

Subject: Immigration Enforcement Activity Response

Meeting Date: February 9, 2026	
Submitted/Presented by/Department: Nate Burkett, City Manager	
Action Type	
<input type="checkbox"/> Consent Item	<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Discussion/Direction
<input type="checkbox"/> Public Hearing	<input type="checkbox"/> Informational Only
<input type="checkbox"/> Action/Motion	<input type="checkbox"/> Report
<input checked="" type="checkbox"/> Resolution	<input type="checkbox"/> Other:
Action	
Approve resolution ratifying food support grants made in accordance with January 26, 2026 Council direction.	
Review and consider adoption of a resolution approving rent support grants using local affordable housing aid in amounts and to organizations as specified by the City Council.	
Discuss and provide additional direction as deemed necessary by the Council.	
Background	
Federal immigration enforcement activity has created heightened community anxiety and disruption. We are hearing from residents and small business owners experiencing real economic harm. When families are afraid to leave their homes, the ripple effects are predictable: missed work, lost wages, reduced access to essential services, reduced customer traffic for local businesses, and heightened housing instability. These impacts harm residents, employers, schools, and neighborhood safety, and they create avoidable downstream public costs.	
<u>WHAT THE CITY HAS DONE TO DATE</u>	
1) Adopted a City policy resolution focused on community safety, City operations, and communications	
On January 26, 2026, the City Council adopted a resolution establishing policy statements regarding community safety, City operations, and communications in connection with federal immigration enforcement activity. Key elements include:	
- Emphasis on community safety and public trust so residents feel safe calling 911, reporting crime, serving as witnesses, and accessing City services.	
- Statement that the City does not participate in civil immigration enforcement, and will act only when required by law, including compliance with valid judicial warrants and court orders.	

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- Direction on City property and facilities, including controlling access to nonpublic areas and not providing nonpublic City space for civil immigration enforcement activity unless required by a valid judicial warrant or court order.
- Commitment to a values-forward communications approach grounded in community safety and trust, while avoiding scenario-by-scenario public guidance that could be misinterpreted and make situations less safe.
- A time-sensitive authorization framework allowing the City Manager, in coordination with the Police Chief and City Attorney, to participate in litigation or file amicus briefs when deadlines prevent timely Council action, with defined boundaries and required notice back to Council.

2) Communicated directly with the Governor requesting state action

The City sent a letter to Governor Walz requesting state-level tools and resources to protect residents and stabilize communities impacted by recent immigration enforcement activity. The letter requests:

- Temporary, targeted eviction protections tied to current conditions
- Emergency housing stability funding for direct rent and mortgage assistance
- Emergency stabilization support for impacted small businesses

The letter clarifies the City is not requesting funds for City operations, but rather state resources deployed directly through existing systems and trusted nonprofit partners.

3) Provided immediate food assistance grants totaling \$10,000

To address food insecurity created or worsened by current conditions, the City distributed \$10,000 in grants to support food assistance networks serving affected households:

- \$2,500 to the Heritage PTA
- \$2,500 to the Garlough PTA
- \$2,500 to the Moreland PTA
- \$2,500 to 360 Communities to be used on behalf of families supported by the Early Learning Center

COUNCIL ACTIONS CURRENTLY ON THE TABLE

1) Resolution to ratify the \$10,000 in food assistance grants already distributed

This action formally confirms and ratifies the grants listed above, and documents the Council's finding that the expenditures serve a public purpose by relieving food insecurity affecting West St. Paul resident families during the current crisis conditions.

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2) Resolution to consider rent and mortgage support grants using LAHA

A separate resolution is proposed to authorize a grant of Local Affordable Housing Aid (LAHA) funds to a nonprofit organization to provide rent and/or mortgage support for West St. Paul resident households at or below 80% of AMI who are impacted by the current crisis and at risk of eviction or loss of housing.

- Staff estimates indicate at least 50 to 100 West St. Paul resident households may require short-term assistance to avoid eviction proceedings or imminent loss of housing.
- The resolution makes specific public purpose findings, including that evictions impose measurable public costs and ripple effects such as increased demand for emergency response and nonprofit services, school disruption, and neighborhood destabilization.
- The resolution contemplates a grant agreement with standard safeguards, including income and residency verification, anti-duplication and anti-fraud controls, audit provisions, and reporting requirements.

ORDINANCE IDEAS RAISED AND STAFF PERSPECTIVE

The Council has been approached about adopting ordinances such as:

- A separation ordinance related to immigration enforcement
- An ordinance requiring law enforcement to not wear masks and to identify themselves
- An ordinance disallowing use of public property for massing or coordinating immigration enforcement activity

Staff recommendation: We understand and agree with the intent behind these proposals. People are asking for clear guardrails, transparency, and reassurance that the City will use every lawful tool available to protect community safety and maintain public trust. Those are legitimate concerns, and the Council's direction on January 26, 2026 was adopted with that same intent in mind.

At this time, staff recommends against adopting new ordinances because the resolution passed by the Council on January 26, 2026 already achieves the practical impacts these ordinance proposals are aiming for. It establishes clear City policy expectations, sets operational direction for staff, and makes a strong public statement, while also preserving greater flexibility for the City to respond to specific situations on a case-by-case basis, with advice from the City Attorney and Police Chief as needed. In a fast-moving environment, that flexibility matters.

Staff also cautions against ordinances that are difficult to enforce, exceed City authority, or are likely to be preempted by state or federal law. Unenforceable ordinances can erode public trust by creating expectations the City cannot legally or practically deliver on. The Council's

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January 26, 2026 policy resolution is designed to avoid that risk by clearly stating what the City will do, what it will not do, and what it must do under law, while providing a workable framework staff can actually implement.

Our goal is not to dismiss these ideas, but to recognize that their core purpose has already been addressed effectively through the adopted policy framework. If circumstances change or gaps become evident, staff will return promptly with options for Council consideration consistent with the Council’s adopted policy direction.

Attachments

Letter to Governor Walz
 Resolution - Crisis food support grants
 Resolution - Crisis rent support grants
 Resolution - Affirming Support and Trust in WSP PD (Signed)
 Resolution - Establishing City Policies regarding Federal Immigration Activity (Signed)

Previous Relevant Actions

1/26/2026 Meeting

Alternatives

Financial

Budgeted: Yes

No Financial Impact

Fund:

Department:

Account:

Amount: