

AITKIN CITY COUNCIL MINUTES  
REGULAR MEETING  
AITKIN PUBLIC LIBRARY

December 15, 2025

6:00 p.m.

**MEMBERS PRESENT:** Mayor Gary Tibbitts, Council Members Chris Dotzler, Jason Henke, Julie Miller, Justin Cartie

**MEMBERS ABSENT:** None.

**ALSO PRESENT:** Street Supervisor Lon Nicko, Police Chief Colter Riedel, Fire Chief Brian Pisarek, Kat Robb

**PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE**

**APPROVAL OF AGENDA**

- Addition under New Business: Street Department – Hire Recommendation
- Remove: Proposal Bolton & Menk, Project Engineering & Administration for Air Park Dr. Sewer Lining Project from New Business

A motion to approve the agenda as amended was made by Justin Cartie, seconded by Julie Miller. The motion carried with all voting aye.

**CONSENT AGENDA**

The following items were included in the consent agenda:

- Minutes – Regular Council Meeting 12/1/2025
- Accounts Payable
  - City
  - Liquor Store
- Financial Reports as of: 11/30/2025
- Gambling Permit; NWTf Aitkin Gobblers – 2/8/2026
- ECRL Library Hours
- Renewal – 2026 Legal Services; Nuisance Attorney Quinlivan & Hughes
- Resolution No. 2025-12-15B Accept Ice Skate Donation
- Resolution No. 2025-12-15C Accept PD Donation
- Resolution No. 2025-12-15E Authorize Cert. of Assumed Name

A motion to approve the consent agenda was made by Jason Henke, seconded by Justin Cartie. The motion carried with all voting aye.

**PUBLIC HEARING**

- None.

**MAYOR'S REPORT**

- None.

**ADMINISTRATION REPORT**

- Liquor Store Inventory has been scheduled for January 2, 2026.
- 2025 Audit has been scheduled for the week of March 9, 2026.
- Personnel Committee has been working on negotiations. A tentative agreement with the Police Department will be brought to the January 5<sup>th</sup> Council Meeting. Public Works, Teamsters Supervisory, AFSCME are scheduled to meet on December 22, 2025.
- City Administrator Jen Thompson and City Clerk Samantha Sass recorded a podcast with Mark Jeffers from Aitkin County Economic Development which will be published December 18, 2025.
- The rooftop unit at the Liquor Store has been replaced.

**OLD BUSINESS**

- None.

**NEW BUSINESS**

- **Fire Department – Hire Recommendations**
  - Fire Chief Brian Pisarek reported that the Fire Department currently has 26 firefighters on staff, with a preferred staff of 28 firefighters. Chief Pisarek recommended the hiring of Andrew Browne and Steve Tilbury. Both applicants have the required training and certifications. The proposed start date for both applicants is January 16, 2026, contingent upon successful completion of a background check. Both hires would serve a one-year probationary period.

A motion to extend the employment offer to Andrew Browne and Steve Tilbury contingent on a background check was made by Jason Henke, seconded by Julie Miller. Mayor Tibbitts called the vote.

- Council Member Dotzler -- Aye
- Council Member Henke -- Aye
- Council Member Miller -- Aye

- Council Member Cartie – Abstain

The motion carried 3-0, with one Council Member abstaining.

- **2026 Fire Department Pay Structure**

- Resolution No. 2025-12-15C Approving a Pay Structure for Fire Department Personnel
  - Chief Pisarek noted that the last pay increase for the Fire Department occurred in 2018. Chief Pisarek requested approval of a revised firefighter pay structure to bring wages in line with minimum wage standards. He further explained that page-out call would remain unchanged, while the revised structure would allow for additional compensation for extended attack responses.

A motion to approve Resolution No. 2025-12-15C Approving a Pay Structure for Fire Department Personnel was made by Julie Miller, seconded by Jason Henke. Mayor Tibbitts called the vote.

- Council Member Dotzler – Aye
- Council Member Henke – Aye
- Council Member Miller – Aye
- Council Member Cartie – Abstain

The motion carried 3-0, with one Council Member abstaining.

