City of Neenah

Common Council Minutes

Wednesday, November 4, 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.

The Common Council of the City of Neenah, Winnebago County, Wisconsin, met in regular session at 6:00 PM, November 4, 2026, in the Council Chambers of Neenah City Hall.

Mayor Borchardt is the chair.

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

Also Present: Fire Chief Teesch, Water Utility Director Mach, Human Resources Director Barber, Human Resources Deputy Director Schott, Civil Engineer Eckhart, Park & Recreation Director Kading, Recreation Superintendent Butteris, and those on the attached sign-in sheets.

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

I. Roll Call and Pledge of Allegiance
The City Clerk called a voice roll call as the Mayor/Aldermen recorded their attendance in the RollCall-Pro System followed by the Pledge of Allegiance led by Alderman Weber.

II. Proclamations – None

III. Introduction and Confirmation of Mayor's Appointment(s) - None

IV. Approval of Council Proceedings

A. Approval of the minutes and proceeding of the October 21, 2026 meeting.
Motion by Neuman/Bruno to approve the minutes. Motion carried in a roll call vote 8-1 with Pollnow dissenting.

Alderman Pollnow noted that the minutes' wording of amended motions and subsequent votes on Council directives was confusing and difficult to follow for anyone who had not attended the meeting. The member recommended recording the final motion as amended, rather than listing the original motion followed by the amended version, to more clearly reflect the language Council ultimately voted on.

Clerk Nagel explained that her understanding and training have always been that motions should remain exactly as made during the Council meeting and that the Clerk should not independently change their wording in the minutes. Although the minutes were amended, Clerk Nagel still has reservations based on her professional training. She also noted that meeting recordings are available on both the City's website and the City's YouTube channel for anyone seeking clarification about the discussion or motions.

V. Public Forum

Speakers should give their name and residential address (not mailing address) and are allowed five minutes to speak on any topic.

Mayor Borchardt opened the public forum.

A. Jeremy Searl, 1323 Cherry Lane - Expressed strong support for moving toward a professional city administrator model to improve daily operations, communication, and departmental leadership. However, he estimated the position could cost approximately $250,000 annually, emphasizing the need for fiscal discipline, competitive bidding for consulting services, and identifying cost offsets. He suggested considering a reduction in the Common Council from nine to six members, with the Mayor serving as Council President, as well as conducting a citywide organizational review to identify efficiencies and eliminate overlapping responsibilities.

Mr. Searl also expressed opposition to the Neenah School District's request to add information to property tax bills. He questioned the district's claim of municipal partnership, stating neighboring municipalities were not consulted before the resolution was issued. He believes tax bills should remain a ministerial collection tool rather than become a vehicle for political or policy advocacy. He also raised concerns about setting a precedent for other organizations to request similar disclosures and shared that, as Finance Director for the Village of Fox Crossing, he had provided the School District with the Village's official response. A copy of that letter is attached to these minutes.

B. Scott Francis, 301 N. Commercial Street - Addressed longstanding concerns regarding parking restrictions and street marking changes along the Forest Street corridor. He stated the changes were originally presented as a one-year trial but were never reevaluated, resulting in reduced public parking, accessibility challenges, and negative impacts on nearby businesses, organizations, and residents. He noted that the original reason for the changes was a drop-off issue at Roosevelt School, which is no longer in operation, and argued that no specific safety concerns at the Forest and Commercial Street intersection had been identified. He expressed disappointment that Council declined to initiate a staff study of the parking situation, emphasizing that multiple businesses and organizations share these concerns. He asked Council to reconsider the corridor, restore parking where possible, and take responsibility for reviewing the long-term effects of the City's decisions.

VI. Mayor/Council consideration of public forum issues

A. Alderman Pollnow clarified that although he was outvoted, he did not support the council directive. He disputed the claim that the Forest Street parking issue had not been adequately reviewed, noting that it had previously been discussed six to eight times by the Public Services and Safety Committee between 2019 and 2021. He referenced the 152 pages of information provided in the meeting packet and noted that the former city traffic engineer, now Public Works Director in Menasha, was invited to provide input. He emphasized that considerable discussion and public engagement had occurred, including a two-hour conversation with Mr. Francis. Alderman Pollnow wanted the record to reflect that there was an immense amount of discussion previously and currently in regard to this issue. So, for Mr. Francis to state that the elected officials weren't listening

is flat out not true, and wanted the record show that because we always want to listen and discuss.

