



DRAFT

Regular City Council Meeting

Minutes

Monday, December 15, 2025 at 6:00 pm

1. Call to Order

Minutes:

Meeting called to order by Mayor Lalone at 6:06 pm.

a. Pledge of Allegiance

Led by Mayor Lalone

b. Roll Call

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

2. Approval of Minutes for City Council meeting Nov. 17, 2025, Red Rooster Minutes Sept. 29, 2025, and DAHS meeting Oct. 28, 2025.

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Suchy to approve the Minutes for City Council meeting Nov. 17, 2025, Red Rooster Minutes Sept. 29, 2025, and DAHS meeting Oct. 28, 2025. Motion carried.

3. Public Hearing(s)

a. 6:15 PM Public Hearing for Certification of Delinquent Accounts

Minutes:

Mayor Lalone opened the Public Hearing for Certification of Delinquent Accounts at 6:15 pm. Three accounts paid in full: Hawkinson, Kendall, and Stillman. Notices have been sent to the individuals on the list. Penalty calculated on the past due amount, a one-time 10% penalty fee. Mayor Lalone closed the Public Hearing at 6:17 pm.

b. 6:30 p.m. Public Hearing - Truth In Taxation

Minutes:

Mayor Lalone opened the Truth In Taxation Public Hearing at 6:45 pm. Administrator Eckerly gave the Truth In Taxation presentation stating the preliminary amount in September was 9%, now at 5%. \$853,873, an increase of 5% or \$40,565. Bond levy is significant due to the first year of a major payment for the sidewalk parking lot project. Bond payments doubled to \$182,240 and the total property tax levy is \$1,120,076. The museum bond will come off in 2026, with about \$35,000.00 still owed. The water tower is going to come off in 2028, and the water main will come off in 2029. •The sidewalk and street project that was bonded will stay on until 2040. \$20,000 of the \$40,000

increase is for law enforcement protection. The other \$20,000 is between liability insurance wages, health insurance went up 16% and changing the administrative assistant to full time was another \$6,000. \$12,000 collected in delinquent taxes. Public safety aid was a one-time hit of \$64,000 from the state., that they will not be doing again. \$3,000 decrease from subscription subscriber fees to Spectrum. The museum is doing really well with their rentals this year. Paid family leave: Two accounts: one for employees who qualify for unemployment (0.44) and one for firefighters and council members (0.88). Eckerly is checking with the state as to why we have 2 rates. The capital fund accounts balance will be transferred to the next year. Water and sewer information will be provided at next month's meeting.

The report to the county will show a 5% overall increase, with a 12% increase overall. The figure of \$937,836.00 will be reported to the county, which is cumulative. The Total Certified Levy being \$1,120,076.00. Staff will be a check with George to see if bonds can be bought down or called early to reduce the bond. Mayor Lalone closed the Public Hearing at 7:11 pm

c. 7:00 p.m. Public Hearing Review Ordinance 36.01 Fee Schedule & Potential Increase in Water/Sewer/Stormwater rates for 2026

Minutes:

Mayor Lalone opened the Public Hearing to Review Ordinance 36.01 Fee Schedule & Potential Increase in Water/Sewer/Stormwater rates for 2026 at 7:11 pm.

