



**City of Neenah
Common Council Minutes
Wednesday, August 19, 2026 at 6:00 PM
Neenah City Hall – 211 Walnut Street
Council Chambers**

[A broadcast of this meeting can be viewed and heard through this link on the City's YouTube channel.](#)

I. Roll Call and Pledge of Allegiance

The Common Council of the City of Neenah, Winnebago County, Wisconsin, met in regular session at 6:00 PM, August 19, 2026, in the Council Chambers of Neenah City Hall.

Mayor Borchardt is the chair.

Present: Council President Steiner, Aldermen Bruno, Erickson, Linski, Defferding, Pollnow, Ellis and Weber. Staff present Director of Finance Rasmussen, Director of Community Development & Assessment Nieforth, Interim Public Works Director Rolhoff, City Attorney Rashid, and City Clerk Nagel.

Also Present: Fire Chief Teesch, Police Chief Olson, Park & Recreation Director Kading, Deputy Director of Community Development & Assessment Schmidt, and those on the attached sign-in sheets.

Mayor Borchardt called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m.

II. Introduction and Confirmation of Mayor's Appointment(s) – None.

III. Approval of Council Proceedings

A. Approval of the of [August 5, 2026](#) meeting. (Voice Vote)

Motion by Alderman Ellis, seconded by Alderman Neuman to approve the August 5, 2026 minutes as presented. Motion carried in a voice vote, 9-0.

IV. Public Forum

Speakers must state their name and residential address and are allowed five minutes to speak on any topic.

- A. Gerald VanRyken, 654 McKinley Street – Thanked Alderman Pollnow for his help after the tornado and shared a heartwarming story about community support. He emphasized the importance of thanking and appreciating community leaders and first responders. Mr. VanRyken called for unity and encourages citizens to help each other, especially those who feel lost or forgotten. He provided his contact information encouraging people to reach out for help.
- B. Joe Bachman, 629 Wheeler Street – Thanked the Council for their service and requests a comprehensive review of emergency preparedness and response. He highlighted the need for clear communication during emergencies, citing his own experience with inconsistent information. Mr. Bachman suggested forming a group involving government officials, city management, and citizens to address these issues. He expresses his love for Neenah and offers to engage in further discussion.

- C. Kay Horan, 324 Ninth Street – Shared her experiences on how the tornado impacted her and criticized the city’s communication efforts. She mentioned the lack of internet access for elderly residents and the poor communication compared to the likes of Menasha. Ms. Horan raised concerns about property tax assessments for homes that have been damaged or destroyed by the tornado, suggesting that the city needs to address this issue. She thanked the Council for their efforts and emphasized the need for better communication and support for affected residents.
- D. Mary McHugh, 210 Clybourn Street – Addressed a phone call she received from Alderman Ellis regarding a fallen tree on the back of her property. She explained the steps she took to address the issue, including removing the tree and other debris. Ms. McHugh questions the process and authority of aldermen to contact property owners directly about property conditions. She sought clarification on the property process and responsibility for notifying property owners.
- E. Scott Becher, 1061 Green Acres Lane – Spoke about communication and perhaps the opportunity for the city to offer cell phone notifications to residents. He hopes the Mayor considers involving citizens in some sort of committee. He reminded everyone to vote for Neenah on the on-line Hallmark Channel’s Merriest Christmas Contest.

V. Mayor/Council Consideration of Public Forum Issues

- A. Alderman Ellis defended his conversation with Ms. McHugh explaining the long-term issues with garbage collection on the premises and loud music at all hours of the day. He stated that many neighbors reach out to the tenant to no avail, then to him personally. Therefore, he contacted the property owners in an attempt to find resolution.
- B. Alderman Pollnow reiterated the importance of public meetings, specifically the Emergency Government Committee for better communication and preparedness.
- C. Alderman Defferding discussed the need for better disaster response and communications mentioning ongoing training and efforts to improve this areas, specifically targeting the Emergency Government Committee.
- D. Council President Steiner agrees there is opportunity to improve communication. The first couple of days after the tornado we were putting information on the website which may need to have a better design if residents couldn’t find the information. Within two hours after the tornado hit, at the Emergency Operations Control (EOC) at Winnebago County, information was being shared through website and Facebook links. Once it was found out there was no internet, canvassing was done by providing information on flyers. Council President Steiner explained the magnitude of the tornado was a lot to manage at one time. He thanked those who came out to share their perspective and give feedback, and he would be happy to meet with anyone.
- E. Mayor Borchardt advised that staff and leadership are reviewing the tornado response to identify lessons learned, including communication gaps and areas for improvement. Feedback will be gathered from council members, residents, and staff, while efforts are underway to improve emergency communications tools; the city website and public outreach. The city acknowledges mistakes were made and is committed to being transparent, sensitive to those still affected, and involving the community in developing a better response in the future.