B. Alderman Ellis addressed the comments regarding city governance, the proposed city administrator position, and the Forest Street parking concerns. He noted that Council has previously grown from one alderman per district to three and that members are open to reviewing council structure, combining services, and identifying staffing efficiencies. Regarding the city administrator proposal, he explained that the first step is to bring in an experienced professional to educate Council before deciding whether to proceed further.

On the Forest Street parking issue, Alderman Ellis disputed that reduced parking was responsible for the area's business decline, citing changing economic conditions and business ownership changes. He also pointed out that several nearby businesses and organizations have underutilized parking lots. He emphasized that the city intends to evaluate the broader area, not just the individual block or blocks, and wants to carefully consider future development and parking needs before making decisions.

C. Alderman Erickson inquired as to whether or not the dialysis center is still on N. Commercial Street. It was determined that indeed the dialysis center is still located on its original site.

X. Consent Agenda – None.

XI. Reports of standing committees

A. Public Services & Safety Committee meeting of October 27, 2026: (Chairman Weber/Vice Chairman Pollnow) (Minutes can be found on the City website)

1. Committee recommends Council approve amending Ordinance Chapter 16 Article III, Section 16-149, combining two prior subsections. (Roll Call Vote)
Motion by Weber/Linski to approve amending Ordinance Chapter 16 Article III, Section 16-149 as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a roll call vote, 9-0.

B. Finance & Personnel Committee meeting of October 26, 2026: (Chairman Erickson/Vice Chairman Ellis) (Minutes can be found on the City website)

1. Committee recommends Council approve the reallocation of $22,000 from the budgeted Capital Fund for Riverside Park lighting project to the unbudgeted Capital Improvement Plan Freedom Acres Park grading and seeding project to be completed this fall. (Roll Call Vote)
Motion by Erickson/Weber to approve the reallocation as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a roll call vote, 9-0.

2. Committee recommends Council approve an amendment to the Ground Lease with VB Nimbus, LLC. (Roll Call Vote)
Motion by Erickson/Pollnow to approve the amendment Ground lease with VB Nimbus as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a roll call vote, 9-0.

3. Committee recommends Council approve Resolution No. 2026-12 to ratify the budget transfer for executive coaching services. (Requires 2/3 vote of Council) (Roll Call Vote)
Motion by Steiner/Bruno to approve Resolution No. 2026-12 as recommended by Committee. Motion failed in a 2/3 roll call vote of the members present, with Erickson, Defferding, Ellis, and Neuman dissenting.

Alderman Erickson stated she would not support the resolution authorizing payment of a $4,500 training expense. She stated that the expenditure was not approved by Council in advance, was not included in the mayor's budget, and was transferred to the Finance Department budget without proper authorization. Alderman Erickson also questioned the lack of information initially provided about the trainer's identity, qualifications, and training. The speaker noted that the mayor had originally indicated he would personally pay for the training and believes the expense should remain his personal responsibility rather than be paid with taxpayer funds.

Alderman Ellis stated he would not support the $4,500 training expense, agreeing with the concerns raised by Councilwoman Erickson. He distinguished the proposed life-coaching training from customary employee training, noting the lack of an established curriculum, documented benefits, prior committee review, and budget approval. They emphasized that the mayor had initially indicated he would personally pay for the training. The primary concern was setting a precedent for elected officials to incur expenses and seek reimbursement without prior Council approval. He characterized the issue as a matter of fiscal responsibility, accountability, and maintaining consistent spending procedures rather than a personal criticism of the mayor.

Alderman Defferding stated he would vote against the $4,500 training expense because it was not included in the approved budget. While acknowledging and respecting the mayor's explanation, he emphasized the importance of following established budget procedures. Alderman Defferding contrasted this situation with a previous expense where Council identified an appropriate budget allocation and approved the reallocation. He concluded that the city should adhere to its budget process and therefore would not support the expenditure.

