

City of Gilbert
Minutes of Regular City Council Meeting
Tuesday, April 28, 2026
Council Chambers

Mayor Oberstar, Jr. called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at 6:32 PM
Quorum determined.

Present: Mayor Karl Oberstar, Jr., Councilors Bob Pontinen, Paul Skrbec, Ryan Redepenning and Rudy Vertchnik; Deputy Clerk Lynn Lorey, Administrative Assistant Marion DeLage and Police Chief Ty Techar

Pledge of Allegiance

Additions to the Agenda: Under New Business: I. Ore Be Gone Rock Sign, J. Summer Office Help; Under Old Business: J. Commercial Garbage Rates – East Mesabi Sanitation, K. Downtown Bar.

Consent Agenda:

City Council Minutes

- April 14, 2026 City Council Regular Meeting Minutes
- April 14, 2026 City Council Working Session Minutes

Boards and Commission Minutes

- Water & Light Board Minutes

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Redepenning to approve the Consent Agenda. MCU

Public Participation: Kathy Leoni, Gilbert Resident, inquired about her parcel split. City Attorney Bryan Lindsay was not at the meeting, however he messaged Clerk Lorey and stated he will get the necessary papers to her (Clerk Lorey).

Leo Skrbec, Water & Light Board, recommended an admin fee of \$10 to be added on top of East Mesabi Sanitations commercial garbage fee.

Donna Sadar, Gilbert Cemetery Board, present to take part in the ditch/running water issue at the cemetery.

Reports – Mayor & Council

Councilor Pontinen: Spoke with City Engineer Matt Reid regarding getting city infrastructure records uploaded into a database (GIS form). It is believed the prior Engineer (Jamnick) left info with the city. Discussion took place to look at quotes on getting things digitalized next year and perhaps budget for it. Pontinen expressed that a good first step would be to clean the public works office.

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Councilor Skrbec: Flower pickup for the City will be May 8th. Skrbec is looking for volunteers to help plant the City planters. He will need 8-10 volunteers. Planting will either be on May 17th or May 22nd and 23rd. If you are interested in volunteering, please email Councilor Skrbec at: paulskrbec@gilbertmn.org

Councilor Skrbec let the council know he validated interim Clerk Lorey's timesheet. Skrbec requested council guidance as he would like to donate, free of use, West 40 RV Park's ATV's to the Gilbert Police Department and Gilbert Fire Department to familiarize themselves with the area trails. All users will need to sign the required waiver. It was decided since it is a donation of his resources that a resolution will need to be made.

Councilor Vertachnik: Inquired if the spigots/yard gates for the campground had been installed or if they had been returned, as he thought the price was too high. Councilor Skrbec reminded the council that it was discussed if any of them were not put in yet, that they would be returned for something less expensive. He also spoke of different kinds. Clerk Lorey will get an update from Public Works Director Sam Lautigar to see how many have been installed/replaced.

Motion by Vertachnik, seconded by Skrbec, to replace any spigot with a rusty end and to return any yard gates that were not installed, due to the cost. MCU

Councilor Vertachnik expressed concern about the elections coming up and a computer he saw designated at City Hall with a sticker showing "election computer." Administrative Assistant DeLage stated no one in the office would know anything about it as a computer was not used for elections in the last 3 prior years. The county has been in contact with the City regarding the upcoming elections (procedures, training, deadlines, etc.).

Discussion took place that a new head election judge will be needed this year. The City is sending out a letter to all the prior election judges to see if any one of them has any interest in taking the head election judge training and position.

Minnesota's primary election day is August 11, 2026.

Councilor Redepenning: Nothing at this time.

Mayor Oberstar, Jr.: Complaints from neighbors on New York Avenue regarding blight. Police Chief Ty Techar stated he will address the blight situation during his report.

Mr. Brian Maki purchased the school property, closing on May 15th. Discussion took place regarding the playground equipment, some thought the city was going to take the old playground equipment, while others recalled that it would not be taken by the city due to safety concerns for the equipment being outdated. City staff will look to see if there are any resolutions claiming the old playground equipment. Mayor Oberstar stated if the city does take it, it would need to be removed on May 15th.

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Mayor Oberstar received a letter from Tom Nemanich, asking permission to test Ore Be Gone for future sand pits and down near where Councilor Vertachnik lives. He requested doing some test digging then putting it back together. Mayor Oberstar stated as much as he wants them to have future operations, he is not ok with having a sandpit by residential areas and jeopardizing the potential of the development of 200 additional homes.

