

**CITY OF BIRCHWOOD VILLAGE
207 BIRCHWOOD AVENUE
BIRCHWOOD, MINNESOTA**

**MINUTES OF THE CITY COUNCIL MEETING
MAY 13, 2025, 6:45 P.M.**

MEMBERS:

Jennifer Arsenault	Mayor
Ryan Eisele	Councilmember
Ryan Hankins	Councilmember
Bridget Sperl	Councilmember
Katherine Weier	Councilmember

STAFF:

Alan Kantrud	City Attorney
Scott Hildebrand	City Administrator
Marcus Johnson	City Engineer

GUESTS:

Lori Tella	Washington County Conservation District
Mary Cahill	
Jessie Granic	

Minutes prepared by Josh Rup of Minutes Solutions from a video recording.

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Arsenault called the meeting to order at 6:45 p.m.

2. PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

3. APPROVAL OF THE AGENDA (0:02:33)

On a motion made by Councilmember Weier, seconded by Councilmember Eisele, it was resolved to approve the agenda as amended. All in favor. Motion carried.

The following changes were made to the agenda:

- The City Engineer's report will be moved to the first discussion item under Staff Reports. The City Administrator's report will be second.

4. OPEN PUBLIC FORUM (0:04:00)

Mayor Arsenault opened the public forum.

Zach Mayhook, 531 Hall Avenue:

Zach Mayhook is a member of the Parks and Natural Resources Committee for Birchwood. He thanked Lori Tella and Mary-Sue for their service and contributions.

Mayor Arsenault closed the public forum.

5. PRESENTATIONS (0:04:56)

5.1 Washington County Conservation District (0:04:56)

On a motion made by Councilmember Hankins, seconded by Councilmember Weier, it was resolved that the Council supports the Parks Committee and Lori Tella and offers its general support regarding the project moving forward. All in favor. Motion carried.

Lori Tella explained that the Washington County Conservation District is the local soil and water, and they are involved in natural resource opportunities, soil health, and water quality. Two years ago, the City Parks Committee had invited the Washington County Conservation District to tour Tighe Schmitz Park and identify potential opportunities and natural resource concerns. A community forum was held to gather suggestions.

A storm water retrofit study from 2017 identified approximately six best practices to reduce phosphorus loading. Grants were pursued to assist with funding of the project, and eight project options or areas were highlighted. Area A, the shoreline and swale enhancement zone, has erosion and a swale is not draining properly. Area C has flooding, soil, and sediment deposits which require maintenance. Area D has a clogged basin that has sediment. Areas E, F, and H are all flooded. An aerial view of flooded areas was presented to the Council. Permission was obtained from the Committee to obtain \$70,000 of funding, and Washington County Conservation District applied on behalf of Birchwood Village. There is a 10% match promised by the City who will be conducting the bidding process and managing construction. Another community forum will be held and a review of final designs will be done with the Parks Committee before the project is placed for bids.

A Habitat Enhancement Landscape Pilot (HELP) grant of \$10,000 is offered by the Board of Soil and Water Resources. The WCD received \$250,000 which has been divided between several communities. The additional funds will be used for planting. A Rice Creek Watershed District grant up to \$750 will be pursued to obtain additional items in combination with native plantings. The grant will be issued upon completion of the project. An outreach event will be held on May 31, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to engage the community and obtain feedback regarding the project. Regarding maintenance, it would cost \$250 to \$500 per BMP. Lori Tella noted that WCD encumbers the funds and the \$10,000 grant will be held for Birchwood Village. It was noted that the project should be completed in Q4, 2026.

5.2 Lake Links Fund Presentation (0:20:34)

Mary Cahill and Jessie Granic discussed Birchwood Village's portion of the Lake Links Trail. The goal of the Lake Links Trail is to connect all communities around White Bear Lake, and the trail will be designed for safe walking and biking. A task force committee consists of Mary Cahill, Jessie Granic, Ben Grey, Karen Freeberg, Brian McGinness, Ellen Maspratt, Mike Werner, and Janet Wernett. Cora Henkins is the Road Committee task force representative and Councilmember Sperl is the Board liaison.

A public forum was held in November, 2024, to obtain feedback from the community. A map of the potential trail was presented. Based on cost estimates and research, the project may cost less than \$35,000, and the Parks Committee was engaged to determine how to spend the remaining amount up to \$70,000. It was recommended to use the funds to paint the crosswalks, add additional signage regarding the sharing of the road, traffic mirrors located around Hull and Jay as well as Wildwood and Cedar. Funds could be used to install stencils along the bike path and to separate the walking and riding areas. Two electronic speed signs will be purchased and placed at 170 Wildwood. Two benches may be placed in Tighe Schmitz Park and Wildwood Park. The cost estimate includes vegetation removal equipment.

The Council was asked to create a resolution to support the project and pay the upfront costs for reimbursement. The Council was asked to commit to ongoing maintenance and support the grant application process. It was noted that the project could commence in July, 2025, and it could be completed by the end of the year. Councilmember Hankins recommended that an engineering firm review the scope of work and confirm the costs associated with the project. The grant should include costs of updating the road plan to accommodate the project. It was noted that extra funds could be used to repair potholes along the path. The Council asked whether the white stripe along the trail could be repainted.

