

**REGULAR COUNCIL MEETING
CITY COUNCIL CHAMBERS, CITY OF ALBERT LEA
March 24, 2025 – 7:00 P.M.**

PRESENT: Mayor Rich Murray, Councilors, Larry Baker, Jason Howland, Reid Olson, Keith Van Beek, Brian Anderson, City Manager Ian Rigg, Public Works Director Steven Jahnke, City Attorney Joel Holstad of Lake National Law LLP, and City Clerk Daphney Maras.

ABSENT: Councilor Rachel Christensen

ADDITIONAL STAFF PRESENT: Sergeant-at-Arms-Public Safety Director JD Carlson, Deputy Fire Chief Jeff Laskowske, Finance Director Kristi Brutlag, and Wayne Sorensen Building/Zoning Official.

CALL TO ORDER AND ROLL CALL - Mayor Murray called the meeting to order at 7:00 PM. City Clerk Maras administered roll call.

PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE - Mayor Murray asked all in attendance to stand and recite the Pledge of Allegiance.

CEREMONIAL ITEMS - None

PUBLIC FORUM – None

CONSENT AND APPROVAL OF AGENDA

- A. Approve Minutes of the March 10, 2025 Regular Council Meeting
- B. Approve Minutes of the March 10, 2025 Work Session
- C. License & Permits
- D. Resolution Approving Gambling Permit – Albert Lea Amateur Hockey Association
- E. Resolution Authorizing Application to the Minnesota Public Facilities Authority Drinking Water State Revolving Fund for Lead Service Lines Replacements Project Grant Funding (Job 2508)
- F. Resolution Amending Fund Balance Policy

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve the consent agenda as read, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-050 through 25-052
Included with these minutes)

PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS - None

UNFINISHED BUSINESS - None

NEW BUSINESS

Building/Zoning Official Wayne Sorensen displayed a PowerPoint and provided a detailed overview including history and photos of the four (4) Hazardous Structures as listed on the agenda:

- 338 Broadway Avenue South
- 809 Clark Street West
- 915 Autumn Street
- 819 Garfield Avenue

Rigg said on or about December 23, 2023, the City placarded the property at 338 Broadway Avenue South as being structurally unsafe and unfit. The structure continues to further deteriorate. In the interest of public safety, the City would like to abate the structure because of the unsafe condition. Sorensen said many avenues have been explored to fund the repairs including proposals from interested developers, grant money, and funding options to no avail. He explained budget estimates received for repairs on May 19, 2023, were in the amount of \$726,700. This estimate, barring discovery of more serious interior framing issues, would bring the structure to a stable state. He emphasized this estimate does not include interior renovations or repairs. Owners have provided permission for staff to enter the building in order to obtain exact cost of asbestos removal and demolition.

A. Mayor Murray opened the Public Hearing Authorizing Order for Abatement of Hazardous Structure at 338 Broadway Avenue South. He called the first time. Robert Hoffman spoke of his support to tearing this building down due to its structural issues and believes the removal will add more to the downtown. Mayor Murray called two more times. No one spoke. He closed the public hearing.

A1. Public Hearing and Resolution 25-053 Authorizing Abatement of Hazardous Structure at 338 Broadway Avenue South

Councilor Howland said although he agrees with the removal of the building, he is concerned with voting on abating this structure without an exact cost. Furthermore, he questioned why the council couldn't wait two weeks until a more definite cost estimate was secured. He thinks it is disingenuous to require immediate action when the city has known about the issues for quite some time. Councilor Olson commented city staff gave the council the proper insight it needed to make its decision and thinks it would not be fair for staff to waste more time. Councilor Baker noted his support to abate this building due to the structural issues. He questioned if the city would be liable in the event something happened to someone because the city did nothing to repair it. To which City Attorney Holstad responded, it would be a very serious problem if nothing is done to fix the problem and someone gets hurt. He strongly advised against leaving the building standing without action for two more weeks. Rigg added the city has known the building is a hazard and not taking action puts the city in a more serious situation. In response to Councilor Anderson's question, Rigg responded estimates will be brought back to council for final action at a later date.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve abatement of the hazardous structure at 338 Broadway Avenue South, seconded by Councilor Van Beek. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-053
Included with these minutes)

B. Abatement of Hazardous Structure at 809 Clark Street West

Rigg said on or about September 1, 2017 the City placarded the property at 809 Clark Street West as being structurally unsafe and unfit. The property was deemed a nuisance property. Some minimal cosmetic renovation was attempted. The property was once again placarded on March 7, 2024 because of the length of time without remediation. Staff recommends the structure be abated by repair or removal. Sorensen displayed photos and provided history.

