



**WHITEHALL
CITY COUNCIL
WORK SESSION MINUTES**

Council Chambers

January 14, 2025

PRESENT Scott Brown, Tanya Cabala, Debi Hillebrand, Jeff Holmstrom, Stephen Sikkenga, Steve Salter, and Tom Ziemer

ABSENT None

ALSO PRESENT Scott Huebler, Brenda Bourdon, Brennen Gorman, Roger Squiers

Mayor Salter called the meeting to order at 5:00 p.m.

DISCUSSION ITEMS

City Manager Search

Ziemer raised concerns about the timeline for the manager search and opposed staff being responsible for selecting the consultant. Holmstrom, however, expressed support for the proposed schedule. Huebler clarified that staff would handle the solicitation of consultants, but the final selection would be made by the council. He also provided further details about the schedule outlined below.

February/March	Consultant Selection
April	Develop Community Profile and Candidate Qualifications
May	Solicit Applications
June	Interview Candidates
July	Select New City Manager, Negotiate Contract
August	New City Manager

Brown and Hillebrand backed a work session to explore a shared city manager, but Cabala, Holmstrom and Salter opposed the idea, citing practicality concerns. Salter noted Montague's manager was uninterested, though Hillebrand disagreed. Sikkenga suggested a shared manager would only work if the cities merged.

Deer Hunting on City Property

Sikkenga proposed opening city-owned properties for deer hunting to help manage the deer population. Based on a map provided by City Manager Huebler, Sikkenga identified five properties as feasible options. He suggested a lottery system for interested hunters, where participants would indicate their top three location preferences. Once a hunter successfully harvests a deer, the next individual on the list would be granted access to the designated property. Sikkenga noted that Montague limits each hunter to a two-week period.

Hillebrand, Holmstrom, and Brown expressed support for expanding hunting to city property, while Salter suggested conducting a resident survey to gather public input. Attorney Gorman mentioned that professional companies could be hired to cull the deer population if overpopulation is the primary concern. He also emphasized the importance of addressing liability issues before proceeding.

Park Upgrades

City Manager Huebler reported that all three park grant applications were unsuccessful, noting that the scoring criteria favored larger urban communities. Despite this, he emphasized that the city could still move forward using the \$106,100 of local match funds. Huebler highlighted the urgent need to replace the bathrooms at Funnell Field and recommended prioritizing that project.

Country Club Walkway

City Manager Huebler reported that a sidewalk runs from Mears Avenue to Lake Street, cutting through Gee Park, with stairs located at the west end. Adjacent homeowners have requested that the city either repair or replace the stairs, improve sidewalk maintenance, or relinquish ownership of the sidewalk to the homeowners. An estimate of \$6,700 was provided to replace the stairs, and \$22,200 to replace both the stairs and the sidewalk from Carleton to Lake Street. Salter, Cabala, and Sikkenga expressed support for maintaining the sidewalk and stairs, while Brown questioned the necessity of repairs, noting that few people seem aware of it. Huebler emphasized the liability concerns associated with not addressing the issue.

INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

None

PUBLIC COMMENT

Mark Nienhouse provided information on Montague's deer hunting process.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Salter adjourned the work session at 5:59 pm

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Bourdon, City Clerk



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ABSENT None

ALSO PRESENT Scott Huebler, Brenda Bourdon, Brennen Gorman, Roger Squiers

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

APPROVAL OF THE AMENDED AGENDA

Motion by Cabala, seconded by Sikkenga to approve the amended agenda.

Voice Vote: 5 yes, 2 no – Brown, Ziemer

MOTION CARRIED

APPROVAL OF THE CONSENT AGENDA

A. Approval of the December 17, 2025 Council Meeting

B. Accounts Payable \$644,851.61

C. Communications: Appointments, Billing Error Report, BLT Minutes, Playhouse Operating, Wastewater Management Meeting Minutes

Motion by Holmstrom, seconded by Sikkenga to approve the Consent Agenda.

Ziemer initiated a discussion regarding the Playhouse Committee and its lack of progress. After consulting with the attorney, it was decided to include this matter under new business.

Voice Vote: 5 yes, 2 no – Brown, Ziemer

MOTION CARRIED

MESSAGES FROM THE MAYOR, COUNCIL, AND CITY MANAGER

Messages were received from Council members.

PUBLIC COMMENT

Kim Cyr commented that boards use Old Business as an opportunity to add action items. Terry Leonard spoke against owning the Playhouse as did Mark Nienhouse.

OLD BUSINESS

None

NEW BUSINESS

A. Resolution 25-01 – Poverty Exemption

Motion by Brown, seconded by Holmstrom to adopt the 2025 Poverty Exemption Policies and Guidelines as presented.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Brown, Holmstrom, Ziemer, Hillebrand, Cabala, Sikkenga, and Salter;
No – None; Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

B. Resolution 25-02 – Residents Right to Protest

Motion by Holmstrom, seconded by Sikkenga to provide the right of resident and non-resident taxpayers to file protests to the Board of Review in writing, without the necessity of personal appearance by the taxpayer or the taxpayer’s representative, provided such written protest is received on or before the second Tuesday in March of the tax year at issue.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Holmstrom, Sikkenga, Brown, Ziemer, Hillebrand, Cabala, and Salter;
No – None; Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

C. Resolution 25-03 – Board of Review

Motion by Sikkenga, seconded by Brown, to schedule the 2025 board of review dates: Wednesday March 12th from 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm and 6:00 pm to 9:00 pm and Thursday March 13th from 9:00 am to 12:00 pm and 1:00 pm to 4:00 pm.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Sikkenga, Brown, Holmstrom, Ziemer, Hillebrand, Cabala, and Salter;
No – None; Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

D. Resolution 25-04 – Personnel Manual

Motion by Holmstrom, seconded by Cabala, to adopt the amended Personnel Manual as presented to comply with State law to separate sick time from personal time.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Holmstrom, Cabala, Sikkenga, Brown, Ziemer, Hillebrand, and Salter;
No – None; Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

E. Feet on the Street Request

Motion by Brown, seconded by Hillebrand, to approve the street closure for the N. Mears promenade on Sunday, June 1, 2025 from 2 pm – 7 pm for the Feet on the Street event.

Voice Vote: All yeses

MOTION CARRIED

F. Playhouse Committee (added new business item)

Motion by Cabala, seconded by Brown, to approve the mayor’s recommendation for the Playhouse Committee.

Roll Call Vote: Yes – Cabala, Holmstrom, Hillebrand, and Salter; No – Brown, Sikkenga, Ziemer;
Absent – None

MOTION CARRIED

PUBLIC COMMENT

Four students from Montague introduced themselves for class credit.

ADJOURNMENT

Mayor Salter adjourned the Council Meeting at 6:46 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Brenda Bourdon, City Clerk

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