5.3 Fire Department Presentation – 2024 Activity Summary (0:44:07)

Chief Greg Peterson provided a summary of 2024's activities and goals in 2025. At the present time, there are 18 full-time firefighter paramedics and one full-time firefighter EMT. There are 12 part-time staff members. Call volume in 2024 was 4,784; 78% of calls are regarding ambulance services and the remaining is fire and rescue. The top five categories for ambulance services are: ill individuals, breathing issues, psychiatric issues, falls, and unconsciousness. A total of 64% of patients are over the age of 60. It is anticipated that call volume will increase over the next several decades necessitating more resources.

Paramedics are trained at a high level from Regions EMS, and a trial program will commence regarding the use of IV Tylenol at 1,000 mg. The IV will be used to replace the use of narcotics to avoid potential opioid addictions. The fire department attended 56 planned events in 2024. A Vial of Life program was started which is a pouch that includes pertinent information for medical calls. A citizen's fire academy was started to educate the public regarding fire and safety prevention. Ride-alongs are done with physicians, doctors, and citizens. Training is ongoing for CPR, emergency community responses, and cardiac support among others. Chief Peterson shared a quote from a resident who acknowledged the efforts of the fire department.

5.4 Discussion Regarding Key Metrics (0:55:55)

Councilmember Sperl included a report in the meeting package that reassures the community that the Council will work with the City Administrator to populate key metrics for Birchwood.

6. CONSENT AGENDA (0:56:43)

On a motion made by Councilmember Hankins, seconded by Councilmember Sperl, it was resolved to approve the consent agenda except for the second item, the Treasurer's report, as presented. All in favor. Motion carried.

7. STAFF REPORTS (0:57:57)

7.1 Update and Discussion Regarding Wildwood Lift Station Reconstruction (0:57:58)

ACTION – City Engineer March Johnson will prepare a one-page overview of the project timeline and expectations. Weekly updates will be provided to the community.

City Engineer Marcus Johnson noted that the reconstruction is scheduled to commence in June, 2025. The EPA is current and the semiannual report was sent on April 29, 2025. A webinar will be held in the near future regarding the EPA grant portion. It was noted that the new lift station will be relatively flat, safer, and it is a larger structure. During construction, the north side of the intersection will remain open as the south side will be closed. The project may take one month to complete depending on the weather.

7.2 Update and Discussion Regarding 425 Lake Avenue Variance – Impervious Surfaces (1:03:21)

City Engineer Marcus Johnson prepared a memo for City Council regarding retaining walls. It is of the opinion of City Engineer Johnson that retaining walls do not meet the definition of impervious surface under the Birchwood City code.

7.3 Discussion of 2025 Street Project (1:09:00)

It was noted that pothole repairs need to be completed within 30 days after the project quote is approved. The remainder of the project should be completed by October 15, 2025. City Engineer Johnson proposed a temporary ditching of the road. Utility companies will be engaged to ensure that components are not exposed as construction is underway. The \$105,000 cost will include milling overlay, temporary ditching, and filling city potholes.

7.4 Discussion Regarding Council Expectations and Duties (1:09:45)

City Administrator Scott Hildebrand discussed the responsibilities of Council which include voting on city policies, laws, resolutions, a fiscally responsible budget, and to plan the community's future. City Administrator Hildebrand recommended a planning session with the Council.

8. CITY BUSINESS – ACTION ITEMS (1:13:43)

8.1 Discussion of Resolution 2025-44 – Establishing a Task Force to Evaluate the Replacement of Water Mains (1:13:46)

ACTION – Mayor Arsenault will prepare an application for potential task force committee members.

ACTION – Councilmember Hankins will prepare an objective statement for the task force.

Councilmember Hankins noted that the task force will allow for two meetings and a Q&A process with the City Engineer. If progress is made, and satisfactory questions are received regarding the water main replacement process, the task force can be extended. The Council noted that advertising for committee members can be done via email, the City website, and Facebook.

The Council noted that members should have a professional background and the committee should consist of new and long-term community members throughout the City. The potential committee members should be critical thinkers that are open to other opinions. The Council agreed that applications should be accepted until the next Council meeting. The committee members will be approved in June, 2025, and will meet during the month. Two additional meetings will be held on July, 2025, with a report prepared for the Council by August, 2025.

8.2 Discussion of Request to Repair Hydrant at 1 Birch Street (1:24:59)

On a motion made by Councilmember Hankins, seconded by Councilmember Eisele, it was resolved to permit City Administrator Hildebrand to determine whether the repair of fire hydrant on 1 Birch Street is an emergency situation, and if so, authorize an immediate repair. All in favor. Motion carried.

ACTION – City Administrator Hildebrand will consult the fire department to assess the state of the hydrant at 1 Birch Street.

A community member noted that the fire hydrant at 1 Birch Street needs to be rebuilt and the cost for repairs is approximately \$3,000 to \$4,000. Components will take up to four weeks to arrive. Mayor Arsenault noted that, if the situation is an emergency, a special Council meeting can be held to approve the matter or the Council can continue discussion during the next meeting.