Alderman Pollnow supports the mayor's $4,500 executive coaching expense, stating that the level of scrutiny surrounding the issue seemed disproportionate compared with a previous $66,000 vendor overbilling incident. He questioned whether the criticism had become personal and emphasized the importance of consistent treatment in government. Alderman Pollnow noted that the mayor had acknowledged the mistake and apologized, and argued that executive-level professional development is beneficial. He concluded that he would support the expense because the money had already been spent and he believed the training was worthwhile.

Council President Steiner will support the $4,500 training expense, agreeing with Alderman Pollnow's comments. He characterized the situation as an honest mistake that had been clearly acknowledged by Mayor Borchardt. He argued that the expense was a budget reallocation rather than an increase to the city's overall budget and disagreed that approving it would create a significant precedent for future spending issues. He encouraged Council to move forward to other business.

Alderman Ellis reiterated opposition to the $4,500 training expense, emphasizing that the issue was not the dollar amount or budget reallocation but the failure to follow established city policies and procedures. He questioned when the decision was made to have taxpayers cover the expense instead of the mayor personally paying for it and noted that this was not clearly communicated to the Finance Committee. Alderman Ellis also raised concerns about the lack of information regarding the life coach's curriculum and how it differed from existing training opportunities. He stressed that approving exceptions undermines city policies and creates inconsistency in how Council applies established procedures.

Councilwoman Erickson clarified that the $4,500 credit card charge occurred on June 4, 2026, and was not brought before Council for several months. She explained that, as Finance Chair, reviewing monthly vouchers is part of her oversight responsibilities and that the expense was neither budgeted in the mayor's budget nor properly approved. She disputed the argument that the expense was simply a budget reallocation, noting that the remaining Finance Department funds could have been carried forward for future departmental training. She reiterated that her opposition was based on the failure to follow established procedures, not on the mayor personally.

Mayor Borchardt defended the $4,500 executive coaching expense, explaining that it was paid from existing training funds and did not increase the city's overall budget or divert money from another department. He acknowledged making a mistake in transferring the funds without understanding the applicable state requirements and accepted responsibility. Mayor Borchardt stated that there was no established city policy addressing the transfer and that the city was working toward clearer, consistent policies for future training expenditures. He also compared the expense to Leadership Fox Valley training opportunities provided to employees, noting that similar questions about curriculum and instructors had not previously been raised. The mayor expressed hope that the resolution would address the issue and that clearer policies would be established for 2027.

4. Committee recommends Council authorize the sale of public property located along the south side of W. Winneconne Avenue to Keen Capital Management, LLC in the amount of $30,000 and subject to the terms of the Real Estate Purchase and Sale Agreement. (Roll Call Vote)

Motion by Erickson/Neuman to authorize the sale of public property as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a roll call vote, 9-0.

Alderman Pollnow supports the sale and thinks this is good news.

Director Nieforth advised the city is proposing to sell a landlocked property it has owned since the 1980s, originally acquired by WisDOT for an overpass project that was ultimately not needed. The city has maintained the property for more than 30 years. After notifying adjacent property owners of the potential sale, the city received an offer from Henry Long, owner of existing townhomes on Winneconne/Henry Street, to purchase the property for $30,000. The purchase includes contingencies allowing the buyer to withdraw if the intended development cannot be completed or the required improvements, such as installing a fire hydrant, create obstacles. The anticipated goal is to complete the sale before the end of the year, with construction to follow. The sale would return the property to productive use and add to the city's tax base.

Alderman Defferding expressed enthusiasm for the proposed property sale and future development, noting that the land is currently unused space. He asked whether the development would create additional costs for the city, particularly related to infrastructure improvements such as streetlights or other public improvements, and whether any expenses should be anticipated in next year's budget.

Director Nieforth clarified that because the property is landlocked, it was offered to an adjacent property owner. The buyer plans to combine the property with their existing parcel and extend utilities through their current development. The project is expected to comply with PSC (Public Service Commission) requirements and will not require additional city infrastructure, streetlights, or other improvements. It will simply extend the existing development.

C. NMFR Joint Finance & Personnel Committee meeting of October 20, 2026**:** (Alderman Pollnow) (Minutes can be found on the City website) (Attached)

1. Committee recommends both the Cities of Neenah and Menasha Common Councils accept the proposed 2027 budget as edited by both mayors for a total of 11,144,380.00. (Roll Call Vote) (Attachment)
   Motion by Pollnow/Bruno to accept the proposed 2027 budget as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a roll call vote, 9-0.

