack of someone to coordinate. Kurt Jacques volunteered to coordinate the Bike Ride and James Dickey and Max Johnson volunteered to coordinate the Run/Walk. Mayor Lalone and Councilmember Suchy will be in attendance at the August 14th Red Rooser Committee meeting.

b. DAHS Meeting June 24, 2025 - Eckerly

Minutes:

Administrator Eckerly reported the last DAHS meeting last 2.5 hours. The Ergot exhibit was discussed along with which exhibits will stay, and which will be taken down. There are 3 consultants that are proposing how much a new exhibit will cost but quotes or estimates have been given. Eckerly explained the exhibit and how it would work with the QR codes, iPads would be provided or an Apple device if the visitor had one, but it would only work with Apple products. Mayor Lalone stated there needs to see the design and competitive bids for the project.

c. Dassel- Cokato Trail Meeting June 30, 2025 - Landrus

Minutes:

Council member Landrus gave an update from the June 30, 2025 meeting. The new representative from Dassel Township was introduced to the committee. Mitchell Lease, Bolton & Menk was present to go over the plans for the project, including a resident who is looking to have his driveway done so it can be coordinated with him. The meeting to proceed with the bid opening will be August 20, 2025.

d. Planning Commission Meeting - June 7, 2025 - Landrus

Minutes:

Council member Landrus reported that at the meeting the PUD amendment was discussed including the setback and future plans for the property. This will be up for a motion later in the agenda.

e. League of Minnesota Cities Conference - Duluth June 25, 2025 - Suchy

Minutes:

Council member Suchy reported she and Clerk Bergum attended the League of Minnesota Cities conference in Duluth in June. A lot of information was received, the North Star Story map, which Bergum added the Mushroom Building too. There are opportunities to get planting in town along with other monies from grants. AARP offers a grant for certain park projects. Attended a session on the tragedy in Burnsville to learn about preparedness in the case of a major event.

8. Staff Reports

a. Museum Director

Minutes:

Administrator Eckerly reported the air conditioning issues – resolved. Landscaping will be doing the spring and fall work around building and are looking at some other areas of landscaping concerns. Volunteer is mowing lawn. Staff is working on evaluation of the spaces in the History Center for exhibits and enhancing the ergot exhibit.

Upcoming programs and exhibits include: Airborn – Aug. 7, 6-9, Food and Cash Bar. Cost \$10. Crow River String Band, Aug. 16, 7:00 pm. \$15, Red Rooster Program - Aug. 30, 10 am. Galen Johnson. Food. No Charge, Reading of Our Town – Aug. 31, 2:00 pm. No Charge, Also Exhibit “Our Town” Kurt Meyer – Sept 7, 2:00 pm. No Charge, Tea, Saki, Poetry –, Lydia Henry – Manhole Cover Rubbings – Sept. 21. 2:00 No Charge, Elaine Nordlie – Norwegian Celebration, 200th Anniversary of the Start of Norwegian Emigration Oct. 11, 9 am., Rosemaling classes, Paper heart making, Straw Ornaments, Lunch.

b. Liquor Store Manager

Minutes:

Manager Moy reported they are slowing down on purchasing as sales were down a little in June to \$98,177.71. At this point with the approval to hire the 2 applicants on the agenda we will be fully staffed. Staff is working on rotating out displays to promote the different on-going summer sales.

c. Fire Chief

Minutes:

Chief Johnson reported 26 calls for service in the month of June, 18 of which were in the city limits of Dassel and 235 year to date.

d. Public Works Director

Minutes:

Street Department: Street sweeping has been conducted as needed. Coordination ongoing with MNDOT on sidewalk and road projects. Storm sewer lines and basins along Highway 12 have been vacuumed and jetted during the highway closure. Work is nearly complete. Next steps include storm vector work, contingent on weather and ground conditions. Curb and crosswalk painting has begun, currently focused on the south side of the tracks. Parking adjustments around the Fire Hall are planned within the next couple of weeks. Parts have been received for the crosswalk sign on Highway 12. Updates will be completed and MNDOT will handle installation. Pothole patching is underway; problem areas are being addressed. Grading of gravel areas and detour routes around the tracks is ongoing. Water Department: The RPZ (Reduced Pressure Zone) valve at the Water Plant was replaced by Servin Plumbing. All City-owned RPZs have been inspected per annual requirements. Crews are managing one-call locates for MNDOT and fiber installation projects. Water monitoring and sampling continue as needed. Initial outreach to water tower cleaning companies has begun. Pricing is being gathered for potential exterior cleaning within the next couple of years, as recommended during the last inspection. Sewer Department: Team Lab conducted sonar testing of wastewater ponds. Results show less than 10% sludge levels in all ponds –