Examples of utility increases were provided for each residential, commercial, and industrial. The rate increase aligns with a study recommending a 3% annual increase to cover debt and improvements. The study projected increases for 20 years. No increases were done last year. There is concern about failing infrastructure and the need to replace it. Meter replacements were done in 2020 and are good for 20 years. Rental of the community room is proposed to increase from \$60 to \$75. Dave recommended changes to fire false alarm fees: First three alarms: No charge, 4th-10th alarm: \$55 each, 11th-15th alarm: \$110 each, 16th+ alarm: \$165 each. A new fee of \$50 is proposed for fire department incident reports for insurance companies. It is suggested to get rid of animal licensure but keep dangerous dog sections. Only 15 dogs were licensed last year. Tracey keeps an active spreadsheet of all dogs in town. Rabies requirements and dangerous dog sections will be maintained. A pre-development agreement should also be in place, similar to the one with Mr. Haase, so taxpayers aren't paying for TIF districts. The developer should pay all legal, engineering, and planning costs. The state has set the fees the city can charge for cannabis licenses. Most initial licenses and renewals are \$500 and \$1,000, respectively. Low potency hemp edible retail registration is \$125. With the Department of Cannabis going into effect, the THC ordinance can be repealed. The state must first approve the license, then the city can charge \$125 to examine the location and ensure it fits the code. State legislature sets fees for the city, making them very cheap compared to alcohol. The State of Minnesota has a water testing fee by the Department of Health, increasing from \$9.72 to \$15.22 starting January 1st. Suggested increase in the three-quarter inch meter (residential meter) from \$300 to \$350. Mayor Lalone closed the

public hearing at 7:25 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:

Darrin Sombke, Meeker County Commissioner spoke on the county's new strategic plan. Which include four priorities: financial stewardship, assets and amenities, quality economic growth, and organizational excellence. Financial stewardship involves maximizing tax revenue and using it efficiently. Exploring a half-percent sales tax option due to road and bridge repairs. Meeker County is one of the only counties in all of our surrounding counties that does not have any type of sales tax. Currently considering a half-percent sales tax increase, which is part of their plan. It is specific to roads and bridges projects, not for general budget issues. Evaluating cost savings and reallocation of resources during the annual budget process. Changes in staffing are being evaluated to ensure positions are necessary and filled appropriately. Meeker Memorial Hospital renovations will not cost the county any money. The funding is coming from the hospital's reserves. The demolition landfill and transfer station north of Litchfield may be sold to a private entity due to additional environmental requirements. Consolidating highway out shops due to equipment issues. A significant addition to the highway department building in Litchfield is expected. Partnering with cities to support economic growth. Funding is available through economic grants. Addressing housing and childcare as important factors for quality economic growth. Working with the Child Care Coalition. Updating the county's comprehensive land use plan. Planning a family resource center to provide resources to people who are struggling. Aiming to bring resources to places like Dassel as many resources are focused on Litchfield. Enhancing the positive work environment for Meeker County employees. Competing with the Metro area for employees due to higher pay. Implementing a leadership and development training program. Evaluating job descriptions and compensation to remain competitive. Conducting staff team-building activities and addressing turnover rates. The goal is to have a trim budget while providing quality services and a quality place to live. MetLife was chosen for paid family leave administration because it is cheaper and helps administer the program, MetLife is also helping to pay for the insurance. Employees dropped short-term disability due to the paid family leave. Minnesota Family Leave is putting a toll on Meeker County. Tracking and administering the leave is costing a lot of resources. Consultants and other expenses have been incurred to implement the leave. MetLife paying part of it added complexity. The county adopted a mission statement: "united to lead, driven to serve." Meeker County has influence at the statewide conference of county leaders. The half-percent sales tax will be discussed at an upcoming meeting. The tax would be 50 cents for every \$100 spent. The sales tax could take some pressure off property taxes. The sales tax would be used only for roads and bridges. There are no administrative fees taken out. Council invited Commissioner Sombke to the walk throughs at the elementary schools in March and April.

5. Additions or Omissions to Agenda

6. Consent Agenda

Minutes:

Motion by Suchy, seconded by Thurn to approve the Consent Agenda as presented.
Motion carried.

