



**CITY OF RIVER FALLS, WISCONSIN
COMMON COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS**

February 10, 2026

Mayor Toland called the meeting to order at 6:30 p.m.

City Council Members Present: Todd Bjerstedt, Jeff Bjork, Nick Carow, Sean Downing, Scott Morrissette, Diane Odeen, Michael Page

Staff Present: City Administrator Scot Simpson; Community Services Director/City Clerk Amy White; City Attorney Chris Gierhart; Deputy Police Chief Matt Kennett; Utility Director Kevin Westhuis; Community Development Director Amy Peterson; Chief of Staff Jennifer Smith; Senior Planner Harley Melhorn; Assistant Director of Community Development Emily Shivley; Planning Intern Anna Shakel; IT Specialist Jonathan Thoen

The pledge of allegiance was said.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES:

January 27, 2026 meeting minutes

MSC Morrissette/Bjork to approve the minutes. Unanimous.

APPROVAL OF BILLS:

MSC Bjerstedt/Downing moved to approve the bills. Unanimous.

Mayor Toland provided an immigration enforcement update and explained the practices of the River Falls Police Department.

PUBLIC COMMENT, PETITIONS, REQUESTS AND COMMUNICATIONS:

Austin Mahanke – Mahanke introduced himself as a candidate for alderperson at large and provided his contact information.

Dana Linscott – Linscott expressed his concerns with public safety and police misconduct.

PUBLIC HEARING:

At 6:35 p.m., the mayor recessed into a Public Hearing for the first reading the following ordinances: Ordinance 2026-01 An Ordinance Amending Title 17 Zoning, Chapters 17.04 and 17.08 (accessory Dwelling Units), Ordinance 2026-02 An Ordinance Amending Title 17 Zoning, Chapters 17.04, 17.08, 17.20, 17.24, 17.28, 17.64 and 17.73 (Multifamily Spatial Standards, Amenity and Open Space), Ordinance 2026-03 An Ordinance Amending Title 17 Zoning, Chapters 17.04, 17.08, 17.20, 17.24, 17.28 and 17.104 (Code Clarification), Ordinance 2026-04 An Ordinance Amending Title 17 Zoning, Chapters 17.08.020 (Driveway Width), Ordinance 2026-05 An Ordinance Amending Title 17 Zoning, Chapters 17.20, 17.24, 17.28, 17.44, 17.48 and 17.80 (Single Family, Multi-Family and Industrial Parking Standards), Ordinance 2026-06 An Ordinance Amending Title 17 Zoning, Chapters 17.04 and 17.08 (Shade Structures)

Senior Planner Harley Mehlhorn provided a presentation that outlined each amendment. He explained the Comprehensive Plan guidance and data analysis followed in making the recommendations.

Mayor Toland asked if anyone had comments about the proposed ordinances. With no questions, Mayor Toland moved back into Open Session at 6:58 p.m.

Councilmember Downing asked why the recommendation for amenities would be with the developer instead of the Plan Commission or Park Board. Senior Planner Mehlhorn indicated it's due to development timing, clarifying the multifamily performance standards for amenities that will be included in the ordinance will allow, during project review, assurance it is either on the list or at the quality of what's on the list.

Councilmember Bjerstedt expressed concerns about the accessory dwelling units and how it may impact the sale of the property once built or becoming used as a rental unit.

Councilmember Morrissette indicated this is an impactful change on how the city reviews developments. He talked about the missing middle and how it impacts neighborhood. He has density concerns and how it affects public works and public safety. He talked about market trends over the years and what it might be like in years to come. He indicated he is not in favor of updating the driveway widths to allow for larger space at the curb.

Councilmember Odeen asked if the proposed amendment would prohibit developers from building larger homes on larger lots. Senior Planner Mehlhorn affirmed.

Councilmember Page said the recommended amendment will help with decision making as they are more straightforward.

Councilmember Bjork expressed his concerns with the trend of smaller lots and how it will change what River Falls esthetics.

Councilmember Bjerstedt asked if there is a dollar amount attached to the missing middle housing. Senior Planner Mehlhorn explained that while staff have started to do the analysis, they have not done a direct economic analysis to provide that information. He indicated, however, staff now has the tools to map on the city's rentals, multiplexes, missing middle, and home age. Councilmember Bjerstedt reminded that density equals dollars.

Councilmember Downing shared he has requested staff to work on accessory units, missing middle housing, updates to setbacks and zoning that specifically met the city's comprehensive plan. He agrees the amendments meet the States' guidelines for functionality and appreciates the work done in meeting the communities' needs for affordable housing.

Administrator Simpson provided information on the cost of replacement on an expanded driveway and what policy options the Council could make.

CONSENT AGENDA:

Resolution No. 7050 Approving Award for 2026-2028 Electric Distribution and Transmission Line Clearance Tree Service Contract

MSC Morrissette/Bjerstedt to approve the remaining Consent Agenda. Unanimous.

REPORTS

Comptroller Report

General Fund revenues through the end of January were \$2,132,279 or 14.8% of total budgeted revenues for the year. Revenues in January included \$1.6 million in general property taxes, \$10,120 in zoning fees, and \$8,200 in building permits. Expenditures through the end of January were \$1,028,048, or 7.1% of total budget expenditures for the year. As of January 31, 2026, net revenues over expenditures were \$1,104,231.

Administrator's Report

Administrator Simpson provided some additional information pertaining to the middle housing referenced in Senior Planner Mehlhorn's presentation. He indicated staff would provide additional information to Council with a better definition and how it relates to River Falls.

Mayor's Good News Report

Mayor Toland reminded everyone that the State of City is on March 3 at Tattersall beginning at 7:30 a.m.

CLOSED SESSION

At 7:23 p.m., MS Morrissette/Downing move to Recess into Closed Session per Wisconsin State Statutes §19.85(1)(e) for the following purposes: "conducting other specified public business, whenever competitive or bargaining reasons require a closed session, to wit: discussion and consideration regarding the sale and development of City property in the Mann Valley Corporate Park". Mayor Toland asked for a roll call vote which passed 7-0.

RECONVENE INTO OPEN SESSION

At 7:47pm, MSC Morrissette/Odeen to move back into Open Session. Unanimous.

MSC Bjerstedt/Page move to adjourn at 7:48 p.m. Unanimous.

Respectfully submitted,

Amy White, Community Services Director/City Clerk