8.3 Discussion of Request to Plant Ground Cover on the South Side of City Hall (1:36:06)

On a motion made by Councilmember Hankins, seconded by Councilmember Weier, it was resolved to authorize the request to plant ground cover on the south side of City Hall. All in favor. Motion carried.

8.4 Discussion of Request to Donate to the White Bear Fireworks Fund (1:39:15)

On a motion made by Councilmember Weier, seconded by Councilmember Eisele, it was resolved to approve the request to donate \$200 to the White Bear Fireworks Fund. All in favor. Motion carried.

8.5 Approval of Resolution 2025-42 – Discontinuing the Use of Blank Gunfire at July 4th Celebration (1:40:18)

ACTION – City Administrator Hildebrand will draft a revision to Section 609.020 of the ordinance regarding the discharge of a blank cartridge firearm and present it during the next meeting for review.

The Council noted that live blank gunfire has not occurred during July 4th celebrations in the past five years.

8.6 Approval of Resolution 2025-43 – Adopting Design Standards for Benches in Public Spaces (1:43:19)

On a motion made by Councilmember Weier, seconded by Councilmember Sperl, it was resolved to approve Resolution 2025-43 adopting design standards for benches in public spaces. All in favor. Motion carried.

Councilmember Sperl recommended that the design of benches in public spaces should be uniform throughout the City. The four benches that will be installed along Lakeings Trail should also be the same design.

8.7 Discussion Regarding Maintenance Repairs to 725 Birchwood Avenue

ACTION – City Administrator Hildebrand will obtain information regarding the disposal of sawdust in the manhole at 725 Birchwood Avenue.

Councilmember Eisele reported that there was a sewer backup on Birchwood Avenue. White Bayer was called to vacuum the manhole, jet the sewer line, and remove sawdust from the manhole. The repairs cost approximately \$3,200 to clean the sawdust.

8.8 Second Reading of Ordinance Revising Animals Fee Schedule and Revising Ordinance No. 605 Regarding Animals in the City Code (1:52:02)

On a motion made by Councilmember Hankins, seconded by Councilmember Sperl, it was resolved to adopt the ordinance amending the animal section of the fee schedule. All in favor. Motion carried.

On a motion made by Councilmember Hankins, seconded by Councilmember Eisele, it was resolved to adopt the ordinance amending ordinance No. 605 adopted March 12, 2019, titled “Animals.” All in favor. Motion carried.

City Attorney Kantrud noted that a first reading will be followed by a public hearing to obtain feedback. Staff will make changes, then a second hearing will be held followed by a final hearing. The resolution will then be published or passed authorizing the summary publication. The process is Mayor Arsenault would open the public hearing on the fee schedule, close it, then a vote is held. This is followed by a public hearing opened regarding the animals code, then closed a vote held to pass the resolution with a summary publication released.

Mayor Arsenault opened a public hearing on the ordinance revising the animal fee schedule. No comments were made and Mayor Arsenault closed the public hearing.

Mayor Arsenault opened a public hearing on the ordinance regarding the amendment of ordinance No. 605 adopted on March 12, 2019, titled “Animals”.

8.9 Approval of April, 2025, Treasurer’s Report and Expenditures (1:58:32)

On a motion made by Councilmember Sperl, seconded by Councilmember Eisele, it was resolved to approve the Treasurer’s Report and Expenditures for April, 2025. All in favor. Motion carried.

Councilmember Weier noted that the reimbursement to Barton for \$400 was voided, as the correct amount was less. The correct amount was reimbursed. The capital projects amount of negative \$13,000 was highlighted. City Administrator Hildebrand noted that the City did not receive the distribution for the year yet. The Council agreed that a working session can be arranged to review and comprehend accounting reports.

9. CITY COUNCIL UPDATES (2:05:26)

Councilmember Weier noted that there is a Tighe Schmitz planning session open house on May 31, 2025, from 10:00 a.m. to 12:00 p.m. to review the land water improvements and the improvements for Tighe Schmitz park.

Mayor Arsenault has been working with City Engineer Johnson to obtain data regarding grants and capital improvement projects. Councilmembers Eisele and Hankins worked on enhancements to the website. In April, 2025, there were 2,600 views and 614 visitors to the website. Councilmember Sperl has been working to enhance the bulletin board and the City Facebook page. She is also working to enhance the safety of the stairs outside City Council.

10. ANNOUNCEMENTS/UPCOMING EVENTS (2:07:33)

It was noted that the announcement regarding the Tighe Schmitz planning session open house will be emailed to residents. The Council agreed to a working session with City Administrator Hildebrand on June 2, 2025, at 6:30 p.m.

11. ADJOURNMENT (2:10:02)

On a motion made by Councilmember Eisele, seconded by Councilmember Sperl, it was agreed that there was no further business of the Council to transact in the open session; the meeting was closed to the public.

DISCLAIMER

The above minutes should be used as a summary of the motions passed and issues discussed at the meeting. This document shall not be considered a verbatim copy of every word spoken at the meeting.

Mayor Jennifer Arsenault

City Administrator

Date

Date