City of Gilbert City Council Meeting Minutes

6:00 p.m. Tuesday, October 13, 2026
Gilbert City Hall - Council Chambers
16 S Broadway Street
Gilbert, MN 55741

ATTENDEES

Council Members Present: Mayor Karl Oberstar, Jr.; Councilors Rudy Vertachnik, Paul Skrbec, and Bob Pontinen.

Council Members Absent: Councilor Ryan Redepenning (with notice).

City Staff: Clerk-Treasurer Nancy Sanford; Fire Chief Anthony Nemanick; Chief of Police Ty Techar; Maegen Bothwell.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING AGENDA

1. CALL TO ORDER

Mayor Karl Oberstar, Jr. called the Regular City Council Meeting to order at 6:16 p.m.

2. ROLL CALL

A. Determination of Quorum
B. Pledge of Allegiance
C. Approve Additions/Deletions to the Agenda (if any)

Roll call confirmed four Council members present, and Councilor Redepenning absent with notice. A quorum was established and the Pledge of Allegiance recited. No additions to the agenda were made.

3. CONSENT AGENDA

A. City Council Minutes

- September 22, 2026 - Working Session Minutes
- September 22, 2026 – Regular Meeting Minutes
- September 29, 2026 – Special Meeting Minutes

Oberstar requested corrections to the September 22, 2026, regular meeting minutes to identify motion makers, and to the special meeting minutes from September 29, 2026 to reflect his proposed motion failed for lack of a second. The September 22, 2026, working session minutes were not included in the packet.

MOTION: Defer approval of both September 22, 2026, meeting minutes to the next regular meeting and approve the remaining consent agenda, including the special meeting minutes from September 29, 2026 with the stated correction from Mayor Oberstar. (Skrbec/Vertachnik) Passed unanimously (4–0).

B. Boards and Commission Minutes

- October 5, 2026 Cemetery Board Meeting Minutes

C. Payment Report Approval

- Payment of Bills and Payroll upon proper audit of Clerk and Mayor

Oberstar requested that future payment approval reports be placed under Old Business after the check register and time sheets.

4. PUBLIC INPUT

No public input was offered during the designated public input period.

5. REPORTS - MAYOR & COUNCIL

A. Mayor

B. Council Members

Pontinen discussed updating the water service arrangement with Fayal Township and the need for accurate metering and fair compensation. Skrbec outlined individual-meter and bulk-meter alternatives. A Water and Light Board representative discussed the expired contract, rates and fire protection. Council supported beginning negotiations promptly.

MOTION: Direct the Water and Light Board to arrange meetings with Fayal Township to negotiate a new water service contract. (Pontinen/Skrbec) Passed unanimously (4–0).

Skrbec thanked Gilbert Community Church/United Methodist volunteers for cleaning the Community Center following construction and noted the auditorium would still need attention. He also recognized improved communication and status reporting from City staff.

MOTION: Post the completed 2023 City audit and future audits online for public access. (Skrbec/Vertachnik) Passed unanimously (4–0).

Council discussed advertising the deputy clerk position, including the salary range in the posting, and resolving retiree health insurance payments. Sanford noted that staff were obtaining policy and billing information. Oberstar reported that Community Center renovations were substantially complete but expressed concern about the condition of the parking lot.

MOTION: Direct Public Works and the City's engineering/contractor contacts to obtain a quote for complete repaving of the Community Center parking lot by the next meeting. (Oberstar/Skrbec) Passed unanimously (4–0).

6. REPORTS - STAFF, BOARDS & COMMISSIONS

A. Fire Chief Anthony Nemanick

Fire Chief Nemanick requested approval to hire Brandon Olson, a qualified applicant who would restore the department to 19 members. Council requested the hiring action be placed on the next meeting agenda. Existing turnout gear could be used temporarily, with new gear anticipated in the next budget.

B. City Attorney Briyan Lindsey

C. Chief of Police Techar

Chief Techar reported staffing shortages, an anticipated new officer, a potential unpaid criminal justice internship through Winona State University, blight enforcement activity, and an increased contract request from the Mesabi Humane Society. He described ongoing abatement and court proceedings involving nuisance properties. A request to remove him as a check signatory was deferred because the earlier authorizing meeting minutes had not yet been approved.

D. City Engineer Matt Reid SEH

E. Public Works Ops Director Sam Lautigar

F. Library Director Su Dubbas

G. First Responders Pete Makowski

H. Clerk – Treasurer Nancy Sanford

Sanford reported preparation for a waste management tax audit, annual insurance renewal, potential Caselle payroll and accounts receivable modules, election administration and budget preparation. She updated Council on North Shore Development Co.'s administrative support contract, including agendas, minutes and records-management procedures. Council supported researching higher-interest municipal investment options, including the 4M Fund, for later approval.

MOTION: Authorize staff to investigate the Caselle accounts receivable module. (Vertachnik/Skrbec) Passed unanimously (4–0).

MOTION: Restore regular City Hall office hours of 8:00 a.m. to 4:30 p.m., Monday through Friday, beginning October 19, 2026. (Skrbec/Pontinen) Passed unanimously (4–0).