   Alderman Defferding asked whether the increase reflected in the salary figures was due to the new labor agreement. The response was yes; the budget includes the salary increase which caused the budget increase.

2. Committee recommends the City of Neenah Common Council approve Resolution 2026-11 to Exceed the Levy Limit for Neenah-Menasha Fire Rescue for Fiscal year 2027. (Roll Call Vote) (Attachment)

Motion by Pollnow/Ellis to approve Resolution 2026-11 as recommended by Committee. Motion carried in a roll call vote, 9-0.

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

A. Plan Commission meeting of October 27, 2026: (Ald. Neuman) (Minutes can be found on the City website)

1. Meeting canceled, no report.

B. Report from the Sustainable Neenah Committee – Alderman Neuman

1. No report.

C. Report from the Bergstrom Mahler Museum – Alderman Bruno

1. Alderman Bruno reported there were 35,000 museum visitors, 13,564 participants in special programs, and 4,600 attendees at the August Glass Arts Festival, which was relocated to Appleton due to tornado damage. Museum renovations were completed ahead of schedule and under budget. Alderman Bruno announced a special *Night at the Museum* event on February 6 from 7–10 p.m. and promoted the museum's holiday gift shop, including its annual ornament, which will be made in-house for the first time, and limited-edition paperweights.

XIII. Presentation of petitions

A. Any other petition received by the City Clerk's Office after distribution of the agenda.

1. None.

XIV. Council Directives

A. **Motion by Ellis/Erickson that Neenah initiate conversations with the City of Menasha and Fox Crossing to explore shared services, service consolidation, or the possibility of forming one unified community and government.**

Alderman Ellis proposed beginning an open discussion with the City of Menasha and Village of Fox Crossing regarding opportunities for shared services or potential municipal consolidation. He referenced a 1972 feasibility study conducted by Bill Kellet and other community leaders that explored a possible Neenah-Menasha merger, which he had distributed to Council, the Mayor, and Department Heads for review. He noted changing financial pressures, rising tax bills, and challenges facing local governments and school districts as reasons to revisit the discussion. He encouraged Council members to review the 1972 study before the next Council meeting, when further discussion could take place.

Point of Order: Council President Steiner clarifying that the proposed Council directive would not be voted on at this meeting but would be brought forward for consideration at the next. He expressed support for open discussions with neighboring communities but emphasized that the directive needs to be specific and actionable. He questioned who would lead the discussions, what format the discussions would take, and which departments or services would be involved so staff would have clear directions on expectations.

Mayor Borchardt clarified that the motion had been made and seconded, so the proposed directive would be brought back for discussion at the next meeting, with additional details and clarification. He emphasized that council directives need to provide

clear direction to staff and suggested that issues of this magnitude would ideally be developed through a committee process. He expressed support for open discussion but cautioned that exploring major initiatives such as regional consolidation should not interrupt or delay the city's ongoing operational responsibilities and projects.

Alderman Ellis agreed with the concerns raised about providing clear direction and managing the process. He clarified that the immediate proposal is simply to determine whether Council supports exploring potential shared services or municipal consolidation with neighboring communities. If there is agreement to proceed, the details, format, responsibilities, and next steps would be developed collaboratively. He encouraged Council members to review the 1972 feasibility study, noting that it addresses many of the questions raised about how a potential consolidation could work.

XV. Unfinished Business

A. Alderman Ellis requested a future Committee of the Whole meeting to receive status updates on the City Hall use study and the Fire Department report previously presented to the Finance Committee. He acknowledged the Council's full agenda but asked that both items be brought forward when time permits

B. Alderman Pollnow reiterated that the Council Rules state that two alderman can request a Committee of the Whole, not just the mayor.

XVI. New Business

A. Any announcements/questions that may legally come before the Council.

1. Alderman Defferding advised that he will meet with Information Systems Director Matt Schroeder and the Mayor to discuss the possibility of establishing a City IT Committee. He noted that according to the City Attorney, the committee could be created by Common Council resolution. Further discussion would take place at a future Committee of the Whole meeting after input is gathered from the appropriate part.

