



City Council Meeting

January 26, 2026

7:00 PM

Fridley City Hall, 7071 University Avenue NE

Minutes

Call to Order

Mayor Ostwald called the City Council Meeting of January 26, 2026, to order at 7:00 p.m.

Present

Mayor Dave Ostwald
Councilmember Patrick Vescio
Councilmember Ryan Evanson
Councilmember Luke Cardona
Councilmember Ann Bolkom

Absent

Others Present

Walter Wysopal, City Manager
Sarah Sonsalla, City Attorney
Jim Koluchar, Public Works Director
Bath Kondrick, Deputy City Clerk
Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director

Pledge Of Allegiance

Proclamations/Presentations

1. Proclamation of January 26-30 as Winter Salt Awareness Week

Mayor Ostwald read the Proclamation Designating January 26-30 as Winter Salt Awareness Week.

Jim Kosluchar, Public Works Director, provided information on Winter Salt Awareness Week and thanked the Council for its support.

Approval of Proposed Consent Agenda

Motion made by Councilmember Bolkom to adopt the proposed Consent Agenda. Seconded by Councilmember Evanson.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Mayor Ostwald declared the motion carried unanimously.

Approval/Receipt of Minutes

2. Approve the Minutes from the City Council Meeting of January 5, 2026.
3. Receive the Minutes from the December 4, 2025, HRA meeting.
4. Receive the Minutes from the October 14, 2025, Environmental Quality and Energy Commission Meeting.
5. Receive the Minutes from the December 1, 2025, Parks and Recreation Commission meeting.
6. Receive the Minutes from the December 3, 2025, Public Arts Commission.

New Business

7. Resolution No. 2026-06, Approving an Agreement Between the City of Fridley and the Minnesota Department of Public Safety – Bureau of Criminal Apprehension (BCA) for Participation in the Violent Crimes Reduction Unit (VCRU).
8. Resolution No 2026-12, Approving Entering into a Contract for Health Insurance with Medica, Inc. for the 2026 Plan Year.
9. Resolution No. 2026-14, Approving Gifts, Donations, and Sponsorships Received Between November 15, 2025, and January 21, 2026.

Claims

10. Resolution No. 2026-15, Approving Claims for the Period Ending January 21, 2026.

Open Forum, Visitors: (Consideration of Items not on Agenda – 15 minutes.)

Elisa Schnell, 4632 2nd Street NE, commented on the values of the community and the importance of protecting the community. She commented on the harm that is being caused by the Federal enforcement actions and the two lives that have been lost in a neighboring city. She commented on a recent incident she believed to be a burglary, but was actually a young man attempting to flee ICE agents. She asked the City to take the position of protecting residents rather than cooperating with Federal agents.

Jake Karnopp, Chair of the Fridley School Board, commented that he is speaking on behalf of the School Board as a whole, and if other members of the Board choose to speak tonight, they are speaking on their own behalf. He supported the men and women of the Fridley Police Department and directed his statement towards the City Council. He stated that the City has declined to recognize or apply Federal and constitutional laws that restrict enforcement in school settings and has declined to collaborate with the School District to keep students safe in the schools. He stated that ICE has been present at the schools and bus stops, which has created fear and absenteeism. He reviewed the different laws and rulings in place that protect the right to education for all students regardless of immigration status. He commented on the communities in the metro that have stated that they would uphold these rights and protect the

right to education, whereas Fridley has not taken that position. He stated that this refusal has consequences and described the path that the School District has had to take on its own to protect students and staff, noting that 428 students have already signed up for e-learning as they do not feel safe attending school. He asked the Council to acknowledge the protections that limit civil immigration enforcement on K-12 properties, update its 2017 immigration guidance to comply with current federal laws, and adopt formal cooperation with Fridley Public Schools to ensure that law enforcement will protect children and uphold the law. He invited the members of the Council to attend a ride-along with the Superintendent to drive staff members to work who are otherwise afraid, to distribute groceries to families to afraid to leave their homes, or to patrol bus stops in the morning or afternoon to provide security to students.

