

**City of West St. Paul
City Council Meeting Minutes
January 26, 2026**

1. Call to Order

Mayor Napier called the meeting to order at 6:31 p.m.

2. Roll Call

Present: Mayor Dave Napier
Councilmembers Pat Armon, Wendy Berry, Lisa Eng-Sarne, Doug Fromm, Robyn Gulley, John Justen and Junior Councilmember Elise Moga

Absent: None

Others Present: City Manager Nate Burkett
City Attorney Pam Whitmore / Greta Bjerkness
Assistant City Manager Dan Nowicki
Police Chief Brian Sturgeon
Public Works Director / City Engineer Ross Beckwith
Community Development Director Ben Boike
City Clerk Nicole Tillander

3. Pledge of Allegiance

4. Adopt the Agenda

Motion was made by Councilmember Justen and seconded by Councilmember Eng-Sarne to adopt the agenda, as presented.

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

5. OCWS Briefing

Open Council Work Session held January 26, 2026 at 5:00 PM:

1. Welcome and Note Attendance
2. Agenda Items
 - A. Immigration Enforcement Activity Update
 - B. 2026 Legislative Positions (moved to a future meeting)
 - C. Secondhand Store and Construction-impacted Business License Fee Discussion
 - D. Strategic Plan Update (Time Permitting – moved to a future meeting)
3. Regular Meeting Consent Agenda Review
4. Adjourn

6. Community Comments – In Person

- Emily Yederlinic, Ohio St – other councils adopting an eviction moratorium, would like WSP to consider adopting this as well, would like a separation ordinance considered as well.

Mayor Napier advised that the City of West St. Paul is not in a position to institute an eviction moratorium, but the council discussed other ways to help support the community and will put those into action in the coming weeks.

City Manager advised anything immigration related will be covered under agenda item 11B.

- Name not given – asking about Flock license plate readers, advised would be discussed under 11B
- Emily, Ward 1 – appreciation to the community for showing up

7. Community Comments – Phone Line

- No one called in to address the council.

8. Council Comments

Mayor and Councilmembers addressed the public on various topics.

9. Proclamations, Presentations and Recognitions

A. Proclamation Honoring Black History Month

10. Consent Agenda

Councilmember Armon asks that Item B. be pulled for discussion; would like a code enforcement review of the property for licensee Hometown Tire & Service at 1137 Robert St. S., license can still be approved. Council and staff agree to the property review.

Motion was made by Councilmember Justen and seconded by Councilmember Eng-Sarne to approve the following items on the Consent Agenda, as presented:

- A.** Approve City Council Meeting Minutes of January 12, 2026
- B.** City Business Licensing
- C.** City Rental Licensing
- D.** List of Claims for January 26, 2026
- E.** Appoint SMFD Public Member
- F.** Approve Plans and Specifications and Authorize Ad for Bid for the Emerson Avenue Improvement and Mina Alley Reconstruction Projects 26-1 & 26-2
- G.** Approve Plans and Specifications and Authorize Ad for Bid for the Emerson East Mill & Overlay Project 26-3
- H.** Parking Restrictions on Haskell Street East

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

11. General Business

A. Support for and Trust in West St. Paul Police Department

City Manager Nate Burkett presented. The West St. Paul Police Department and Chief Sturgeon are exemplary; committed and dedicated to de-escalation, protecting the community with care and rooted in lawful process and transparency. Mayor Napier read the resolution aloud.

Motion was made by Councilmember Gulley and seconded by Councilmember Fromm to adopt Resolution No. 26-009 Expressing Support for the West St. Paul Police Department Team and Affirming the City Council's Trust, Expectations, and Commitment to Community Safety During Heightened Federal Immigration Enforcement Activity as presented.

B. Community Safety and Federal Immigration Enforcement Activity

City Manager Nate Burkett presented. The presentation can be seen in full by viewing the OCWS meeting from earlier tonight. Topics covered include; legal parameters and boundaries, city philosophy and values and current practices. Community safety is our number one priority. Staff puts forth eight recommendations and a values-based resolution and asks that council adopt these recommendations and resolution as presented.

Chief Sturgeon discussed how WSP PD utilizes Flock license plate readers, who and how that information may be accessed and the partnership with the State of Minnesota, following state data practices and privacy requirements. Chief covered how data is accessed, how alerts are entered into the system and how the system has helped to resolve local crimes.

City Manager and Chief advised police will attempt to only make routine traffic stops in clearly marked vehicles and with uniformed officers.

Mayor Napier thanked staff for their work and opened the floor to public comment.

