

**SAUK CENTRE CITY COUNCIL
REGULAR MEETING MINUTES
WEDNESDAY, FEBRUARY 4, 2025**

1. CALL TO ORDER/ROLL CALL/PLEDGE OF ALLEGIANCE

The Sauk Centre City Council met in a Regular Meeting on Wednesday, February 4, 2025 at 6:30 p.m. due notice being given thereof. Present were Mayor Warren Stone, Council Members Brad Kirckof, Joe Fuechtmann, Heidi Leach and Scott Kowski. Also present were City Administrator Vicki Willer, City Planner Sarah Morton, Police Chief Joe Jensen, City Engineer Keith Yapp and Public Works Director Ben Clink. Mayor Stone presided thereat.

2. APPROVAL OF AGENDA

A motion was made by Council Member Fuechtmann and was seconded by Council Member Kowski to approve the agenda with the addition of 7f and 7g. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Fuechtmann, Kowski, Kirckof, Leach and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

3. APPROVAL OF MINUTES

a. A motion was made by Council Member Kirckof and was seconded by Council Member Leach to approve the January 21, 2026 Regular Meeting Minutes, with changes. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Kirckof, Leach, Kowski, Fuechtmann and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

4. PUBLIC OPEN FORUM (Comments Limited to 3 Minutes)

None.

5. PUBLIC HEARINGS

None.

6. REPORTS/PRESENTATIONS/AWARDS

a. The Planning Commission met on January 28 and discussed the following:

- Zoning Map Amendment – See 7a
- Building Permit Reports:
 - September 2025 – 30 permits issued for a value of \$821,000.00
 - October 2025 – 41 permits issued for a value of \$2.086 million
 - November 2025 – 14 permits issued for a value of \$167,000.00
 - December 2025 – 5 permits issued for a value of \$53,000.00
- Nuisance Violation:
 - Abatement plan – 1
 - Forwarded to attorney – 5
 - Complete – 21
 - In compliance at time of inspection – 2
 - Condemnation – 1
 - In progress – 6

- b. Fire Chief Jeff Bromenshenkel presented the 2025 Fire Department Annual Report. He stated that there were a total of 171 calls in 2025, in comparison to 164 in 2024. The calls were as follows:

<u>Call</u>	<u>Year</u>
Structure Fire	17
Grass Fire	6
Rescue & Medical	42
Vehicle Accidents & Fires	21
Gas, Smoke, Alarm Calls	21
False/Cancelled Calls	55
Service Calls	9

The department billed out \$55,364.00, received \$1,975.00 (2023) and \$44,664.00 (2024), collections/write-offs of \$3,735.00, leaving \$9,270.00 unpaid.

The department received a total of \$88,579.00 in grants/reimbursements/donations in 2025.

The Department had four firefighters retire in 2025, in which three were hired.

- c. Sara Hoffner introduced herself as the new Visit Sauk Centre Director Sara Hoffner. She stepped into the role in July, 2025. Ms. Hoffner stated that the focus of 2025 was expanding reach, refreshing digital presence and assuring that Sauk Centre is showing up in the places that travelers are already looking. Ms. Hoffner presented the following information:

2025

- Advertised in both regional and national publications (print and digital), to include AAA Living, Minnesota Monthly, Minneapolis St. Paul Magazine, MSP Magazine, Midwest Living, Up North Magazine, Minnesota Trails, Iowa Sportsman, Rider Magazine, Road Runner Magazine, and Explore Minnesota Travel Guide.
- Other promotions include:
 - Sauk Centre Visitors Guide
 - Facebook
 - YouTube Advertising
 - Explore MN Leads Program
- Visit Sauk Centre invested in community events to include Sauk Centre Conservation Club Walleye Tournament, Sinclair Lewis Days, Time Travelers Trek, Festival of the Arts, and many other events that contribute to overnight stays, dining, shopping and overall economic activity within the community.
- In 2025 approximately 2,000 Sauk Centre Visitors Guides were mailed out as well as approximately 5,000 guides being distributed to welcome/tourism centers across Minnesota, to include Mall of America, etc.
- Digital engagement increased by 2,700% from 2024.
- Visit Sauk Centre website is continually updated.
- Visit Sauk Centre’s new Mission/Vision statement – Visit Sauk Centre exists to inspire visitors to discover Minnesota’s original Main Street. A community where history, hospitality, and hometown pride come together. We showcase Sauk

Centre’s unique charm, from its lakes and trails to its lively downtown and rich literary legacy. Our work focuses on growing tourism in a way that supports local businesses, strengthens the local economy, and preserves the authentic character that makes Sauk Centre special.