Avonna Stark spoke as a resident and commented that the community is tired, exhausted, scared, and angry, and yet in attendance tonight to speak about what they believe. She asked for strong leadership in a time of conflict. She was disappointed that her calls and texts had been unanswered, outside of Councilmember Vescio. She stated that a member of the Council has also blocked her on social media in response to a text communication she sent them. She commented on the impacts of ICE activity in the community and asked the Council to take action and request that ICE leave the state. She asked the people in the room to be the change they want to see and volunteered to help them run for office.

Aaron Klemz, recognized that this is an unprecedented time where places that were once considered safe are no longer safe. He stated that the schools are doing an amazing job, with parents and volunteers joining, in an attempt to keep students and staff safe. He spoke of recent incidents involving ICE and the impacts on the community, with people too afraid to leave their homes, small businesses that are afraid to be open, and students who are afraid to attend school. He asked that the Council adopt a resolution supporting an eviction moratorium, as people should not have to choose between their safety and their home. He asked the City to protect political expression and the upcoming caucuses.

Aaron Rothe, Jackson and 66th, commented that he barely recognizes the community his family chose to live in. He spoke of the fear people are feeling in the community and things that are happening to people in the community as a result of interactions with ICE. He commented on the public safety actions residents are taking and asked that the Police Department do the same, noting that those actions do not interfere with the Federal activity. He asked the Council and Police Department to do more.

Nicole Allen, Blaine resident and Fridley teacher, spoke of the fear she sees in students.

Natividad Seefeld, 1106 Onondaga Street NE, commented that she lives in one of the two manufactured home communities in Fridley and is also the President of that community. She commented on the recent ICE activity in their manufactured home community, and a conflict with the ICE officers she experienced, and the experiences of others in the community with ICE. She commented that they are not evicting people in their manufactured community. She asked the Council to do something and shared a statement from the ROC USA foundation.

Christina Camp, Fridley Public Schools educator, expressed concern with the growing fear related to ICE activity and the impact that it is having on students and staff. She asked the City to take a clear and public stance to protect students and families, reaffirm school as safe places, and ensure that local policies do not contribute to the fear, trauma, or unlawful practices.

Jonathon Rehlander, 615 57th Avenue NE, stated that the stories shared tonight are not unique. He stated that in the morning, he has to drive by the school to ensure there are no ICE vehicles before his wife follows behind with his child. He stated that it has never been risky to go to school, go to work, or go to a business. He appreciated that the City did not create this situation, and is being put in a tough position. He asked what could be done and believed that more is needed. He recognized the laws and stated that people need to feel safe to participate in democracy and have their voices heard without worrying if they will come home that night. He recognized that there are hard choices to make, and it is time to have those hard conversations.

Annie Jenson, Topper Lane NE, provided historical examples, noting that people often think they would have been one of the good ones. She commented that the people fled horrible conditions to seek freedom, as they have in the past. She asked that the community be problem solvers and that their kindness be contagious. She asked the Council to do what it can and a little more to make up for those who are bystanders.

Kade Bardenpratt, 67th and 7th, commented that he is a third-generation Fridley resident and the challenges facing the young generation. He commented on the lack of safety and unlawful activities of ICE in the communities of Minnesota. He asked the leaders of the city to do their jobs and protect the community.

Anna Pribula, 6880 East River Road, commented on her experience in childcare and the fear that those children are feeling.

Kate Grim, 555 67th Avenue, stated that she applied for a previous open position on the City Council and noted that she sees a number of others who applied for that position present tonight as well. She stated that there are other faces who are not present tonight because they are protecting their neighbors. She spoke of the actions they are taking in the community to protect their neighbors. She asked the City to support an eviction moratorium and shared a draft resolution for the Council to consider.

