

Common Council Minutes
Wednesday, June 4, 2025 at 6:00 p.m.

The Common Council of the City of Neenah, Winnebago County, Wisconsin, met in regular session at 6:00 p.m., June 4, 2025, in the Council Chambers of Neenah City Hall.

Mayor Lang is the chair.

Present: Aldermen Bruno, Erickson, Linski, Ellis, Steiner, Pollnow, Lendrum, Weber, and Council President Borchardt. Staff present Deputy Director of Finance Kahl, Director of Community Development & Assessment Nieforth, Public Works Director Kaiser, City Attorney Rashid, and City Clerk Nagel.

Also Present: Park & Recreation Director Kading, Police Chief Olson, and those noted on the attached Meeting Sign-In Sheets.

Mayor Lang called the meeting to order at 6:14 p.m. Due to technical difficulties, the RollCall-Pro voting system was not operational at this meeting.

- I. The City Clerk called a voice roll call followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Alderman Lendrum.
- II. Introduction and Confirmation of Mayor's Appointment(s)
 - A. None.
- III. Approval of Council Proceedings
 - A. [Approval of the Council Minutes and Proceedings of May 21, 2025 regular session.](#)
 - B. **(UC)**
Seeing no objections, the Minutes and Proceedings were ordered approved.
- IV. Public Forum
 - A. Scott Becher, 1061 Green Acres Lane. Spoke against the proposed DORA. Is concerned with the financial liability of DORA District being adjacent to STH 114. Commercial Street is STH 114. What would be the financial liability should someone partaking in the DORA where to be struck by a vehicle. The economic health of the Downtown is important, and the city has spent over \$100 million to make our downtown worker and family friendly place to be according to a UW-Madison study of 377 Midwest downtowns. The proposed 41 hours of DORA is almost twice of what neighboring Oshkosh has. There has been in fact increased crime in Oshkosh with public urination, public defecation, and disorderly conduct due to increased alcohol consumption. Neenah's image has to remain as a city that stood out with culture, low crime, low poverty, family friendly, and a great place to live. Mr. Becher would like the DORA to be sent back to the committee for additional input so that some of the issues can be worked out.
 - B. Brent Bowman, Executive Director of Future Neenah Inc. (FNI) Mr. Bowman spoke in favor of the DORA District as fostering a vibrant, walkable, and economically thriving community. The DORA will bring increased foot traffic and longer visits to the downtown. NFI invested money and resources into the downtown over the last two years to prove that the DORA model could work. The DORA isn't about alcoholic beverages, it's about creating a destination. It encourages people to spend more time exploring downtown, attending community events, supporting local shops and

enjoying Neenah's public spaces. It enhances the quality of life by making our city more appealing to visitors and prospective businesses. FNI's plan is to create an energetic, accessible, and economically sound downtown which the DORA helps do exactly that by encouraging movement, exploration, and connection. In the end, it's not a vote for or against Neenah, it's a vote for small community businesses and supporting a vibrant social atmosphere.

- C. Jennifer McGuire, 1185 Skyview Drive. Thinks there needs to be some limitations on it. Ms. McGuire thought the TDORA was a great creative idea, but the pervasiveness of the DORA seems like we're asking for trouble. The effect of alcohol is certainly well documented. She would like to carve out some exceptions for special events with the DORA, particularly Very Neenah Christmas. It is irresponsible of us to start at noon and super irresponsible of us to have it as part of a traditional downtown family friendly events.
- D. Gerald Vanryken, 654 McKinley St. Really loves living in Neenah, feels like it's the perfect place to raise my kids, and knows that the Council has responsibility in that. He thanked Police Chief Olson and the Police Department with helping his autistic son when he escaped in the middle of the night. His autistic son loves Washington Park very much which is where he was found. He told Council that he likes to do little things to give back to the community such as picking up garbage at Washington Park. Mr. Vanryken encourage residents to do the little things they can to make Neenah a better place to live. He also spoke of a homeless Marine Veteran who was living under the Winneconne Overpass. This Marine Veteran perished in Neenah, and he couldn't help but think about him a lot this Memorial weekend. Mr. Vanryken is going to make sure that doesn't happen again.
- E. Sara Hanneman, Assistant Executive Director, Future Neenah, Inc. Wanted to make it clear that Shattuck Park and that side of the E. Wisconsin Avenue are not included in the DORA map. The reason for the new time period is to allow people to piggyback on Shattuck Park events, for instance, Farmer's Market. The DORA is not a request from FNI, rather it comes in the form of advocacy. FNI is advocating for our fellow downtown neighbors and businesses, it's not something FNI is personally requesting.
- F. Alison Bieber, 853 Zemlock Avenue. It's important to remember that the backbone pillar of the community is standing up for its weakest. Advocating Neenah as a drinking destination is advocating against those struggling with the disease of addiction The priorities of Neenah need to be redirected in terms of harm reduction and proper risk education.
- G. Michael Stern, 853 Zemlock Avenue. He is a recovering alcoholic, and was disheartened when he first heard the news about the DORA. Knowing that walking past people with open intoxicants is going to prevent me from enjoying the downtown. Selling drinks on the go only contribute to Wisconsin's DUI problem; 30 percent of all fatal crashes in Wisconsin are due to drunk driving, and Wisconsin is the 9th leading state in DUIs. It's an embarrassing statistic. The DORA is promoting only downtown bars, what about other bars in the city. He doesn't see how this is going to be more beneficial to the community, rather sees it ending up being harmful to the community.
- H. Wendy Szczepanski, 1034 Oak Street. Stated that she disapproves of the DORA and is in support of those who spoke against it at tonight's meeting. Her main topic was fireworks and health effects on people and animals. Last year, she lost her dog Luke