Mayor Oberstar stepped off the chair to make a motion.

Motion by Oberstar, Jr., seconded by Skrbec, to deny testing to Mesabi Bituminous at Ore Be Gone and near the trails, jeopardizing the safety and welfare of residents. MCU

Reports – Staff, Boards & Council:

Police Chief Ty Techar: Requesting to be put on the next agenda for 3 blight hearings. There are 5 buildings to take down in town. Building inspector quotes are around \$1500. The buildings must have more damage than 50% of value. The city has no budget for demolitions. Techar is looking at all avenues to help fund the demolitions and asked for patience as they are the first police department to take on this sort of demo. Lieutenant Trucano will be meeting with IRRRB to see what is available. There are many communities applying for a grant with IRRRB.

Chief Techar spoke of the recent shooting in town in regard to certain properties. Techar gave a rundown on various properties stating 11% of the properties in town are rental properties. 56% of their disturbance calls are at the rental properties. 30-33% of narcotic search warrants that have been served for methamphetamine have been rental properties. 50% of the rental property owners do not live in towns in Northeastern Minnesota or even the state. There are property owners all the way in California that have never even been to Gilbert, and the department is trying to deal with them with these flight properties. One residence has had 21 calls since December. Techar expressed that we have a quiet town; the problem is about 5% of our properties are problems and most are drug and alcohol related. Most rental properties have utility shut off notices.

Councilor Skrbec spoke of rental properties being on his radar, stating the council needs to look at existing codes and volunteer to work with Techar to try to make some progress. Techar apologized for the long process, explaining the different steps it takes to enforce blight regulations.

Councilor Skrbec expressed that the city does need to have some basic standards for rental properties. Blight can be assessed in property taxes.

Chief Techar will be submitting the permits for the 3rd of July parades soon, as he is waiting for requests and dates.

Clerk Lorey: inquired about attending a conference at the with the League of Minnesota Cities. Cost is \$275 for the conference and \$470 for hotel/3 days.

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Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Vertachnik to approve interim Clerk Lorey to attend the League conference. MCU

Clerk Lorey stated she had a call with City Attorney Lindsay who suggested the city approve the contract with Lakehead for the water treatment plant with the contingency of financing so that we can have that done and out of the way before we get the loan. If the loan doesn't go through, then the contract is null and void. It will also give Lakehead some assurance that we plan to move forward. Mayor Oberstar would like an ok from PFA before Memorial Day.

Mayor Oberstar moved "G. Mesabi Bituminous quote for the ditch near the cemetery" up on the Agenda as there were participants in the audience for this topic.

The Udovich's live next to the cemetery and came to the meeting. Anton Udovich stated that the culvert by the gas plant by Hopkins Park should be dug out, the spring plugs it up, the road is always washed out. Anton and his wife have spent hours digging the ditch to get the water running elsewhere. Councilor Skrbec shared that he had gone to the wastewater plant and saw that within 10-20 minutes there was 500,000 gallons of I&I after the last rainfall. All that water comes down the hillside. The city can fix the problem on the upper side of the hill, however the MNDOT will need to get after the problems on Highway 37.

Mayor Oberstar stepped off the chair to make a motion.

Motion by Oberstar to approve \$30K quote from Mesabi Bituminous to start work on the culvert. Motion failed for lack of a second. Councilor Skrbec wants to tour the area and see how the \$30k will be used there to remedy the issue.

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Vertachnik to have a Special Meeting to tour the cemetery issues and other items on Monday, May 4th at 4:30 PM. MCU

Old Business:

Check Register:

- a. Check register 4/20/2026 – 4/21/2026

Chief Techar volunteered the PD to add the mechanic worksheets into a spreadsheet.

Mayor stepped off the chair to make a motion.

Motion by Oberstar, seconded by Skrbec to approve the 4/20/2026 – 4/21/2026 check register. MCU

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Discussion on the transformer. The city has a promissory note from the homeowners for \$26k. Clerk Lorey asked if it's fair to charge the homeowner for the transformer when the city will be drawing from it. Vertachnik doesn't want the bill to be paid until the contractor's mess that was left is cleaned up. The utility company owns the transformer. The homeowner cannot have responsibility for maintaining or owning utility. Councilor Skrbec suggested talking to the attorney.