VI. Consent Agenda

- A. Approve the Temporary Class "B" Fermented Malt Beverage License to Fox Valley Labor Council, AF-CIO for Labor Fest. (Unanimous Consent)
There being no objections, the Consent Agenda is ordered approved as presented.

VII. Reports of Standing Committees

- A. Public Services & Safety Committee meeting of [August 11, 2026](#): (Chairman Weber/Vice Chairman Pollnow) (Minutes can be found on the City website)
1. Common Council may act on Committee's tie vote to recommend the Common Council approve a change order for the Master Services Agreement with Stantec in the amount of \$66,850 for professional services for Arrowhead Park environmental services. Funding for the change order will be provided from Arrowhead Park carry forward funds included in the Capital Improvements Budget. (Voice Vote)

Motion by Alderman Weber, seconded by Alderman Ellis to approve the change order for the Master Services Agreement with Stantec in the amount of \$66,850 for professional services for Arrowhead Park environmental services. Funding for the change order will be provided from Arrowhead Park carry forward funds included in the Capital Improvements Budget. No vote taken.

Alderman Pollnow opposed the approval, citing concerns that the cost exceeded the originally approved amount and that contract terms may need clarification to prevent similar issues in the future. He expressed concern over approximately \$534,000 spent on Arrowhead related consultants and contractors since August 2024, and noted that the item should be characterized as invoice approvals rather than a change order.

Alderman Defferding opposes the continued spending on Arrowhead Park, expressing concern that costs keep escalating, placing an excessive burden on Neenah residents. He questioned whether all expenses are truly required and argued that the city should explore more cost-effective alternatives and prioritize other needs, such as road repairs.

Director Nieforth was asked to give an overview. She explained that the city approved two Stantec task orders totaling just over \$57,000 for DNR required geotechnical oversight and implantation of the Arrowhead Park methane plan. Additional work and DNR requests caused costs to exceed expectations. Staff acknowledged the contractor should have provided better notice before going over budget. Moving forward, the city plans to strengthen contract language and oversight while noting that these projects were required by the DNR and not optional. The methane monitoring is separate from the master plan. Before Director Nieforth started with the city, the master plan project was submitted to the DNR for approval. Part of that approval was the requirement of geotechnical borings in the dike area to ensure buildings would not structurally impact the dike in a negative way. However, regardless of what goes on the site, the geotechnical boring are a DNR requirement.

Attorney Rashid responded to contract questions. He advised that rejecting the change order could potentially lead to legal action and damage the City's relationship with a longstanding engineering and geology firm. While some of the work was required by the DNR, the main concern was the firm's lack of communication about exceeding costs, which has been addressed and is not expected to happen again.

Alderman Bruno supports Arrowhead Park as a community asset but believes the City should pause further spending on the project. In light of the recent tornado and the community's immediate needs, she believes resources should be focused on recovery and essential services rather than a long-term "dream" project.

Mayor Borchardt clarified that the current Arrowhead Park expenses were previously approved, required works and outstanding bills; there is no new spending toward future phases or the larger master plan. The city is pausing further decisions on Arrowhead until additional information is available, at which point Council will determine how to proceed.

Council President Steiner plans to vote in favor of the payment because rejecting it could expose the City to legal and reputational consequences; the City pays its bills. He also views the situation as a learning opportunity to strengthen contracts, improve cost controls, and ensure vendors communicate when costs exceed approved amounts.

Alderman Ellis emphasized that elected officials have a responsibility to research issues, present accurate and complete information, and be honest with taxpayers regardless of whether they support or oppose an issue. He defended Council's work and Department Heads, stating that disagreements do not mean taxpayers' money is being wasted and that officials can respectfully disagree without attacking one another.

Alderman Pollnow suggested tabling the matter until the next Council meeting to give the City Attorney time to review the Master Services Agreement and identify legal options. He also proposed allowing Director Nieforth to negotiate with the Stantec, emphasizing that the Council should respectfully push back on costs and demonstrate that it is actively overseeing the relationship.