excellent condition. Existing treatment practices will continue. (Report attached.) The lift pump at 5th St lift station needs replacement. A new pump (with a 5-year warranty) is recommended over a rebuilt one (1-year warranty). Suggested budget line: 602-49450-500. Spraying has been ongoing when weather permits. Due to frequent rain, night operations have been necessary to remove water. When the new lift pump is installed, the contractor will also address electrical component repairs. Main lift station siding is approximately 90% complete; delays due to concurrent projects. Ahlgren Electric will inspect one of the pivots for electrical issues. Weed spraying at the ponds continues. Equipment Updates: Grates for Red Rooster Days Chicken Feed have been replaced; basket replacements underway. Macqueen provided training on jetting truck operations. Vac/Jet truck was serviced at DC Diesel for alternator and wiring repairs. Routine equipment maintenance and repairs are ongoing. Parks Department: Summit Park dirt work is complete. Pending motion approval, hydroseeding will proceed. Wimmer Tree Service scheduled for tree removal (previously approved). Awaiting drier ground conditions. New surface material has been added to all playground areas. Building/Property: Handrail repairs and door/entryway painting have been completed at City Hall. Awaiting MNDOT project completion before Landscaping installs irrigation and sod. Servin Plumbing has re-installed all necessary components. Dirt work at City Shop from water line repair is complete and will be seeded. A property walkthrough was conducted with the League Insurance representative for insurance evaluation. Weed spraying in downtown areas is in progress. Councilmember Landrus inquired on the responsibility of the cottonwood tree at 910 5th St. N. since it is dead. Moy stated that is the responsibility of the property owner. Councilmember Suchy stated the weeds at Veterans Memorial need to be taken care of, Moy stated they will get it taken care of, they haven't been doing much along Hwy. 12 due to the construction.

e. City Engineer

Minutes:

Engineer Lease reported he has done some research for available grants for the Breeds Park bathroom project. There is one grant opportunity for this project and that is the DNR Outdoor Recreational grant. This grant would be a minimum of \$25,000.00 and a max of \$350,000.00 with a 50/50 match and 10% being engineering costs. The project right now does not qualify and would need additional things added as a supporting facility.

Lease updated the council on the DC Trail project stating the plans have been certified and will be advertised this week with the bid opening scheduled for August 20th. Lease also noted the reclaim area has been extended.

Lease will reach out to MNDot to get an update on the construction project.

f. City Administrator

Minutes:

Coalition of Greater MN Cities – Regional Meeting, Thurs. Aug 7, 2025, Willmar, if anyone is wanting to attend let staff know. She had training and started developing the City of Dassel Economic Development website. The domain

name is discoverdasselmn.com. Tracey Bergum, City Clerk-Treasurer attended the League of MN Cities conference and learned about the North Star Story Map website along with much more. She gathered the information and now the Mushroom Building is one of the travel sites on the map. Administrative staff has been working a lot on Red Rooster Days celebration. The Committee needs at least 35-40 volunteers for the Labor Day weekend. We have achieved getting new people to take over the duties of the Red Rooster Bike ride and Walk/Run. Anyone interested in helping with chicken dinner, bike ride, walk/run please call city hall. I attended the following meeting: DAHS meeting, Municipal Impact website training, EDAM – Legislative Session Update, Planning Commission meeting, Department Head meeting, Bill Ward regarding the Heritage Preservation Committee, Mari Pieti regarding the Lake Association Meeting and Joint Trail meeting I held a meeting on 2nd Street with Jeremy Alman, Pamela from Dassel Dental, Dave Johnson, Fire Chief, Deputy Jason Kelly, and Kyle Moy, Public Works Director to try to resolve the parking issues on this street. the 4 parking spots across from the Fire Hall will now be no parking, the Fire Hall is available for parking during daytime hours, not overnight. Kyle Moy and I gave the League of MN Cities Insurance Trust appraisal a tour of all the city property and buildings on July 8, 2025. The City will be hosting with the Litchfield Chamber of Commerce a FREE training session on Paid Family leave with Stacey Neuhaus, Vinna Human Resources on Wednesday, July 23, 2025, from 7:30am to 10:30am. We still have room, if interested call city hall. There is a new retirement act that has been implemented and we are working to get a meeting together to educate people on that. We need to schedule a meeting for the 2026 preliminary budget. The preliminary budget is due to Meeker County on for before September 30, 2026.