had a massive heartache when an M80 went off at noon on the 4th of July. When she approached the city of this horrible situation, she was met with resistance because the process to deal with illegal fireworks is too lengthy. Let's do what Oshkosh did and pass an ordinance so that the police can do their job this year with fireworks.

- I. William Szczepanski, 1034 Oak Street. Spoke on the illegal fireworks. He would like to know what laws are enforced and what are not? He listed off other ordinances he received violation warnings on but there is nothing done about illegal fireworks which is a state law. Year after year, it is the same houses, the same fireworks, and nothing is done.
 - J. Alderman Lendrum read a letter from a resident who could not attend tonight's meeting. Lee Hillstrom, 1021 Sterling Avenue. Spoke against the DORA. The name of this resolution is misleading without any discussion on what most people would consider a refreshment. We are talking about alcohol being able to be carried openly in our downtown area for 40 hours a week, what reason is there for starting out at 40 hours? Unfortunately, this may evolve into Booze Fest, when adults can purchase an alcoholic drink they can enjoy while walking in our downtown. The Oshkosh, Neenah, Menasha area is listed in the top 10 of the drunkenness cities in America. Finally, alcohol is a carcinogen with no warning label on the containers, worse than tobacco. He supposes voting no on the DORA this evening.
 - K. Alderman Bruno read a letter from former Alderman Kathie Boyette who could not be at tonight's meeting. Kathie Boyette, 807 Nicolet Blvd. Ms. Boyette asked the Council to vote no on the DORA. Future Neenah, Inc. is the only one profiting from the DORA. The DORA does not have a positive effect on all the downtown businesses, just those who have a liquor license. What is the taxpayer going to gain from this? This is not good for the city as a whole.
- V. Mayor/Council consideration of public forum issues
- A. Alderman Pollnow is concerned with the fireworks. What is the best venue to discuss fireworks. Attorney Rashid advised the topic could be placed on the Public Services and Safety Committee or as a Council Directive.
- VI. Consent Agenda
- A. None.
- VII. Reports of standing committees
- A. [Regular Public Services and Safety Committee Meeting of May 27, 2025](#): (Chairman Lendrum/Vice Chairman Weber) (Minutes can be found on the City website)
 - 1. Committee recommends Council approve the Construction Administrative Agreement with Edgewater Resources for the Doty Park Phase 1 Shoreline Improvements project in the amount of \$126,976.00 and for reimbursable expenses in the amount of \$11,222.00 utilizing 2025 CIP Budgeted funds.
(RollCall-Pro)
MSCRP Lendrum/Pollnow to approve the Construction Administrative Agreement with Edgewater Resources for the Doty Park Phase 1 Shoreline Improvements project in as recommended by the Committee, all voting aye.

Alderman Pollnow recognized the work that Director Kading and the Neenah Taskforce did in whittling down the five companies that had submitted bids to get the right company for the project.

2. Committee recommends Council approve Resolution 2025-04, Establishing a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area with the time frame being 12:00 PM to 10:00 PM, Wednesday through Saturday. (Attachment) **(Roll Call-Pro)**
MSCRP Borchardt/Pollnow to approve Resolution 2025-04 Establishing a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area with the time frame being 12:00 PM to 10:00 PM, Wednesday through Saturday as recommended by the Committee.