2. Mayor Borchardt reflected on the Brewers' season and compared the team's unity and shared purpose to the Common Council and city staff. He acknowledged disagreements during the meeting but emphasized that decisions should not be taken personally and that everyone remains committed to serving Neenah. He also noted that next year's budget would include funding for training and thanked Council members for their input.

XVII. 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 along the westside of the 1300 block of S. Commercial Street. (Roll Call Vote)

Motion by Ellis/Neuman for the Common 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 along the westside of the 1300

block of S. Commercial Street. 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 in a roll call vote, 9-0.

At 6:58 PM, The Council convened into closed session.

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.

XVIII. Adjournment

Motion by Pollnow/Linski to adjourn. Motion carried in a voice vote 9-0. Meeting adjourned at 7:16 PM.

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

Respectfully submitted,

Charlotte K. Nagel

Charlotte Nagel, City Clerk

City of Neenah – Committee of the Whole Meeting
Wednesday, November 4, 2026
Attendance Sheet

NAME	
1. Becky Kletzka Kim Hanson	
2. Frank Cuthbert	
3. ANTHONY L. MACH	
4. KRISTINE BUTTERIS	
5. M. Kading	
6. SCOTT BECHER	
7. Jeremy Secrl	
8. James Flannigan	
9. Stephanie Flannigan	
10. Duke Behmke	
11. Scott Francis	
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FOX CROSSING
BRIDGING THE FOX CITIES

VILLAGE OF FOX CROSSING

2000 Municipal Drive Neenah, WI 54956
Phone (920) 720-7100 Fax (920) 720-7116
www.foxcrossingwi.gov

June 9, 2026

Mr. Brian Epley
President, Neenah Joint School District Board of Education
410 South Commercial Street
Neenah, WI 54956

RE: Request for Tax Bill Information Regarding State Voucher Program

Dear President Epley,

This letter is regarding your March correspondence requesting that the Village of Fox Crossing include supplemental information on the annual property tax bill regarding funding for independent charter and private voucher schools.

We do want to note our concern regarding the language utilized in the District's resolution, which states that it was passed "in partnership with" the surrounding municipalities, including the Village of Fox Crossing. In reality, no prior contact, discussion, or consultation was initiated by the District with our administration before this resolution was finalized and publicized. Framing a unilateral request as a "partnership" is misleading to the public and creates an inaccurate impression that the Village was involved in or supportive of this initiative from its inception. Moving forward, we request that the Village not be listed as a partner on initiatives deeply affecting our operations without prior discussion and mutual agreement.

The Village Administration has now carefully reviewed your request. While we appreciate the District's stated goal of providing transparency to taxpayers regarding the allocation of state education funds, the Village must respectfully decline the request to modify the property tax bill format for this purpose.

The Village's position is rooted in the following considerations:

- **Administrative Neutrality**: The property tax bill is a ministerial document authorized by state statute for the primary purpose of notifying residents of their tax liabilities and facilitating the collection of assessments. Introducing specific line items that highlight particular state funding mechanisms moves the tax bill away from its purpose and into the realm of political advocacy.
- **State Legislative Authority**: We note that proposals to mandate this type of disclosure have recently been deliberated by the Wisconsin State Legislature. We believe that such a significant change to the uniform structure of property tax bills is a matter of statewide policy that should be addressed through the formal legislative process and a state mandate, rather than through piecemeal local adoption. Until the State provides a uniform requirement for such disclosures, the Village intends to maintain its current billing format.

- **Existing Transparency Channels**: We recognize that the impact of the State Voucher program is a topic of public interest. However, this information is already a matter of public record. Through the Department of Public Instruction's (DPI) reporting, the District's own public budget hearings, and various media releases, there are already robust and appropriate venues for the District to share this data with the public directly.
- **Uniformity and Clarity**: Our priority is to keep the tax bill as clear and concise as possible for our residents. Adding non-mandated information can lead to taxpayer confusion and creates a precedent for other taxing jurisdictions to request specialized disclosures for their own specific budget or policy concerns.

The Village of Fox Crossing remains committed to our collaborative relationship with the Neenah Joint School District and supports the District's continued use of the many communication platforms currently at your disposal to engage with the community.

Thank you for your understanding of the Village's role as a neutral administrator in this process.

Sincerely,



Jeremy A. Searl, CPA
Director of Finance, Village of Fox Crossing