- **Mutual Aid Agreement**

- Chief Pisarek presented a mutual aid agreement with Cuyuna Range Fire Services. A fire department mutual aid agreement is a formal pact between fire agencies to share resources across town lines for large or complex emergencies.

A motion to approve the Mutual Aid Agreement was made by Jason Henke, seconded by Julie Miller. Mayor Tibbitts called the vote.

- Council Member Dotzler – Aye
- Council Member Henke – Aye
- Council Member Miller – Aye
- Council Member Cartie – Abstain

The motion carried 3-0, with one Council Member abstaining.

- **IRRR Public Works Grant**

- The City of Aitkin received a \$500,000 Public Works Grant from IRRR for the Wastewater Treatment Facility. City Administrator Thompson noted this is the largest IRRR grant the city has received to date.

- **Resolution No. 2025-12-15A Accepting LMC Grant Navigator Funding**

- The City of Aitkin received \$3,000 from the League of Minnesota Cities to support the grant writing and application services regarding the City's Street Improvement Project to offset consulting costs with Bolton & Menk.

A motion to approve Resolution No. 2025-12-15A Accepting LMC Grant Navigator Funding was made by Chris Dotzler, seconded by Justin Cartie. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- ~~**Proposal Bolton & Menk, Project Engineering & Administration for Air Park Dr. Sewer Lining Project**~~

- **Ehlers Investments & Arbitrage Services**

- Resolution No. 2025-12-15F Approval to Open Financial Acct & Investment Advisor
  - Ehlers will work to optimize the investment returns and minimize any potential arbitrage liability, to act in the City's best interest.

A motion to approve Resolution No. 2025-12-15F Approval to Open Financial Acct & Investment Advisor was made by Jason Henke, seconded by Christ Dotzler. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- **Rink Attendant – Hire Recommendations**

- Two applications from previous employees have been received and have been selected for the Seasonal Rink Attendant position. Because both applicants are returning employees, City Administrator Jen Thompson and Street Supervisor Lon Nicko will not be conducting interviews. As this is a seasonal position, the individuals hired will be compensated at the same step they held during their previous employment. They will remain at that step throughout the season and will not advance to a new step on January 1, 2026. However, while their step will not change, their compensation will adjust to the 2026 pay scale. An offer letter, contingent on a background check, was present to the Council for consideration: Nolan Dotzler at Grade SS5, Step 1, with a wage of \$15.08, and Jeremy Egstad at Step 2, with a wage of \$15.57.

A motion to approve both hires contingent on a background check was made by Justin Cartie, seconded by Jason Henke. The motion carried with all voting aye.

- **2026 City Meeting Schedule**

- The council reviewed and established the 2026 City Meeting Schedule.

- **Street Department – Hire Recommendation**

- The Personnel Committee, City Administrator, and Street Supervisor conducted interviews for the Street Maintenance Worker and recommends hiring Chad Robbins with a start date of January 5, 2026.

A motion to extend the employment offer to Chad Robbins at Grade STA3, Step 4 (\$22.58 on the 2025 Wage Scale) pending a background check and pre-employment physical was made by Justin Cartie, seconded by Julie Miller. The motion carried with all voting aye.

**PUBLIC WORKS**

- None.

**BUDGET COMMITTEE**

- None.

**PLANNING & ZONING**

- 12/17/2025 Mtg. – Canceled

**PARK COMMITTEE**

- None.

**LIBRARY COMMITTEE**

- Draft Minutes; 12/9/2025 Mtg.

**AIRPORT COMMISSION**

- Draft Minutes; 12/3/2025 Mtg.
- 12/26/2025 Mtg. – Canceled

**PERSONNEL COMMITTEE**

- None.

**EDA**

- None.

**COMMENTS FROM VISITORS**

- None.

**ADJOURNMENT**

A motion to adjourn the meeting at 6:29 pm was made by Justin Cartie, seconded by Chris Dotzler. The motion carried with all voting aye.

X

Gary Tibbitts  
Mayor

X

Jennifer Thompson  
City Administrator