MOTION: Appoint the election judges presented by the Clerk for the November 3, 2026 election, at $16 per hour for election judges and $18 per hour for the head election judge. (Skrbec/Vertachnik) Passed unanimously (4–0).

Sanford advised that the Public Accuracy Test would occur October 15, 2026 at 10:00 a.m. She also discussed the existing garbage contract, a possible lobbying services proposal, and a need to confirm budget and contract information.

Council designated the November 10 and November 24 working sessions for budget discussion only. Members discussed revenue, department needs, the Biwabik police contract and retired police benefit expenses.

MOTION: Schedule a special City Council budget meeting for November 17, 2026, from 5:00 to 7:00 p.m. (Oberstar/Skrbec) Passed unanimously (4–0).

Sanford reported renewed interest from Dollar General in City property. Council discussed previous site proposals, possible environmental assessments and the need for a written proposal. Skrbec encouraged considering future property maintenance or vacancy protections in any development agreement.

7. OLD BUSINESS

A. Check Register, August 27–September 30, 2026

Mayor Oberstar stepped off the chair 7:34 p.m. Councilor Vertachnik, serving as Acting Mayor, assumed responsibility of the meeting.

MOTION: Approve the check register for August 27 through September 30, 2026. (Vertachnik/Skrbec) Carried (3–0).

B. Timesheets for Employees, September 13–26, 2026

MOTION: Accept employee timesheets for September 13 through September 26, 2026. (Pontinen/Skrbec) Carried (3–0).

C. Community Center Project Update

The project and parking lot condition were addressed in the Mayor and Council reports.

D. Northern Lights Dental Land Purchase

Council discussed pending information concerning the proposed building and property conditions.

MOTION: Table the Northern Lights Dental land purchase until the next meeting pending additional information. (Skrbec/Pontinen) Carried (3–0).

E. Campground Contract

Pontinen proposed revising the previously authorized $55,000-per-year campground host offer. Council discussed compensation, existing helper arrangements, City-provided seasonal assistance and the contract period.

Mayor Oberstar returned to the meeting at 7:40 p.m. and resumed presiding over the meeting.

MOTION: Withdraw the previously approved campground host contract offer. (Pontinen/Skrbec) Passed unanimously (4–0).

MOTION: Offer a two-year campground host contract at $42,350 in the first year and $46,585 in the second, with one City-paid summer helper for up to 40 hours per week during the camping season and two campsites. The revised agreement is to be prepared by the City Attorney. (Pontinen/Skrbec) Passed unanimously (4–0).

Council discussed a January start, ending seasonal obligations after the first weekend in October, and excluding November and December services; precise dates and terms are to be reflected in the revised contract. Staff were also asked to follow up on campground heaters.

8. NEW BUSINESS

A. Mine Tour Local Signage Approval and Placement

Council discussed placement of an interpretive mine-tour sign near the Mesabi Trail information kiosk, where trail users could see and access the sign.

MOTION: Approve mine-tour local signage for placement next to the Mesabi Trail information kiosk on City property. (Skrbec/Vertachnik) Passed unanimously (4–0).

B. Proposed Ordinance 30.09

Council discussed deferring the proposed ordinance so the incoming Council could consider the issue.

MOTION: Table proposed Ordinance 30.09 for reintroduction at the January 12, 2027 meeting. (Skrbec/Vertachnik) Passed unanimously (4–0).

C. City Engineer Contract

MOTION: Approve the City engineering contract, described as a three-year agreement ending in 2029. (Skrbec/Pontinen) Passed unanimously (4–0).

D. Floor Maintenance Expense – ServiceMaster

MOTION: Approve the ServiceMaster floor maintenance expense as estimated in the Council packet. (Skrbec/Vertachnik) Passed unanimously (4–0).

Council requested a separate estimate for ongoing floor maintenance at the Community Center.

E. Justin Remien – Testing/Training for Class B Water Operator

MOTION: Approve training and related expenses for Justin Remien to obtain his Class B water operator license. (Pontinen/Skrbec) Passed unanimously (4–0).

F. Stages of the Range Players Discount on Facility Rental

MOTION: Approve the reduced Community Center auditorium rental rate of $1,200 for the dates requested by Stages of the Range Players. (Skrbec/Vertachnik) Passed unanimously (4–0).

G. Payment Approval Report

The item was identified as a duplicate of an item addressed earlier in the meeting. No separate action was taken.

H. Land Use/Building Permit

MOTION: Approve the land use/building permit for a fence at 215 E. Michigan Avenue, per working-session agenda. (Vertachnik/Pontinen) Passed unanimously (4–0).

I. Appointment of Election Judges

The appointment and compensation were approved earlier during the Clerk-Treasurer report.

9. MISCELLANEOUS ANNOUNCEMENTS

The public accuracy test for election equipment was scheduled for Thursday, October 15, 2026, at 10:00 a.m.

10. ADJOURN

MOTION: Adjourn the meeting at 8:08 p.m. (Vertachnik/Skrbec) Passed unanimously (4–0).

Respectfully submitted,

Nancy Sanford, Clerk-Treasurer

Karl Oberstar, Jr., Mayor