g. City Attorney

Minutes:
Greenley left after Open Forum.

h. Sheriff's Department

Minutes:
Deputy Bonnick reported 139 calls for service, 82 were traffic stops, 5 damage to property, 4 arrests, 1 warrant, 4 motor vehicle accidents and 2 open doors.

9. Business Items

a. Motion to approve Resolution 2025-020 PUD Amendment and Lot Line Adjustment for Block 5 (Lots 1-4 and 13-28) in Highland Circle

Minutes:
Motion by Lalone, seconded by Thurn to table the Resolution 2025-020 PUD Amendment and Lot Line Adjustment for Block 5 (Lots 1-4 and 13-28) in Highland Circle. Council would like to give the developers the opportunity to answers questions prior to a decision. Motion carried.

b. Motion to approve Resolution 2025-019 Approve Vacatiion of Drainage & Utility Easements in Highland Circle

Minutes:

Motion by Lalone, seconded by Thurn to table Resolution 2025-019 Vacation of Drainage & Utility Easements in Highland Circle. Council would like to give the developers the opportunity to answer questions prior to a decision. Motion carried.

- c. Motion to approve the increase in fee to the Maintenance Permit at the Countys request from \$40.33 to \$64.00.**

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Thurn to approve the increase in fee to the Maintenance Permit at the Countys request from \$40.33 to \$64.00. Motion carried with Lalone voting no.

- d. Motion to replace the pump at the 5th St lift station in the amount of \$12,535.00 from Quality Flow with funds from 602-49450-500.**

Minutes:

Motion by Landrus, seconded by Suchy to replace the pump at the 5th St lift station in the amount of \$12,535.00 from Quality Flow with funds from 602-49450-500. Motion carried.

- e. Motion to have hydroseeding done at the city shop and Summit Park by Neaton Brothers in the amount of \$,5000.00/\$2.00 a yard. Funds coming from 504-43000-500 for the shop and 505-45200-580 for the Summit Park.**

Minutes:

Motion by Landrus, seconded by Lalone to have hydroseeding done at the city shop and Summit Park by Neaton Brothers, up to \$5,000.00/\$2.00 a yard. Funds coming from 504-43000-500 for the shop and 505-45200-580 for the Summit Park. Motion carried.

- f. Motion to approve Resolution 2025-018 Supporting Claim that City has Matching Funds for Library Grant**

Minutes:

Motion by Lalone, seconded by Thurn to approve Resolution 2025-018 Supporting Claim that City has Matching Funds for Library Grant. Motion carried with Landrus and Suchy voting no.

10. Announcements / Dates to Remember

Minutes:

Administrator Eckerly shared the upcoming events with council. 2024 Consumer Confidence Report Letters from Charter Communications Regarding Spectrum Channel Line-up Changes Southwest Initiative Foundation - Thank you and 2026 Budget Consideration DAHS meeting, Tues. July 22, 2025, 10:00 a.m. History Center Dept Head meeting, Tues. Aug. 12, 2025, 7:00 a.m. at City Hall Red Rooster Committee meeting, Thurs. Aug. 14, 2025, at 6:00 pm at City Hall City Council Meeting, Mon., Aug. 18, 2025, at 6:00 p.m. City Hall Joint Trail Bid Opening, Wed., Aug. 20, 2025, at 11:00 a.m. City Hall DAHS meeting, Tues. Aug. 26, 2025, 10:00 a.m. History Center Red Rooster Committee meeting, Tues. Aug. 26, 2025, at 6:00 pm at City Hall

11. Adjourn

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Suchy to adjourn at 9:16 pm. Motion carried.

Contact: Renee Eckerly (renee.eckerly@dassel.com 320-275-2454) | Minutes published on 08/14/2025, adopted on 08/18/2025