Motion made by Vertachnik, second by Skrbec to have the Police Department hand deliver the council packets to the council members home on the Fridays before council meetings. MCU

Motion made by Skrbec, seconded by Oberstar to approve the employee timesheets. Motion failed. Administrative Assistant DeLage and Clerk Lorey explained that they could not submit timesheets for work that hasn't happened yet and timesheets are submitted then brought to council. Police Chief Techar told the council he had never heard of this before and needs some guidance as a supervisor on how to move forward. Councilor Pontinen protested approving them because he doesn't believe in overtime. DeLage reminded the council that every single department within the city is running short staffed. Councilor Redepenning redacted his "no" vote and a new vote was taken. Mayor Oberstar requested the council to discuss any concerns with timesheets and staff concerns prior to council meetings and with the Department heads.

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Redepenning to approve the employee timesheets. Councilor Vertachnik voted "no". Motion carries 4 to 1. Councilor Pontinen stated he voted "yes" but under protest of the overtime and will disagree with it every two weeks.

Community Center updates: the contractor assured the city he could cut a particular pipe instead of cutting up the floor. A plumbing inspection was done with one issue that needs to be resolved that they are working with the engineer on.

LELS contract update: Clerk Lorey is waiting to hear back from Attorney Lindsay.

Motion made by Vertachnik, seconded by Pontinen to approve a parcel split for Paul Thelen. MCU

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Redepenning to approve the class of 1976 to plant one oak tree and one maple tree at Lake Ore Be Gone. MCU

Mayor stepped off the chair to make a motion.

Motion by Oberstar, seconded by Skrbec to approve the resolution to add the Fayal Township sewer customer's sewer bill to their taxes. The motion includes setting up a

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meeting with the Fayal board to ask them to release the customer to the City of Gilbert after the process of adding their sewer to the property taxes. MCU
Councilor Skrbec expressed concern that the township is essentially handing us a bad consumer. Councilor Pontinen stated we would be able to shut their water off upon delinquency.

Councilor Redepenning presented an Organizational Chart to have structure on the order of how things get done and reporting process based on positions. The Library Board does not report to the council except for funding approval. Multiple discussions took place regarding the different positions.

Motion by Vertachnik, seconded by Pontinen to approve the Organizational Chart as a fluid chart that changes can be made to. Councilor Skrbec went on record to say he believed the council was making a big HR mistake. After some discussion, Mayor Oberstar appointed Chief Techar as the Emergency Management Director. The motion carried unanimously.

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Redepenning to approve the \$10 fee to be added to East Mesabi Sanitation's Commercial garbage rates. MCU

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Redepenning to approve the building permit for the Downtown Bar with the following conditions: to pay another \$500 permit fee (for starting construction before a permit was issued), to maintain the existing fence around the property and all the users of the patio go through the bar during bar operation hours. MCU

Discussion took place regarding the HRA, its history and the current financial situation. Attorney Lindsay stated the city could intercede. He will reach out to Shelly and get some clarification. More regarding the discussion can be seen on Mesabi TV on You Tube.

New Business:

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Redepenning to revoke the previous ordinance 114.04 regarding charitable gambling. MCU

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Vertachnik to introduce ordinance 114.05 with new additions, including those holding 3 or less raffles a year in Gilbert to be exempt from having a portion of gambling sales go to the City of Gilbert. MCU

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Vertachnik to approve the firework application for J&M Displays. MCU

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Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Redepenning to approve the building permit for Northland Small Engine. MCU

A resolution will be drawn up to accept the donation of services from Mike Eliason to make a rock sign for Lake Ore Be Gone.

Motion by Skrbec, seconded by Vertachnik to approve 1 FTE staff, same rate as Public Works summer help, no more than 67 shifts, to help in the office. MCU

Mayor Oberstar stepped off the chair to make a motion.

Motion by Oberstar, seconded by Pontinen to look for a city clerk by creating/appointing a committee to review and advertise locally before committing to use the company that was presented by Councilor Skrbec to assist in a clerk search. Skrbec reiterated that this is part of what this company specializes in, to use their best processes to get applicants. Oberstar stated there is no guarantee that we will get the best applicants whether we use the process or try locally, therefore he would like to try it without spending the \$26,000 with that company first. Motion passed 4 to 1; with Councilor Skrbec voting no.

Motion by Vertachnik, seconded by Pontinen to adjourn meeting at 9:47 PM. MCU
**These minutes are paraphrased and are not written word for word.*

ATTEST:

Lynn Lorey, Interim Clerk

Karl Oberstar Jr., Mayor