B1. Public Hearing and Resolution 25-054 Authorizing Abatement of Hazardous Structure at 809 Clark Street West

Mayor Murray opened the Public Hearing Authorizing Order for Abatement of Hazardous Structure at 809 Clark Street West. He called three times. No one spoke. He closed the public hearing.

Councilor Anderson inquired if the owner or the city is paying the fee for abatement. Sorensen replied the expense will be assessed to the property. To Howland's question, Sorensen responded no one is living in the home.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Howland. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-054
Included with these minutes)

C. Abatement of Hazardous Structure at 915 Autumn Street

Rigg said on or about May 17, 2023, the City placarded the property at 915 Autumn Street as being structurally unsafe and unfit. The structure continues to further deteriorate. In the interest of public safety, the City would like to abate the structure because of the unsafe conditions. Staff recommends the structure be abated by removal. Sorensen displayed photos and history of the building.

C1. Public Hearing and Resolution 25-055 Authorizing Abatement of Hazardous Structure

at 915 Autumn Street.

Mayor Murray opened the public hearing. He called three times. No one spoke. He closed the public hearing.

Mayor Murray inquired where the funds are coming from to pay to abate these houses. City Manager explained 338 S. Broadway would come from the TIF Fund, while the others will come out of the Blight Fund. Mayor Murray inquired as to how these four houses are chosen when there are so many blighted houses within the city. Sorensen replied most blighted homes are complaint driven and bring attention to the Inspection Department. He added there are approximately 30 blighted houses on the radar, but this number continuously evolves. He further explained the reason he brought four blighted homes forwarded at one time is due to the opportunity of a better bid price to take them all down by one bidder.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-055
Included with these minutes)

D. Abatement of Hazardous Structures at 819 Garfield Avenue

Rigg said on October 9, 2024 the accessory structure was placarded due to a fire. On November 13, 2024 the City placarded the residential structures at 819 Garfield Ave as being structurally unsafe and unfit. The structure continues to deteriorate. In the interest of public safety, staff recommends to abate the structures by repair or removal. He said there is the potential of an interested party to buy the house and repair it. Sorensen displayed photos and provided history.

Councilor Anderson suggested the possibility of instead of paying to demolish a blighted house, perhaps sell it to someone and provide incentives to make repairs and save the home. Rigg responded that could be a possibility that will necessitate further research. Sorensen added the blight diversion process is always a priority. In every event, an attempt is made to rehabilitate the home. He provided many examples of successes of rehabilitation.

D1. Public Hearing and Resolution 25-056 Authorizing Abatement of Hazardous Structures at 819 Garfield Avenue

Mayor Murray opened the public hearing. He called the first time. Robert Hoffman said although he believes some properties are suitable for rehabilitation, he does not believe this one is. He supports the demolition of 819 Garfield Ave. Mayor Murray called two more times. No one spoke. He closed the public hearing.

Motion made by Councilor Olson to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice

call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-056
Included with these minutes)

E. Resolution 25-057 Amending and Restating an Interfund Loan for Advance of Certain Costs in Connection with Tax Increment Financing District No. 5-33.

The current interfund loan amount for TIF District 5-33 Soil District is \$541,000 and resolution 23-059 authorized an interfund loan amount of \$200,000. This resolution increases the interfund loan from \$200,000 to \$1,000,000. The costs in this TIF district will eventually be repaid with increment or the sale of land in this district, this resolution increases the interfund loan amount until the revenue covers the costs.

Mayor Murray inquired where this money is coming from. Rigg deferred to Finance Director Brutlag who explained this is an interfund loan from the general fund and will remain there unless the interfund loans are moved elsewhere.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Van Beek. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-057
Included with these minutes)

F. Ordinance 25-133 Amending Chapter 2, Article IV Departments (1st Reading)

The ordinance change will separate the public safety department back into the police department and the fire department, each with a chief to oversee operations. Current staffing and needs of the community are better matched going back to this organizational structure.