- a. **Payment of Claims \$554,870.80**
- b. **Approving new liquor license and Sunday liquor application for Thirsty's Bar & Grill under GTown LLC Sara Cassidy for January 1, 2026 to January 1, 2027 pending background check by Meeker County Sheriffs Department.**
- c. **Motion not to waive municipal tort liability limits established by MN Statute 466.04.**
- d. **Motion to schedule the 1st City Council meeting of 2026 on Tuesday, January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.**
- e. **UPDATE: Motion to Approve the Appointment of the Fire Department Officers effective Jan. 1, 2025**
- f. **Motion to approve Resolution 2025-032 accepting a donation to the City of Dassel from Dassel Firemans Relief Association Gambling Account in the amount of \$15,000.**

7. Council & Committee Reports

- a. **DAHS meeting, Tues. Nov. 25, 2025 - Eckerly**

Minutes:

Eckerly reported FungusAmongus is up for 26 awards: people can go vote for them. Janice is working on the new website. The Rental Agreement was discussed, and they passed a motion to modify their lease to charge an extra fee if people pick up tables and chairs, due to damage to the floor. Next DAHS meeting is January 27, an annual and monthly membership meeting.

- b. **Joint Meeting with City of Cokato, ISD 466, and City of Dassel, Mon. Dec. 1, 2025 - Mayor Lalone**

Minutes:

Mayor Lalone reported at the meeting they discussed the Elementary schools: feasibility study underway regarding moving or reconstruction. Hockey rink: upgrade for the atrium/entrance is on hold. Cokato is looking into low-income or additional housing. Dassel is experiencing an increase in jobs. Cokato touched on a \$1.4 million upgrade to fix holes in the kitty pool, which may be replaced with an art splash park near the corn carnival area. Elementary schools: tours are coming up. Dassel informed them of their infrastructure projects. There was a discussion about a 4-inch water line for fire suppression at the school. The school may have a bond question in about five years. Will be tours of each elementary school, Dassel Elementary will be the first Monday in March at 5:30 pm and Cokato Elementary will be the first Monday in April at 5:30 pm.

- c. **Red Rooster Committee meeting, Mon. Dec. 8, 2025 - Gaertner**

Minutes:

Council member Gaertner reported the Red Rooster committee is considering

turning into a 501(c)(3) organization. There was discussion of possibly raffling a golf cart, with 600 tickets at \$50 each. The goal is to utilize the history museum's federal ID number to have raffles. Red Rooster needs to establish bylaws and elect a president, secretary, and treasurer. The city cannot make money as the host of Red Rooster. The Red Rooster committee has made money in the past to give to organizations like the ambassadors. The board is open to reducing the days to Friday and Saturday, possibly including a community church on Sunday. The new representatives for the ambassadors need to figure out the royalty schedule. They are considering having chicken on Saturday, with a parade, coronation, and fireworks. Some people wish the chicken dinner was on Saturday after the parade because they don't come back on Monday.

8. Staff Reports

a. Museum Director

Minutes:

Eckerly reported that rentals have continued to increase. Sherlock Carol play begins December 12th. Staff is starting to work on ideas for events for 2026.

b. Liquor Store Manager

Minutes:

Manager Moy reported October sales numbers went from \$89,973.16 to \$93,766.80. Holiday sales numbers were good, with people celebrating before and after the holidays. Final inventory of the store will be done on January 2nd. Loaded up on closeout items and planning a 10% off all wines through the end of the year. Council discussed advertising and holiday sales, aiming to increase numbers. Moy stated she is already planning for fishing opener and the 4th of July. December numbers have been good, with weekday sales performing well. Sunday sales are averaging around \$1200.

c. Fire Chief

Minutes:

Chief Johnson reported November had 37 calls for the month, with 15 in the city of Dassel. Year-to-date calls are at 410, compared to 392 last year. The Red Cross was called for the last incident. There are 21 old portable radios to be taken out of service and potentially sold. •The new radios are working well with a few minor programming issues.

d. Public Works Director

Minutes:

Eckerly reported the valve is leaking at 1st St and Hwy 12 again. The city will need to suck the water out with the vac truck so the company can fix the break. Not sure if it will be covered under warranty. Trying to flood the rink, but water is seeping through. Hoping the cold weather will help hold the water on the spongy soil. Replacing a broken window in the warming house with plexiglass. No bids received on the Ranger. Kyle wants to relist it for \$1,500 after fixing a leak. Motion to sell the 2005 Ford Ranger XLT 4x4 for \$1,500. Motion by

Landrus, seconded by Gaertner to relist and advertise the Ranger for \$1,500.00. Motion carried.