Motion by Alderman Pollnow, seconded by Alderman Erickson to table this item to the next Council meeting for further contract information. Motion voice vote, 6-3.

- B. Special Public Services and Safety Meeting of [August 19, 2026](#): (Chairman Weber/Vice Chairman Pollnow) (Minutes can be found on the City website)
1. Consideration of Committee recommendation to enter into a professional services agreement with Strand Associates, Inc., for the preparation of an update to the City of Neenah stormwater management plan. (Voice Vote)

Motion by Alderman Weber, seconded by Alderman Pollnow to approve the entering into a professional services agreement with Strand Associates, Inc., as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a voice vote, 9-0.

At this time, Mayor Borchardt asked Adam with SGA who is working with D-Tak on clean-up efforts and debris removal to address the Council.

The debris removal contractor provided an update, noting that crews are nearing completion of the first pass through all storm-impacted neighborhoods and have removed approximately 65,000 cubic yards of debris. He praised the Neenah community, city staff, state and local partners, and National Guard for their support and cooperation following the tornado. Crews will work with the City on a second pass to address remaining debris, including difficult piles requiring specialized equipment, low-hanging limbs, and large stumps.

Mayor Borchardt emphasized that City crews are continuing to collect residential debris and asked residents to place leaves, twigs, and small branches in brown bags for pickup. He thanked residents and staff for their patience and extra effort, and noted that the City will communicate a final cutoff date for debris collection after the first pass is completed.

- C. Finance & Personnel Committee meeting of [August 10, 2026](#): (Chairman Erickson/Vice Chairman Ellis) (Minutes can be found on the City website)
1. Committee recommends Council award the independent audit services contract to Baker Tilly for the fiscal years ending December 31, 2026 through December 31, 2029, including preparation of the Annual Comprehensive Financial Report (ACFR). (Voice Vote)

Motion by Alderman Erickson, seconded by Alderman Neuman to award the independent audit services contract to Baker Tilly as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a voice vote, 9-0.

Director Rasmussen acknowledged there was about \$6,000 savings going through the Request For Proposal process. She is excited to have Baker Tilly onboard for the next four years.

2. Committee recommends Council adopt the Utility Rate Review Policy to the Common Council. Establishing this policy will help ensure the City's utility rates are evaluated on a regular basis, promote long-term financial sustainability of the utilities, and implement the direction previously provided by the Common Council. (Voice Vote)

Motion by Alderman Erickson, seconded by Alderman Bruno to adopt the Utility Rate Review Policy as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a voice vote, 9-0.

3. Committee recommends Council approve the Addendum to the Maintenance Assessment Services Contract for 2027 Interim Market Update Revaluation with Associated Appraisal Consultants, Inc, for an additional \$13,750 annually for the next four years of the existing contract for maintenance and revaluation assessment services. (Voice Vote)

Motion by Alderman Erickson, seconded by Alderman Pollnow to approve the Addendum to the Maintenance Assessment Services Contract for 2027 Interim Market Update Revaluation with Associated Appraisal Consultants, Inc. as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a voice vote, 9-0.

Director Nieforth provided some education on the revaluation process. The Wisconsin Department of Revenue (DOR) reviews sales data to determine whether or not assessment remains reasonably aligned with the market value. Neenah's assessment ratio was 87% in 2025 and is projected to be about 84% in 2026, putting the city below the state's 90-100% acceptable range, which requires a revaluation within a 5-year required timeframe.

The revaluation is intended to fairly distribute the tax burden across the city, not automatically increase individual tax bills by the same percentage as property assessments. Communication will be important, including providing homeowners with estimates and talking points to help explain how the process affects their taxes.

VIII. Reports of Special Committees and Liaisons and Various Special Projects Committees

- A. Plan Commission meeting of [August 11, 2026](#): (Ald. Neuman) (Minutes can be found on the City website)
 1. Meeting cancelled, no report.
- B. Report from the Library Board Meeting of August 19, 2026 – Alderman Erickson

The library continues to demonstrate strong efficiency with a \$4.52 cost per circulation compared with the \$8.48 average among Wisconsin's top 25 circulating libraries. In 2025, the library had 44,109 program attendees and offered 943 programs. Movie Talks hosted by Alderman Neuman remain popular, with the upcoming films including *Seven Samurai*, *The Silent Civilians*, and *Up*.