Motion made by Councilor Baker to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Howland. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

(See Secretary's Original Ordinance 25-133
Included with these minutes)

MAYOR AND COUNCIL REPORTS:

First Ward, Councilor Christensen reported: ABSENT

- Ward Items –
- Committee Update –

Second Ward, Councilor Baker reported:

- Ward Items – Staff assisted in resolving a couple ward items.
- Committee Update – Attended the Heritage Preservation meeting where certificate of appropriate was awarded to the owners of 147 N. Broadway and 232 S. Washington. Also discussed the S. Broadway Theatre and the board agreed on the direction that was going.

Third Ward, Councilor Howland reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – None. Mentioned the calls he has received from constituents with complaints of speeding vehicles off of Wedgewood Rd. going south. He is requesting a speed scanner be displayed in that area to remind people to slow down. He mentioned an upcoming event at the Moose Lodge this Saturday to benefit St. Jude Children's Research.

Fourth Ward, Councilor Olson reported:

- Ward Items – City staff working on his ward item.
- Committee Update – None

Fifth Ward, Councilor Van Beek reported:

- Ward Items – None other than gave Kudos to the City snow removal crew after the recent snowfall.
- Committee Update – None

Sixth Ward, Councilor Anderson reported:

- Ward Items – None
- Committee Update – None

MAYOR REPORT:

Attended the following meetings:

- ALEDA project meeting on March 11th.
- Met with the Cheer squad. They are looking for more opportunities to cheer in the community.
- Attended the Big Island Rendezvous Education Days fundraiser held on March 14th
- Met with Good Steward Electric Battery project south of Glenville
- Business After Hours hosted by Robert Hoffman Realty
- Working on items with the City Manager

Mentioned the upcoming events and said they are also listed on the City's website.

CITY MANAGER REPORT

- In a couple of days, he will be lobbying on a bill that will provide sales tax abatement on the City Arena project. He extended appreciation to Community Enrichment & Engagement Director Cathy Malakowsky for her assistance.
- Will be attending the ICMA Government conference in Milwaukee at the beginning of April
- Staff will be working on Cannabis registration

- Will attend a meeting later this week regarding Storm Water
- Working with the Finance Director on the future CIP and fund balances
- Working with staff on code enforcement going forward

APPROVAL OF CLAIMS

A. Resolution 25-058 Approving Claims

(1). Presentation of Claims Over \$25,000

The attached resolution directs the Mayor and City Treasurer to issue the payment of claims as presented in the Detail of Claims report. In addition, Maras displayed a list of claims over \$25,000 for the public's viewing, transparency and education.

Motion made by Councilor Anderson, to approve the claims, seconded by Councilor Van Beek. On voice call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-058
Included with these minutes)

CLOSED SESSION – Discuss disposal of City Property subject to Minn. Stat §13D.05(c).

A. Resolution 25-059 Authorizing the City Manager to Dispose Real Property

Rigg said the resolution directs the city manager to dispose of various lots owned by the city. There is no public use or good in the city maintaining ownership given the cost to maintain the lots, a lack of use of utility use and no tax generation. The resolution lists the properties discussed in closed session.

Motion made by Councilor Anderson, to approve as read, seconded by Councilor Baker. On roll call vote, the following councilors voted in favor of said motion: Baker, Howland, Olson, Van Beek, Anderson, and Mayor Murray. Mayor Murray declared the motion passed.

See Secretary's Original Resolution 25-059
Included with these minutes)

At 8:20 p.m., Mayor Murray requested a motion to move into closed session to discuss disposal of city owned real estate property under §13D.05

Motion made by Councilor Baker to move into closed session, seconded by Councilor Anderson. On voice call vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion.

At 8:49 Mayor Murray requested a motion to move out of closed session.

Motion made by Councilor Anderson, seconded by Councilor Baker. On voice call vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion.

Mayor Murray stated council discussed several City owned properties and provided direction to staff.

Councilor Howland motioned for adjournment; Councilor Baker seconded. That there being no further business, the Council meeting adjourn until the next regular meeting of the Albert Lea City Council at 7:00 p.m. on Monday, April 14, 2025. On voice call vote, all councilors voted in favor of said motion.

Mayor Murray declared the motion passed and the meeting adjourned.

ADJOURNMENT: 8:50 P.M.

Mayor Rich Murray

Daphney Maras
Secretary of the Council