Flyer sent out to make people aware of the city's towing policy. No parking on streets or alleys during 48 hours after a snow event. Plowing starts at 4 a.m. and can be done by 8 a.m. Towing costs a minimum of \$200. Vehicle will be towed to Hutchinson if not picked up within seven days, incurring storage fees. The city makes no money off the tows. No cars have been towed yet this winter. Aiming for consistency in towing enforcement. Plowing focuses on downtown businesses first, then the fire department. They try not to plow during the day unless they have to.

e. City Engineer

Minutes:

Engineer Lease discussed the proposal for completing a feasibility report for the 2027 improvement project. Total estimated project cost is around \$2.6 million. Cost estimate for the feasibility report is around \$18,000 to \$22,000. The report is needed to pursue PFA funding. Street project is set to be paid off in a couple of years. Pacific Avenue project moved up to 2027. Feasibility studies can be updated with cost estimates. Sanitary sewer project is related to existing conditions of the sanitary sphere. Televising done in 2017 showed concerns with the sewer line. Project could be pushed off to 2028. There is potential that the pipe's gotten worse since 2017. Working on BDPI grant application for Spectralytics. Grant covers 50% of eligible costs. County may assist with street reconstruction costs. Assessments will be used to pay for extra sanitary sewer, water main replacement, force main, and lift station. Project cost is about \$1 million. New sanitary sewer for Spectralytics to a centralized low point at the end of 3rd street and into a lift station. Water main through the area is from the 1970s and undersized. Assessments would be based off of the sanitary gravity, sanitary sewer and the water main, not the force main and the lift station. Coordination needed with Cretex. Need to meet with property owners and get numbers out. Preliminary assessment figures to be put together. Property owners can waive their right to hearings according to the 429 process.

f. City Administrator

Minutes:

Administrator Eckerly reported she and Mayor Lalone visited with Robert Scott and David from Flaherty and Hood on November 25th. David is helping with the RFP for the engineering and the architects. Low potency license for liquor stores for hemp, but the federal government has banned hemp, which goes into effect November 13th of 2026. Tracey & I had a demonstration from Laserfiche which will be discussed later in the agenda. Met with Vanessa from Waste Management regarding contract renewal. Contract will be on the January meeting agenda. Services include shredding and sharps containers for city buildings. Waste Management has modernized recycling facilities and offers tours. Liability insurance and work comp insurance renewals are complete after the mayor signs the document. Letters regarding paid family leave were sent to

staff for signature after reviewing percentages. Staff timesheets need to be signed and verified for the last payroll next week. Banyon software discrepancies and performance evaluation project packets for department heads are being worked on. Date books with the City of Dassel logo and pen are available for \$7.50 at City Hall and the museum.

g. City Attorney - No Action Items

h. Sheriff's Department

Minutes:

Deputy Kelly reported two thefts, one ATM-related and one scam in Dassel last month. 109 traffic stops occurred last month, resulting in 10 citations. If anyone should receive a suspicious call or email, they should hang up and call their bank back by a number they know. Spam calls related to back income taxes are prevalent; people should hang up and report them. The IRS and sheriff's department will not call requesting money or donations. A Microsoft scam is circulating, appearing legitimate but potentially granting scammers control of computers.

9. Business Items

a. Motion to declare the 20 Motorola XTS2500 radios as surplus property and authorize advertisement for bids or list on gov.deals.

