



CITY COUNCIL MINUTES
City of Birchwood Village
Washington County, MN

September 8th, 2026 at 6:45 pm

CALL TO ORDER

The regular meeting of the Birchwood Village City Council was called to order by Mayor Arsenault at 6:45 p.m.

ROLL CALL

Present: Mayor Jennifer Arsenault; Council Members Bridget Sperl, Kathy Weier, Ryan Eisele, and Ryan Hankins.

PUBLIC FORUM

Jessica Myran and Dave Forsythe spoke regarding ongoing issues with barking dogs in the neighborhood. Residents reported frequent and prolonged barking, previous contacts with the Washington County Sheriff's Office, and concerns regarding the interactions with the dogs' owner.

APPROVAL OF AGENDA

On a motion by CM Weier and seconded by CM Sperl, it was approved to amend the agenda to add **Barking Dogs** as City Business Item 6 and **Additional Claims** as Item 9 under the Consent Agenda. All Aye.

CITY BUSINESS

1. Auditor Presentation

John Statchel of Abdo presented the results of the City's 2025 financial audit. The City received a **clean audit opinion, and no issues with legal compliance were identified**. One miscoding will be corrected by a transfer from the General Fund to the Capital Projects Fund. The audit also identified one standard internal control finding related to the City's reliance on the auditors to assist with preparation of the financial statements.

ACTION: City Administrator to work on publishing audit results/executive summary for residents.

2. Variance Requests – 135 Wildwood Avenue

Bradley and Mary Hapka, 135 Wildwood Avenue, presented requests related to the proposed expansion of their existing 22 foot by 22 foot garage to 30 feet by 26 feet and its proposed effect on pervious vs impervious surfaces at the property. The Council discussed the property's topography, retaining walls, setbacks, impervious surface, parking, and the Planning Commission's recommendations.

* Denotes item that supporting documentation will be provided

The Council determined that the requested impervious surface variance was not necessary because the applicants indicated they could comply with the City's impervious surface requirements.

On a motion by CM Hankins and seconded by CM Eisele, **the requested impervious surface variance was denied.** All Aye.

The Council then considered the requested setback variances. Council discussed the unique characteristics of the property, including its narrow lot, topography, retaining walls, and the relationship of the proposed garage to the City right-of-way and neighboring property.

On a motion by CM Sperl and seconded by CM Eisele, **it was approved to grant the requested setback variance for construction of the garage, subject to the garage being moved an additional three feet toward the house from the location shown in the submitted plan.** The applicants will also work with the neighboring property owner regarding the property-line use agreement. All Aye.

On a motion by CM Hankins and seconded by CM Eisele **it was approved to grant a variance to the front setback section of the city code to allow the construction of a garage at 135 Wildwood Avenue,** on conditions that the garage will not extend beyond any area proposed in the in the plan, with the exception that it be moved three additional feet back toward the house, and the garage shall have no appurtenances that extend outside of the applicant's lot.

3. Variance Request – 315 Wildwood Avenue

The Council considered a variance request for 315 Wildwood Avenue to allow a building height of approximately 39 feet where the City's maximum height is 35 feet. The Council noted the property's slope and the proposed construction into the hillside, which would cause the structure to appear substantially lower from the street. The Planning Commission had recommended approval.

The Council reviewed the required findings of fact and determined that the variance was consistent with the intent of the ordinance and the City's Comprehensive Plan, that the proposed single-family home was a reasonable use of the property, and that the circumstances of the property supported the variance.

On a motion by CM Weier and seconded by CM Hankins, **it was approved to grant the height variance for 315 Wildwood Avenue,** on the condition that application for any subsequent variance will void this variance. All Aye.

4. Preliminary 2027 Budget

The Council continued discussion of the preliminary 2027 budget, including capital expenditures, reserves, parks, City Hall maintenance, water resources, lawn maintenance, garage repairs, and community engagement. The Council also discussed issues at Hall's Marsh related to a non-functioning pipe that is allowing dirt and sediment to enter the marsh.

On a motion by CM Hankins and seconded by CM Eisele, it was approved to adopt the preliminary 2027 budget with the preliminary levy amount at **\$781,946**, representing a **9.70% increase**. All aye.

5. Second Open House – Road Televising Results

The Council discussed holding a second open house for residents to review the City's road televising results, particularly residents who were unable to attend the summer event. The Council discussed holding a shorter, approximately one-hour event and improving the labels on the photographs.

The date of the open house will be **September 22, 2026**.

6. Barking Dogs

The Council continued discussion regarding the barking dog complaints raised during Public Forum. Council noted that the City has an existing barking dog ordinance and public nuisance provisions under Section 66 of the City Code. The Council discussed previous Sheriff's Office contacts and citations and the possibility of pursuing the matter as a misdemeanor under the City's nuisance ordinance.

ACTION: Staff will follow up with the City Attorney and Washington County Sheriff's Office regarding available enforcement options. Residents were also advised to submit a formal complaint to the City. The possibility of contacting the Animal Humane Society regarding concerns about the dogs' welfare was discussed.

CONSENT AGENDA

On a motion by CM Eisele and seconded by CM Hankins, it was approved to adopt the Consent Agenda with Items 1, 2, 3, and 9 pulled for separate consideration. All Aye.

1. August 12, 2026 City Council Meeting Minutes

On a motion by CM Hankins and seconded by CM Eisele, it was approved to adopt the City Council meeting minutes from August 12, 2026. All Aye.

2. Temporary Worker – Danny Werra

On a motion by CM Hankins and seconded by CM Eisele, **it was approved to hire Danny Werra for temporary worker status**, subject to successful completion of the background check, at a pay rate not to exceed \$30 per hour. All Aye.

3. Transfer to Capital Improvement Fund

The Council reviewed the proposed transfer to the Capital Improvement Fund. The amount in the agenda materials was corrected from \$124,721.00 to **\$196,856.92** to reflect the full transfer amount.

On a motion by CM Weier and seconded by CM Eisele, it was approved to transfer **\$196,856.92 from the General Fund to the Capital Improvement Fund**, revising the amount stated in Resolution 2026-14. All Aye.

4. July Carryover Financials

The July carryover financials were approved.

5. August Treasurer's Financial Summary

The August Treasurer's Financial Summary was approved.

6. August Claims Signature Template

The August Claims Signature Template was approved.

7. August Claims History

The August Claims History was approved.

8. August Financial Statement

The August Financial Statement was approved.

9. Additional Claims

The Council considered a reimbursement to Barton Winter for paint purchased for testing a proposed treatment intended to address ice-melt issues at the hockey rink. The Parks Committee had requested that the City make an exception to its previous reimbursement policy because the paint had already been purchased and could not be returned.

On a motion by CM Eisele and seconded by CM Hankins, it was approved to reimburse Barton Winter for the paint purchase as a one-time exception. All Aye.

ANNOUNCEMENTS

City Administrator noted the Sheriff's monthly report and a Lawn to Meadow informative webinar, as well as the recurring E-bike safety issues in Birchwood. City Administrator suggested pursuing an ordinance restricting their use in public spaces.

It was noted that the Ramsey County Beach is open after closure last week.

ADJOURNMENT

There being no further business, the meeting was adjourned.