Amended motion by Lendrum/Bruno to amend the Resolution 2025-04 Establishing a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area from May 1st through August 31st with the time frame being 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM, Wednesday through Saturday.

Alderman Lendrum is looking for a compromise. Neenah has a long history set forth by our forefathers which was decided way back when that alcohol doesn't have to be everywhere. She loves the idea of attracting more families to the city, which in her terms is vibrancy. A year-round DORA, starting at noon is not family friendly. She will be voting against the original proposed timeframe, but would support an amended version that protects families and carves out traditional family friendly events such as Neenah Homecoming Parade and Very Neenah Christmas.

Alderman Ellis doesn't agree and believes that we can "what if" the DORA until there is no more "what ifing" to do, but we won't know the outcome until we try it. The fact that the police department has been involved and there haven't been any issues speaks volumes to the quality of what Future Neenah does and the quality of citizens that visit downtown.

Council President Borchardt is in support of the original DORA proposal and agrees with Alderman Ellis, the "what ifing" has to stop. Sporting events don't stop selling alcohol because kids are in attendance. He trusts the people of Neenah and the Council who can decide to shut it down if things go wrong. The resolution is written so that there is an annual review. This is a great opportunity and believes that Future Neenah to do the right thing.

Alderman Steiner appreciates everyone who came out to speak no matter what their position is. He thinks the city has been prudent and cautious with the rollout of the DORA. The experiments have gone very well and seemed family friendly. It didn't seem like alcohol drove people away from the events. Plus, the resolution can be suspended or terminated at any point, so this is a nice step. He is in favor of the original resolution.

Alderman Pollnow is in support of the original proposed resolution. There has been a lot of talk about alcoholism and family, and, from personal experience, sees both sides. The DORA will not trigger drinking or alcoholism. He is confident in the DORA and in the people of Neenah, and does not think there is a correlation to Oshkosh's DORA because they have the university.

Alderman Bruno thanked members of Future Neenah Inc. for sitting down with her and taking the time to answer all her questions. She is not against drinking but is against how and where to drink. She wants to be a good representative of her constituents and during her campaign she heard a lot of comments on how Neenah is perceived as a safe place to live and raise a family. This is our identity, and it is Alderman Bruno's responsibility to honor what she heard and what she is engaged to do. She will be voting against the original proposed DORA and supports specific adult events with the TDORA. What if something bad happened Alderman Bruno doesn't want that on her conscience.

Alderman Weber agrees with most of the comments that have been said thus far. He is in support of the original proposal although he struggled with the hours in committee. Discussion was had in committee and said again tonight by Alderman Ellis; the DORA is a resolution and can be pulled back at any time and is annually reviewed. Alderman Weber understands the concerns but there are safeguards built into the resolution that allows the DORA to be dialed back. He believes in the Council and the citizens of Neenah will do the right thing in the end.

Alderman Bruno commented that if the DORA has to be dialed back, it's too late. She would like to assure that nothing bad would happen in the first place. When the city gets a bad reputation, it could take years to recover from, if ever. She would rather approach the DORA from prevention side versus the reaction side.

Alderman Lendrum explained the difference between the TDORAs and the DORAs. The DORA is not going to look like the TDORA with officer presence, blocked off walking area, starting later, length of time, or volunteer cleanup crew. The DORA does not have these requirements.

AMENDED MOTION RESTATED: Amended motion by Lendrum/Bruno to Resolution 2025-04 Establishing a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area from May 1st through August 31st with the time frame being 4:00 PM to 10:00 PM, Wednesday through Saturday. Roll call vote: Bruno – aye, Erickson – aye, Linski – nay, Ellis – nay, Steiner – nay, Pollnow – nay, Lendrum – aye, Weber – nay, and Borchardt – nay. Amended motion failed 3-6.