Minutes:

Motion by Landrus, seconded by Thurn to declare the 21 Motorola XTS2500 radios as surplus property and authorize advertisement for bids or list on gov.deals. Motion carried.

b. Motion to certify delinquent water and sewer amounts to the Meeker County Auditor to be put on the real estate taxes

Minutes:

Motion by Landrus, seconded by Suchy to certify delinquent water and sewer amounts to the Meeker County Auditor to be put on the real estate taxes, with the updated changes for those accounts paid. Motion carried.

c. Motion to approve Resolution 2025-028 Ordering Preparation of Report on 2027 Street Improvement Project

Minutes:

Motion by Lalone, seconded to Landrus to approve Resolution 2025-028 Ordering Preparation of Report on 2027 Street Improvement Project with the engineering not to exceed \$22,000.00. Motion carried.

d. Motion to Approve Resolution 2025-030 Appointing Dassel State Insurance and Susan Jarl, Agent

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Thurn to Approve Resolution 2025-030 Appointing Dassel State Insurance and Susan Jarl, Agent. Motion carried.

e. Discuss proposal from SunShare for placement of solar gardens on PID

23-0607000

Minutes:

Motion by Landrus, seconded by Gaertner not to move forward with the SunShare proposal. Motion carried.

- f. **Discuss purchasing digital archival system, Laserfiche proposal and DocuWare proposal. The money would be from account 101-41000-501 Capital Projects with a balance of \$40,000.**

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Suchy to approve the Cities Digital-Laserfiche contract at a cost of \$10,815.00. Motion failed with Landrus, Lalone and Thurn voting no.

- g. **Update on RFP for Engineering/Architect firm for costs on designing new Fire Station**

Minutes:

Administrator Eckerly has been working with the City Attorney and Fire Chief Johnson on the RFP and almost has it finished. The RFP will be ready for the January meeting.

- h. **Motion to approve Resolution 2025-029 Setting and Approving the Annual Fee Schedule for 2026**

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Landrus to approve Resolution 2025-029 Setting and Approving the Annual Fee Schedule for 2026. Motion carried.

- i. **Motion to Adopt Resolution 2025-31 Approving Final Budget & Levy**

Minutes:

Motion by Lalone, seconded by Thurn to Adopt Resolution 2025-31 Approving Final Budget & Levy. Motion carried.

- j. **Motion to approve 3% pay increase for staff effective 1/1/2026.**

Minutes:

Motion by Landrus, seconded by Gaertner to approve 3% pay increase for staff effective 1/1/2026. Motion carried.

- k. **UPDATE: Motion to approve quote from Computer Samurai for Firewall equipment for admin office, public works and museum, a new desktop computer for public works, and additional memory for 2 computers in Admin office**

Minutes:

Motion by Lalone seconded by Landrus to approve quote totaling \$5,500.00 from Computer Samurai for Firewall equipment for admin office, public works and museum, a new desktop computer for public works, and installation at a cost of \$600.00. Motion carried.

- l. **UPDATE: Motion to approve lease with Tiercel Properties LLC for ice rink to**

December 1, 2027.

Minutes:

Motion by Gaertner, seconded by Landrus to approve lease with Tiercel Properties LLC for ice rink to December 1, 2027. Motion carried.

10. Announcements / Dates to Remember

Minutes:

2026 Elected Leaders Institute Feb. 6-7, 2026, in Plymouth and Feb. 20-21, 2026, in Alexandria
NEED TO REGISTER AND BOOK HOTELS ASAP
Holiday - December 24, 2025 - Christmas Eve - City Hall Closed
Holiday - December 25, 2025 - Christmas Day - City Hall Closed
Holiday - December 31, 2025 - New Year Eve - City Hall open 8:00 am - noon
Holiday - January 1, 2025 - New Year Day - City Hall Closed
Dept Head meeting, Tues. Jan. 13, 2026, 7:00 a.m. at City Hall
Red Rooster Committee Meeting - Thurs. Jan. 15, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.
Holiday - January 19, 2026 - Martin Luther King, Jr. Day - City Hall Closed
City Council meeting, Tues. Jan. 20, 2026, 6:00 p.m. at City Hall
DAHS meeting, Tues. Jan. 27, 2026, 10:00 a.m. History Center, Annual Membership Meeting

11. Adjourn

Minutes:

Motion Landrus, seconded by Gaertner to adjourn at 9:15 pm. Motion carried.