- Ann Ulrich, Foodsmith owner – liquor license questions, public safety, ICE presence in businesses, in the letter to the State requests that the city add a rent moratorium for small businesses, emergency small business relief fund, immigrant defense fund or small business defense fund, require agents to identify themselves or not conceal their identities by wearing masks, support for small businesses shouldn't come from community members, it should come from the City
- Beth Lechler, near Smith and Dodd – appreciate the leadership stance and glad for what was said, would also like a town hall meeting to be held to hear more voices from neighbors
- Name not given – would like WSP to send a letter to the Walz administration supporting a statewide eviction moratorium; shared language from Mpls resolution, could include language about helping small businesses impacted as well
- Amanda – what can our police officers do to keep us safe? When ICE agents are breaking the law, can local PD help? Chief Sturgeon addressed the questions – we have resources

which will be available on our website, if you call 911, WSP PD will be there, but it is a difficult situation and there aren't always answers. City Manager also addressed this speaker, our police officers will make the safest decision to de-escalate and protect every member of our community.

- Ben Edwards, Butler Ave – concerns about ICE agents using pretext to gain access to homes, concern about Flock license plate reader cameras and 3rd parties not protecting the data in the same way as the Minnesota data practices and privacy laws, resident privacy is at risk. Chief Sturgeon discussed where data is stored and how it is regulated.
- Name not given – Flock is not a trusted company, DHS can access data, if able to get these cameras out of the community, please do that

Discussion by Council and Mayor around the eviction moratorium and sending a letter of support to the State of Minnesota. Mayor Napier does not support, could be harmful to good property managers and asked the City Attorney for clarification. Attorney advised parameters could be added to the letter. Councilmember Gulley does agree and we should send a letter including rental assistance. Councilmember Eng-Sarne read a portion of the Minneapolis resolution and asks how people would apply. City Attorney advised could add exceptions to a WSP resolution, Minneapolis resolution is a good framework, needs more detail. Councilmember Armon would support with a funding mechanism. Councilmember Justen supports sending the letter and would support requesting assistance to small business owners, would not include the financial assistance to the City line if we put forward a resolution. Councilmember Berry advised we wouldn't determine what the State does, we can just support a rent moratorium. Councilmember Fromm supports an eviction moratorium, but it must also include rental assistance. Councilmember Justen advises Mayor does not have to sign the letter; Nate and Council could sign.

Motion was made by Councilmember Fromm and seconded by Councilmember Eng-Sarne to adopt Resolution No. 26-016 Establishing City Policy Statements Regarding Community Safety, City Operations, and Communications in Connection with Federal Immigration Enforcement Activity as presented.

Resolution (values based) – Fromm/Eng-Sarne

Vote: Fromm – aye
 Eng-Sarne – aye
 Armon – aye
 Berry – aye
 Gulley – aye
 Justen – aye
 6 ayes, 0 nay
 Motion carried.

Motion was made by Councilmember Justen and seconded by Councilmember Berry directing staff to write an eviction moratorium letter of support to send to the State. Prior to sending, staff will send the draft letter to Councilmembers Justen, Berry and Armon for

review; inclusive of language similar to preserve economic stability, there should be a rental funding mechanism.

Vote: Justen – aye
 Berry – aye
 Armon – aye
 Eng-Sarne – aye
 Fromm – aye
 Gulley – aye
 6 ayes, 0 nay
 Motion carried.

Under our public purpose expenditure policy, West St. Paul may make a donation to an organization providing food assistance. City Manager does not have a spending authorization for this and would need a motion of support from the council giving him the spending authorization. The funds used would be from the innovation fund.

Councilmember Gulley advises schools are already working with families and funds can be directed where needed if we donate directly to a school, would also like to see the city donate to rental assistance for families in need.

Additional discussion around rental assistance and small business assistance. Councilmember Armon would like to see if the city could provide small business assistance funds; State and County response is also needed. City Manager advised City funded assistance likely wouldn't make a meaningful impact due to lack of funds. Staff would need time to process and determine what is needed, would recommend sending a letter of support to the State, and holding more discussion at the next meeting. Councilmember Justen adds small business assistance should come from the State, need is likely too great for the City. Food assistance and small business assistance should not be tied together; Councilmember Fromm would like food assistance done now and rental and small business discussed at the next meeting with a thoughtful report from staff at that time.

Staff advises council to make a motion to allow expenditure to a certain dollar amount; City Manager advises to start with \$5,000 or \$10,000.