2026

- Theme: Check this off your list.
- All graphics and ads will now be created in-house.
- New Board Members are Scott Kowski (City Representative) and Dave Schroeder (Palmer House).
- Partnership with Explore MN Co-Op and Sizzle Media – March 2026 a professional video production team will be coming to Sauk Centre to capture local businesses, attractions, hot spots, etc. The videos will be used to promote Sauk Centre as a tourism destination.

7. ACTION ITEMS

- a. At its meeting on January 28, 2026, the Planning Commission held a public hearing to consider a request for rezoning. The request was submitted by Brent Engle on behalf of the Marcus J. Engle Revocable Trust. The request was to amend the zoning map to rezone a seven-acre parcel of land from I/C Industrial Commercial to R-1 Residential. The property is located at 1732 Beltline Road with the NE side abutting the Wobegon Trail.

The parcel is adjacent to I/C Commercial, Agricultural, and R-1 Residential.



The Planning Commission voted to recommend the amendment to the City Council.

A motion was made by Council Member Kirckof and was seconded by Council Member Leach to approve Ordinance No. 854, An Ordinance of the City of Sauk Centre Amending

the Official Zoning Map of the City as Outlined in Section 156.036 of the City Code. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Kirckof, Leach, Kowski, Fuechtmann and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

- b. The Policy Committee reviewed the Fee Schedule as it relates to Penalties and Fines and recommended adjustments as shown on the Administrative Penalties that was presented to the Council, highlighted in yellow. The general rule is that fines and penalties will be consistent at \$125 and highlighted unless otherwise called out in other codes or policies (not highlighted). Curfew violations were raised as well but on a sliding scale.

The Committee recommended its adoption.

A motion was made by Council Member Kowski and was seconded by Council Member Leach to approve Resolution No. 2026-03, Resolution to Adopt a Schedule of Fees for 2026 Voluntary Administrative Penalties and Fines for Offenses of the City Code According to §10.98. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Kowski, Leach, Fuechtmann, Kirckof and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

- c. The 2026 Budget includes funding for crack filling and sealcoating projects to be undertaken in 2026 in the amount of \$175,000.00.

The Operations Committee met on Feb. 4 at 5:00 p.m. and reviewed the project list:

- Anjo Drive
- East Street
- PW Shop Lot
- Ash Street (micro-seal)

The Policy is to crack fill and sealcoat projects within the first five years after construction.

A motion was made by Council Member Kirckof and was seconded by Council Member Fuechtmann to approve Resolution No. 2026-08, Resolution Approving Advertisement for quotes for 2026 Crackfill and Sealcoat Projects. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Kirckof, Fuechtmann, Leach, Kowski and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

- d. Ralph and Larry Zimmerman, 630 Birch Street South, requested that the City reimburse them for costs they incurred for the reinstallation of sidewalk pavers for the walkways up to their house. The City removed a couple feet of each of two sidewalks where they connected to the City sidewalk. Zimmerman stated since they were not put back they hired Treetop Nursery to do the work. The bill he paid to Treetop was \$1,872.75.



Keith Yapp, City Engineer, calculated what the City would have paid to replace the pavers with walkway:

$$7th\ St - 5' \times 5' = 25\ sf @ \$5.02/sf = \$125.50\ (construction\ cost) \times 1.25 = \$156.88\ (project\ cost)$$

$$Birch\ St - 7' \times 5' = 35\ sf @ \$5.02/sf = \$175.70\ (construction\ cost) \times 1.25 = \$219.63\ (project\ cost)$$

\$376.51 total cost

A motion was made by Council Member Kowski and was seconded by Council Member Kirckof to approve a reimbursement request to the Zimmermans in the amount of \$376.51. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Kowski, Kirckof, Leach, Fuechtmann and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

- e. On July 2, 2025, upon recommendation of the EDA, the City Council approved proceeding with the development of an SCDP Loan/Grant to Arrow Health for code deficiency and accessibility upgrades.

At that time, the EDA recommended that electrical updates by Essler Electric and the plumbing/heating upgrades by Kleinschmidt Plumbing and Heating would fit the parameters of the program best. The total cost for these two were estimated at \$20,500 with the City participation at 70% or \$14,350.00.

Final invoices for these two entities came in at \$15,800.00 which was recommended to approved and paid as follows:

Total Eligible		\$15,800.00
SCDP Deferred Loan (Grant after 10 years)	40%	\$6,320.00
SCDP Zero Interest Loan	30%	\$4,740.00

Total Reimbursements **\$11,060.00**

Owner Portion 30% \$4,740.00

A motion was made by Council Member Fuechtmann and was seconded by Council Member Leach to approve payment of \$11,060 for SCDP loans upon receipt of signature on Agreements. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Fuechtmann, Leach, Kowski, Kirckof and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

- f. The 2026 squads arrived and are being scheduled for equipment installation. The installation includes new mobile radio equipment and software licensing at \$5,451.00 each.