ORIGINAL MOTION RESTATED: **Moton by Borchardt/Pollnow to approve Resolution 2025-04 Establishing a Designated Outdoor Refreshment Area with the time frame being 12:00 PM to 10:00 PM, Wednesday through Saturday as recommended by the Committee. Roll call vote: Borchardt – aye, Weber – aye, Lendrum – nay, Pollnow – aye, Steiner – aye, Ellis – aye, Linski – aye, Erickson – nay, and Bruno – nay. Original motion carried, 6-3.**

- B. [Regular Finance and Personnel Committee meeting of May 26, 2025](#): (Chairman Steiner/Vice Chairman Erickson) (Minutes can be found on the City website)
 - 1. Meeting cancelled, no report.
- VIII. Reports of special committees and liaisons and various special projects committees
 - A. [Regular Plan Commission meeting of May 27, 2025](#): (Alderman Steiner) (Minutes can be found on the City website)
 - 1. No action items to report.
 - B. [Board of Public Works meeting of May 27, 2025](#): (Vice Chairman Lendrum) (Minutes can be found on the City website)
 - 1. The Board recommends Council award the bid to complete the scope of services outlines in the bid specifications for Doty Park Phase 1 Shoreline Improvements to Vinton Construction, Two Rivers, WI, in the amount of \$1,266,181.80 utilizing 2025 Capital Improvement Project Funds. (Attachment) **(RollCall-Pro)**
MSCRP Lendrum/Pollnow to award the bid to complete the scope of services outlines in the bid specifications for Doty Park Phase 1 Shoreline Improvements as recommend by the Board, all voting aye.

Alderman Pollnow asked Director Kading for a quasi-timeline. Director Kading advised the plan is to start this fall, work through the winter, be substantially completed by February 28, 2026 with final completion by first of May. There is no penalty included in the contract if these dates are missed.

 - C. Community Development Authority
 - 1. [Report from the June 2, 2025 CDA Meeting](#) – Director Nieforth
 - a. Community Development Block Grant Funding Plan was discussed.
 - b. City projects were discussed.
 - c. The Housing Plan was discussed and the CDAs involvement with the implementation efforts.
 - D. Sustainable Neenah Committee
 - 1. [Report from the May 28, 2025 Sustainable Neenah Committee Meeting](#) – Alderman Linski
 - a. The E-Waste event was held May 19th which was very successful. About 22,000 pounds of electronic waste was recycled up from 18,00 pound in 2024.
 - b. All the rain barrels have been spoken for, and arrangements are being made for them to be picked up.
 - E. Bergstrom Mahler Museum
 - 1. Report from the May 28, 2025 Bergstrom Mahler Museum – Alderman Bruno

- a. Alderman Bruno handed out a Save the Date Events Calendar.
 - b. The annual fundraising event, Catching Fire, starts today through June 14th with a live auction on June 11th.
 - c. Alderman Bruno read an excerpt from the financial report.
- F. Parks & Recreation Commission
 - 1. [Report from the May 15, 2025 Park Commission Meeting](#) – Alderman Weber
 - a. Doty Island Community Partners request a statute to memorialize Roosevelt School be placed at Doty Park which was approved.
 - b. Doty Park Shoreline Construction Contracts were voted on earlier.
 - c. The sheep and goats arrived at Carpenter preserve. It's interesting to see the work that they are doing.
- IX. Presentation of petitions
 - A. Any other petition received by the City Clerk's Office after distribution of the agenda.
 - 1. None.
- IX. Council Directives
 - A. MSC Ellis/Steiner should the City of Neenah provide an opinion to the State Legislature on ending Spring Elections in the State of Wisconsin. **(RollCall-Pro)**

Alderman Pollnow spoke on the Council Directive process as a whole. The two-weeks in between the motion and discussion is for alderman to do research and to set a target completion date and progress report. Due to the fact that this is not included in the motion, he will be voting no. It is concerning that the question is open ended and does not have staff time accounted for.

Alderman Steiner did second the motion at the previous meeting, but looking at it at this meeting, there seems to be a process gap. He is assuming that tonight's vote is to whether or not to provide an opinion, and a subsequent vote on what that opinion is. Thinking through the logistics is there another directive on what the opinion would be and how would that work?

Alderman Ellis' reason for bring this topic forward was to spur a conversation. He wasn't sure which arena to bring this topic up in, and therefore brought it up to the Council. Should the state decide to abolish the Spring Election, the state would provide guidance to the clerks on how that would work. The reason why it's being looked at is because, historically, Spring Elections have less voter turnout and less involvement than Fall Elections because in the fall we elect state and federal offices. From that standpoint, getting more involvement in Spring Elections and saving money, Alderman Ellis thought it was a good idea to have a conversation. The idea came from the Third District Congressman who was just trying to get state legislators in Madison to look at it.