Nikki Karnopp, 482 Rice Creek Terrace, commented on her civic participation in the community and stated that she is watching what leadership is saying and not saying. She asked questions about the statements released on January 23rd from the Mayor and Chief George. She referenced the deceit under which ICE is conducting its activity and asked what would be done about that. She stated that the minority class that is being targeted needs assistance. She asked them to come together as citizens and elected officials to protect those who call Fridley home.

Brian Glare, 6730 Jackson Street, stated that as an architect, he has spent time designing schools, and he never imagined that the threat they would be designing against would be the government. He stated that people should not have to worry if they will be safe at school or work. He asked the Council to sign an eviction moratorium and to hold ICE accountable to the laws and constitutional rights that everyone else is held to.

Wade, Georgetown on the River resident, commented on the work they are doing in the community to distribute food to the community. He stated the City could assist in protecting school bus routes, and the eviction moratorium also makes sense. He asked the Council to read the draft moratorium tonight.

LeahKim Gannett, Starlight Boulevard, stated that her children attend Anoka High School and receive bus transportation. She commented that currently her children have a white driver, but for years had a driver of color, and she has had to prepare her students for what to do if their driver is taken and the bus is left on the side of the road. She provided her experience of a vehicle that was following a school bus recently in their neighborhood. She recognized the work of parents in the community and the work ICE is doing, trying to infiltrate these parent groups. She asked the City for help.

Nicole, Georgetown on the River resident, commented that she lives and works in Fridley and provided information on the work that is done by her employer to euthanize elderly and sick pets in the homes of residents. She asked the Council to support the rent moratorium to provide residents with peace of mind that they do not need to choose between whether they will live in their homes and afford groceries.

Mandy Meisner, Anoka County Commissioner for District 7 and Fridley resident, stated that she is present tonight to listen to the community. She commended the School Board for being fierce advocates for the children in the community. She stated that as an elected official, she encouraged everyone to work together to focus efforts on needed changes in the federal delegation. She stated that the local level is the only level of government where they can work together to get things done. She thanked those who shared their stories and stated that perhaps all local government bodies in Fridley could write a letter to the federal delegation supporting change, noting that she would sign the letter as well. She commented on the letters that she is writing in addition. She recognized that people are fighting for their lives in real ways and urged the community not to fight with one another, but instead fight against the inhumane tactics and unlawful actions of ICE. She welcomed residents to reach out to her and provided her contact information.

Mayor Ostwald thanked everyone for their comments and the time they took to share their stories. He noted that if members of the public want to continue discussions, the Council can speak with them personally following the remainder of the agenda.

Adoption of Regular Agenda

Motion made by Councilmember Bolkcom to adopt the regular agenda. Seconded by Councilmember Vescio.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Mayor Ostwald declared the motion carried unanimously.

Regular Agenda

New Business

11. Resolution No. 2026-11, Approving Gas/Tobacco and Off-Sale Liquor License for MN C-Store

Beth Kondrick, Deputy City Clerk, presented a request from Marissa Powers for a Gas/Tobacco License and Off-Sale Liquor License for MN C-Store (dba BP Gas Station) located at 7600 University Avenue NE and recommended approval of the resolution as presented.

Councilmember Bolkcom asked if the petitioner was present and expressed concern with the appearance of the building and property. Ms. Kondrick replied that this is a corporation outside of Minnesota, and therefore, it is difficult for them to attend in person. She confirmed that staff would remain the same, and it is the corporate ownership that is changing. She stated that Community Development staff are aware of those issues and are hoping to have more success working with the new property owner.

Councilmember Evanson asked and received confirmation that the current owner is also absentee and out of state.

Motion made by Councilmember Bolkcom to adopt Resolution No. 2026-11, Approving Gas/Tobacco and Off-Sale Liquor License for MN C-Store. Seconded by Councilmember Evanson.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Mayor Ostwald declared the motion carried unanimously.