- C. Report from the Neenah Arts Council – Alderman Erickson
The Neenah Arts Council participated in Neenah’s Night Out, which was a successful event with strong community participation, including residents from Fox Crossing and Menasha. The Arts Council will also participate in the Lighthouse Groundbreaking on September 9th and encourages the community to attend.
- D. Report from the Sustainable Neenah Committee – Alderman Linski
Nothing to report.

IX. Presentation of Petitions

- A. None.

X. Council Directives

XI. Unfinished Business

- A. IPA study of the NMFR is in hand. The tornado delayed the review of the study.
- B. Council Picture will be taken when all can be present.

XII. New Business

- A.. Approve Resolution 2026-07 regarding City Operations During Local State of Disaster (Emergency). (Attachment) (Voice Vote)

Motion by Alderman Ellis, seconded by Alderman Pollnow to approve Resolution 2026-07. Motion carried in a voice vote, 9-0.

Mayor Borchardt advised the Emergency Operations Control (EOC) worked with affected communities to estimate disaster-related costs and meet the threshold required to trigger state and potential federal assistance. Monitoring and grant support services helped ensure the City’s documentation was accurate, and the request is now being submitted to the federal government.

Residents were encouraged not to rely on FEMA for full reimbursement but instead use insurance and available community resources such as 211 and local nonprofit assistance. Habitat for Humanity and other organizations have raised nearly \$2.5 million and are preparing to begin work on approximately 100 homes, while officials emphasized patience as nonprofits work through funding requirements and safeguards against fraud.

Discussion ensued regarding the FEMA process which could take up to three years to receive reimbursement, and reimbursement is not guaranteed. Director Rasmussen advised there is enough money in the unrestricted general funds to cover the general fund expenditure and cash flow without borrowing. However, the unrestricted general funds will have to be paid back.

The City is exploring potential state financial assistance and grants to help offset disaster-related costs, including possible funding that could be included in the state budget. Staff are also pursuing expedited grants and federal assistance, including support for water treatment facility, and encouraged Council members and residents to contact their state officials who may be able to help secure funding.

- B. Approve Authorizing Resolution Number 2026-08 to Apply for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Catastrophic Grants. (Attachment) (Voice Vote)

Motion by Alderman Weber, seconded by Alderman Pollnow to approve Resolution Number 2026-08 to Apply for Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources - Catastrophic Grants. Motion carried in a voice vote, 9-0.

Director Kading is seeking authorization to apply for \$50,000 grant to help fund storm debris removal, safety pruning, and tree replacement following the recent tornado. In just four parks, Doty, Kimberly Point, Riverside, and Fresh Air, 128 trees have been or will be removed, with replacement costs estimate at \$80,000, while total tree removal costs are approximately \$290,000. Staff is also quickly addressing hazardous hanging branches ("hangers") to improve public safety as residents continue using the parks.

- C. Any announcements/questions that may legally come before the Council – None.
1. None.

XIII. Closed Session

- A. The Common Council may convene into closed session pursuant to Wis. Stat. §19.85(1)(e) for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchase of public properties, the investing of public funds, and the conducting of other specified public business as competitive or bargaining reasons require closed session for properties at 1300 block of Cardinal Circle, the southwest corner of Winneconne Avenue and Henry Street, the 200 Block of Nicolet Boulevard, and 585 Enterprise Drive. (Roll Call Vote)

Motion by Alderman Neuman, seconded by Alderman Linski for the Council to convene into closed session pursuant to Wis. Stat. §19.85(1)(e) for the purpose of deliberating or negotiating the purchase of public properties, the investing of public funds, and the conducting of other specified public business as competitive or bargaining reasons require closed session for properties at 1300 block of Cardinal Circle, the southwest corner of Winneconne Avenue and Henry Street, the 200 Block of Nicolet Boulevard, and 585 Enterprise Drive. The Common Council may reconvene into open session pursuant to Wis. Stats. §19.85(2) to consider or act on any item (s) discussed in closed session. Motion carried a roll vote, 9-0.

The Council convened into closed session at 7:31 PM.

- B. The Common Council may reconvene into open session pursuant to Wis. Stats. §19.85(2) to consider or act on any item (s) discussed in closed session. (Voice Vote)

The Council adjourned in closed session with no action taken.

XIV. Adjournment

Motion by Alderman Weber, seconded by Alderman Brun to adjourn. Motion carried voice vote, 9-0.

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Respectfully submitted,

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Charlotte K. Nagel". The script is cursive and fluid.

Charlotte Nagel, City Clerk