Alderman Steiner did some research and found that the Spring Elections were designed to be non-partisan. We certainly would be ignorant to say that the Spring Elections did not become partisan because they certainly have, but at least the concept of keeping it nonpartisan and separated is still intact. Even if Spring Elections

were to continue to become partisan, he would not want to contribute to that road because he likes separation if it is not perfect.

City Attorney Rashid weighed in with his research. Basically, it would be nothing more than a lobbying effort and even then it would be powerless because it's in the State Constitution. We could do a directive if you want, but he really doesn't think it's going to influence in change because it's a state decision.

Alderman Pollnow recommends, if we to have discussion on this item, that it is at the Legislative Review Committee.

Alderman Bruno would have interest in this Council Directive, only from a financial aspect. It is always good to have our voice heard, and if we don't speak, our voice is lost.

Alderman Erickson will be voting no as the Spring Elections are for judicial officers, educational officers, municipal officers, and non-partisan county officers. Overwhelmingly there is no chance we would make any changes because many different races are included in the Spring Elections. This would just be an opinion letter that would not have an impact.

MOTION RESTATED: MSC Ellis/Steiner should the City of Neenah provide an opinion to the State Legislature on ending Spring Elections in the State of Wisconsin. Motion failed in a roll call vote, 2-7 with Ellis and Bruno voting in favor of the motion.

- B. MSC Ellis/Bruno should the Council consider having term limits for local elected officials. **(RollCall-Pro)**

Attorney Rashid researched this topic and found there is nothing in the state statute that would prohibit term limits. If the Council wanted to do term limits, it certainly could, there is nothing prohibiting it and other municipalities have implemented term limits.

Alderman Pollnow reverts back to his statement on Council Directive process and the fact there is no timeline associated with this directive.

Alderman Steiner thinks this makes sense if there was an issue. His concern is that there is no big issue with turnover and he does not want the city to get trapped in the incumbent is no longer eligible to run because of term limits and there is no interested candidate.

Alderman Lendrum believes it is already difficult to find candidates to run for aldermanic office. We already have term limits in that an incumbent can be voted out. To Alderman Lendrum, that is term limits.

Alderman Ellis brought this up merely to have discussion and research term limits to see what it would like and is there value to it. The point in bringing up both this and topic and abolishment of Spring Elections was have a discussion. His goal was to teach up to the state and federal level. We don't know if we will have an impact if we don't flush this out.

Alderman Erickson has served on the Council for ten years, and it seems like people are willing to be on the Council when they don't have to campaign, but it's part of the process. There have been many times where there wasn't a candidate running or an opposed candidate. There is value in having experienced members of the Council because they are looked to for wisdom and guidance. She will be voting against this.

Alderman Pollnow again explained the process of a Council Directive. The bar is set high on Council Directives so that staff has clear direction as to what they are to do, not just something ambiguous for them to figure out. This is a nice, useful tool, but should be limited in terms of usage because the bar is so high.

Alderman Ellis stated these two topics were not a department/staff issues, they are elected official, governing body, issues to discuss as to what we think. Alderman Ellis did not know where to have these discussions. Now that he knows it should take place at a Committee of the Whole, he will aim there.

Council President Borchardt appreciates these discussions. Conversations should continue regarding a strategic plan that does not violate a quorum or a walking quorum. This is a healthy conversation to have.

Alderman Steiner likes the discussion as well. Perhaps figuring out the best route or method to have these conversation is the first step. He would like to have continued discussion on both these issues in the appropriate arena.

MOTION RESTATED: MSC Ellis/Bruno should the Council consider having term limits for local elected officials. Motion fails in a roll call vote, 2-7 with Ellis and Bruno voting in favor of the motion.

X. Unfinished Business

- A. Update on the pursuit of grant opportunities.
Mayor Lang advised that the Communication Specialist is working on compiling the information from each department and will share that information when it is available.

XI. New Business

- A. Alderman Pollnow reminded everyone of the League of Wisconsin Municipalities Local Government Basics Training held at the Double Tree in Neenah on June 25th from 2-5pm.
- B. Council President Borchardt recognized Dale and Carrie Clark from First Source Worldwide who donated all the rain barrels for Sustainable Neenah's rain barrel program.

IX. Adjournment

Motion by Pollnow/Borchardt to adjourn. Motion carried in a voice vote 9-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:55PM.

Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlotte K. Nagel". The script is cursive and fluid, with the first letters of each word being capitalized and prominent.

Charlotte Nagel, City Clerk