12. Resolution No. 2026-07, Awarding Well Rehabilitation Project No. 26-448

Mr. Kosluchar provided background information on the request, noting that bids were publicly opened on Tuesday, January 20th, and four responsive bids were received. He provided information on the proposed project and recommended that the project be awarded to Mineral Service Plus, LLC of Green Isle, MN. The draft resolution awards the combined base bid, alternate, and five percent contingency for a total amount of \$240,819.60.

Councilmember Bolkcom asked if there would be any impacts on water service. Mr. Kosluchar provided information on the spring and fall work that would be completed in order to ensure that there is no disruption to residents during the peak times of usage.

Motion made by Councilmember Bolkcom to adopt Resolution No. 2026-07, Awarding Well Rehabilitation Project No. 26-448. Seconded by Councilmember Cardona.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Mayor Ostwald declared the motion carried unanimously.

13. Resolution No. 2026-09, Approving a Community Development Block Grant Application for the Flanery Park Improvements

Mike Maher, Parks and Recreation Director, provided background information on the Community Development Block Grant (CDBG) Program, the grants it provides to communities, and past projects completed in Fridley that utilized CDBG funds. He presented the proposed resolution related to the proposed Flanery Park improvements.

Councilmember Cardona commended staff for their efforts in the plan development for the project and an attempt to secure outside funding. He asked if funds had been allocated in the budget for this project and whether receipt of grant funds would free up those budgeted funds for other uses. Mr. Maher replied that these items have been included in the CIP for a number of years, and if grant funds are received, they could complete enhancements to the project, and/or it would free up the funds they have issued bonds for other projects within the Parks System Improvement Plan.

Motion made by Councilmember Cardona to adopt Resolution No. 2026-09, Approving a Community Development Block Grant Application for the Flanery Park Improvements. Seconded by Councilmember Vescio.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Mayor Ostwald declared the motion carried unanimously.

14. Resolution No. 2026-10, Approving a Community Development Block Grant Application for the Summit Square Park Improvements

Mr. Maher presented a request for the same grant program as the last case for Summit Square Park improvements.

County Commissioner Mandy Meisner was happy to see Fridley applying for CDBG funds. She stated that the cities she represents have been qualified as low-income, which makes it easier to qualify. She commented on the threats the CDBG program is experiencing at the federal level and encouraged the City to take advantage of the program for as long as it is available.

Ms. Pribula commented that she is a retired childcare provider and the kids will love these parks. She noted a need for shade at the parks.

Motion made by Councilmember Vescio to adopt Resolution No. 2026-10, Approving a Community Development Block Grant Application for the Summit Square Park Improvements. Seconded by Councilmember Bolkcom.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Mayor Ostwald declared the motion carried unanimously.

Informal Status Reports

Councilmember Bolkcom noted the upcoming Winterfest events taking place on February 7th. She stated that they are also collecting winter gear for youth and adults in need. She also spoke about Fare for All, which is a local food distribution event.

Councilmember Cardona thanked everyone who attended and provided input tonight.

Councilmember Evanson commented that he struggles to find the right words and was moved by the show of support from the community tonight. He stated that he has been grieved by what he has seen not just in Fridley but in other areas plagued by unrest. He stated that he will continue to pray for his colleagues and ask that they be provided wisdom to do the right thing, which will not be the easy thing, and for all other local and state elected officials, and for the police. He is committed to having dialogue with the Council and others to process the input they received. He wanted to ensure that the community remains safe and does not want to see a revisit of the chaos that occurred six years ago when buildings were burned on Lake Street. He stated that he is committed to upholding the oath he took when he accepted this office.

Mayor Ostwald thanked everyone who shared their thoughts and noted that he welcomes additional discussion with those who are still present after the meeting.

Adjourn

Motion made by Councilmember Evanson to adjourn. Seconded by Councilmember Vescio.

Upon a voice vote, all voting aye, Mayor Ostwald declared the motion carried unanimously, and the meeting adjourned at 8:57 p.m.

Respectfully Submitted,

Melissa Moore
City Clerk

Dave Ostwald
Mayor