This request is for the purchase of two sets for the new squads.

A motion was made by Council Member Leach and was seconded by Council Member Kowski to approve the purchase of two Mobile Radio Sets with Licensing for \$10,902.00. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Leach, Kowski, Kirckof, Fuechtmann and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

- g. Ambulance Director Brian Zales submitted his recommendation to fill the vacant Training Coordinator Position.

Nicole Westbrook has accepted the position of Training Coordinator. The effective starting date is February 9, 2026.

A motion was made by Council Member Kirckof and was seconded by Council Member Fuechtmann to appoint Nicole Westbrook as Training Coordinator for the Sauk Centre Ambulance Service effective February 9, 2026. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Kirckof, Fuechtmann, Leach and Mayor Stone. Against: None. Abstain: Council Member Kowski. The motion passed.

8. UNFINISHED BUSINESS

- a. City Engineer Yapp updated the Council on the Trunk Highway 71 Project:

- City's estimated cost (not including storm sewer allocation on TH 71 corridor, lighting costs)
 - Construction – 8.7 million
 - Total Project – 11.1 million
- MnDOT finalizing alignment and layouts for 71
- Bypass road allows a connection from the east side of the city to the north side of the city during flood events

- b. The City applied for a grant from DEED for a SCDP (Small Cities Development Program) Grant to assist with renovation of up to 25 single family homes in Sauk Centre. The Grant Application was a Preliminary Proposal for \$600,000.00.

The City was recently notified that it was selected to submit a full application. Staff will be working with Heidi Peper of Stantec, Jason Krebsbach of Central Mn Housing Partnership, Amy Wyatt, DEED Region 7W Representative to finalize the application. Submittal date is April 15, 2026. Notification will occur over the summer.

Fourteen cities, including Sauk Centre, were deemed competitive.

Twenty-seven cities were deemed marginally competitive.

The balance of cities were invited to reapply in future years.

- c. The request for an Amendment to the City of Sauk Centre Local Option Sales Tax has been submitted to the House and the Senate. A bill implementing the change is being prepared by Senate and House staff which will be introduced to the House and Senate Tax Committees in the coming months.

The only change requested is to amend the maximum dollar amount to be ultimately collected from up to Ten Million to up to Twenty Million. In either situation, the tax would stop when it hits the cap, or when enough money is collected to fund the project.

Once the Tax Committees hear the proposal and upon testimony from the City, it is likely action will be held over until May to be included in the Omnibus Tax Bill. At that time, we will also know whether we will be required to hold a ballot referendum in November or if they will pass it without the requirement.

9. NEW BUSINESS

- a. Local Board of Review and Equalization hearing has been finalized to occur on Monday, April 6, 2026 at 1:00 p.m.

A quorum of the Council must be present. We must have at least one member who has undergone the training. Leach and Stone are valid until July 1, 2026.

10. CONSENT AGENDA

The Council considered the following Consent Agenda Items:

- a. Schedule of Claims -

Unpaid Claims	\$26,035.07	
Paid Claims	<u>\$90,706.00</u>	
Total		<u>\$116,741.07</u>

- b. Resolution No. 2026-09 Resolution Accepting Contributions.

Men’s Card Playing Group	\$131.75	Senior Center
West Union Combined Charities	\$52.00	Amb. Dept.
West Union Combined Charities	\$70.00	Police Dept.
West Union Combined Charities	\$30.00	Fire Dept.

The Council thanked the Men’s Card Playing Group and the West Union Combined Charities for their donations.

- c. Sauk Centre Youth Hockey Association submitted an Application & Permit for a 1-Day Temporary On-Sale Liquor License for a beer & wine event at the Sauk Centre Civic Arena on March 28, 2026. Fee and Certificate of Insurance is being provided.

A motion was made by Council Member Fuechtmann and was seconded by Council Member Kowski to approve the Consent Agenda as presented. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Fuechtmann, Kowski, Leach, Kirckof and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

11. INFORMATIONAL ITEMS

- a. Spectrum Channel Lineup Changes.
- b. The City of Sauk Centre was incorporated as an official city in 1876, which makes Sauk Centre 150 years old this year.

12. ADJOURNMENT

A motion was made by Council Member Leach and was seconded by Council Member Kirckof to adjourn the meeting. A vote being recorded as follows: For: Council Members Leach, Kirckof, Kowski, Fuechtmann and Mayor Stone. Against: None. The motion passed.

With no further business, Mayor Stone adjourned the meeting.

Respectfully submitted:

Mayor Warren Stone

City Administrator Vicki Willer