Motion was made by Councilmember Gulley and seconded by Councilmember Fromm, with a friendly amendment of the words "up to" by Councilmember Armon, to direct the City Manager to immediately provide donation and general support for families in our community of up to \$10,000.

Vote: Gulley – aye
 Fromm – aye
 Armon – aye
 Berry – aye
 Eng-Sarne – aye
 Justen – aye
 6 ayes, 0 nay

Motion carried.

C. 2026 Legislative Positions

City Manager Nate Burkett presented, outlining city priorities. Discussion and clarification around the ambulance services areas.

Motion was made by Councilmember Eng-Sarne and seconded by Councilmember Justen to approve Resolution No. 26-011 Adopting Policy Positions and Authorizing Certain Individuals to Speak on Behalf of the City Council with Conditions as presented.

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

D. Rental License Application Review - 97 Orme St. E.

Motion was made by Councilmember Berry and seconded by Councilmember Eng-Sarne to continue item 11D. to the February 9, 2026 meeting.

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

E. Amendment to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and First Reading to Rezone Multiple Properties near the Intersection of Butler Ave. and Highway 52

Staff recommends approval of the amendment to the comprehensive plan to re-guide from high-density to medium-density residential through resolution, subject to conditions. The re-guiding of the properties is contingent upon approval of the Metropolitan Council's review and approval of the amendment application. Staff recommends approval of the first reading to rezone multiple properties near the interaction of Butler Ave. and Highway 52.

Motion was made by Councilmember Armon and seconded by Councilmember Justen to approve Resolution No. 26-013 Approving an Amendment to the 2040 Comprehensive Plan and to approve the first reading of an ordinance rezoning multiple properties near the intersection of Butler Ave. and Highway 52 from R-4, Multiple Family Residential to either R-3, Townhouse Residential or R-2, Two Family Residential, as presented, including conditions.

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

F. Site Plan, Preliminary, and Final Plat Applications for the Redevelopment of 424 Butler Ave. E.

Community Development Director Ben Boike presented multiple applications for redevelopment of the property at 424 Butler Avenue East. The comp plan amendment will re-guide from high-density to medium-density residential. Redevelopment will rezone certain properties through ordinance amendment from R-4, Multiple Family to R-3 Townhouse Residential or R-2 Two Family. The site plan will provide for the construction of 13 townhome units at 424 Butler Avenue East.

Planning Commission reviewed, held a public hearing and voted 7-0 to recommend approval of all applications pending conditions for the site plan and suggestions for staff at their January 20th meeting.

Councilmember Armon had questions about connecting trail to County Park, bus stops, garbage trucks, catch basin and prominent garage doors. Concerns addressed by Community Development Director Ben Boike.

Staff recommends approval of the site plan and preliminary and final plat pending conditions.

Motion was made by Councilmember Armon and seconded by Councilmember Fromm to approve Resolution No. 26-014 Approving a Site Plan for Redevelopment and Construction of 13 Townhomes at 424 Butler Avenue East as presented, including conditions and to approve Resolution No. 26-015 Approving the Preliminary and Final Plat for Grand Oak Grove as presented, including conditions.

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

12. Public Hearings

A. Administrative Code Repeal and Replace

City Manager Nate Burkett presented the first reading. This ordinance consolidates and codifies operational governance so that Council, staff, and the public can quickly understand how the City functions in practice. Staff asks that the council hold a public hearing and approve the first reading of an ordinance repealing and replacing section 30.02 of the West St. Paul City Code relating to the administrative code.

Mayor Napier opened the public hearing at 9:00 p.m.

No one came forward to address the council.

Mayor Napier closed the public hearing at 9:00 p.m.

Motion was made by Councilmember Justen and seconded by Councilmember Eng-Sarne to approve the first reading of an ordinance repealing and replacing the administrative code as presented.

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

13. Closed Session - MN Stat 13D.05 Subd 3(a) - City Manager Performance Review

Motion was made by Councilmember Eng-Sarne and seconded by Councilmember Berry to close the meeting pursuant to Minn. Stat. 13D.05 subd. 3(a), to discuss the City Manager Performance Review.

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

Motion was made by Councilmember Berry and seconded by Councilmember Gulley to re-open the meeting at 9:26 p.m. for adjournment. Discussion will be summarized at the next meeting.

Vote: 6 ayes / 0 nays. Motion carried.

14. Adjourn

Motion was made by Councilmember Berry and seconded by Councilmember Gulley to adjourn the meeting at 9:26 p.m.

All members present voted aye. Motion carried.

David J. Napier
Mayor
City of West St. Paul

Respectfully submitted,

Nicole Tillander
City Clerk
City of West St. Paul