

Council Meeting  
Common Council  
January 20, 2026

The regular meeting of the Common Council was held at 21 S. Elm Street, Zeeland, MI 49464 on Tuesday, January 20, 2026. Mayor Rick VanDorp called the meeting to order at 7:02 P.M.

PRESENT: Councilmembers - Mayor VanDorp, Mayor Pro-Tern Gruppen, Timmer, Lam, Langeland, Perkins, Bult

ABSENT: None

Staff Present: City Attorney Donkersloot, City Manager Tim Klunder, Asst City Manager/Finance Director Kevin Plockmeyer, Community Development Director Tim Maday, Marketing Director Abby deRoo, and City Clerk Kristi DeVerney

The Invocation was offered by Councilmember Lam.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

### **Consent Agenda**

Motion was made by Councilmember Timmer and Supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen to approve the Consent Agenda.

1. Approve minutes of the City Council Work Study and Regular meeting of January 5, 2026,
2. Receive for information draft minutes of January 8, 2026, Shopping Area Redevelopment Board meeting
3. Receive for information draft minutes of January 13, 2026, Board of Public Works meeting,
4. Ratify BPW Action #25-072 – Approve Kennedy Industries for spare pump rebuild.
5. Ratify BPW Action #25-073 – Approve Three (3) 2026 Ford F150s.
6. Ratify BPW Action #25-074 – Approve Yellow Line Creative LLC Budget Amendment.
7. Ratify BPW Action #25-075 – Approve Lead 24/7 Leadership Development Training for Brian Coots.
8. Ratify BPW Action #25-076 – Approve Leadership Coaching Proposal from Discover Coaching Services, LLC.

Ayes: Langeland, Timmer, Bult, Lam, Perkins, Mayor Pro-Tern Gruppen, Mayor VanDorp

No Vote: None

Absent: None

## Communications

None

## City Managers Report

*City Manager Klunder reported:*

*Fire/Rescue Chief Search Committee* – Our Fire/Rescue Chief Search Committee met this past week to interview three (3) candidates for our open Fire/Rescue Chief position. They will interview one (1) more candidate this week before they determine the next step which may include 2<sup>nd</sup> round interviews.

*Council Goal Setting* – Our departments continue to compile information to share with City Council about their department's accomplishments, challenges, opportunities, capital needs, etc. Our administrative team will share that information with City Council on January 26 following a review of our 2025 Strategic Action Plan Assessment at the beginning of that evening. On Tuesday, January 27, Council and the administrative team will then consider the strategic action steps for 2026.

*Economic Outlook* - The Chamber held their annual economic outlook presentation by hosting Dr. Paul Isely from Grand Valley State University. While things were slow in 2025, there is slight optimism for 2026 (particularly the 2nd half) in our area.

*Representative Slagh* – Last Friday, Representative Slagh took some time to meet with some of our administrative team to hear about potential projects the city may soon have and the possibility/process of pursuing State funding support. While we have some projects in mind, the Council goal setting session will be a nice opportunity to identify which project(s) Council particularly desires to pursue. In addition to this discussion, we also had the opportunity to share other updates that Representative Slagh may be able to help with at some point in time.

*Personnel Committee* – Wednesday, January 28, at noon, is their next committee meeting date. The primary item on their agenda will be consideration of Employee Handbook amendments.

## Public Hearing – El Rancho, Inc. #8, LLC Liquor License Application

Mayor VanDorp called the public hearing to order at 7:10 P.M. Alfredo Melemdez Aquirre, introduced himself as the new owner of El Rancho (17 E Main Ave.). He has submitted his Liquor License Application for City Council approval. City Manager Klunder and Marketing Director deRoo provided an overview of staff's review of the liquor license application. Staff recommends approval of the liquor license application. The public hearing was closed at 7:19 P.M.

## Action Items

**26.008 El Rancho, Inc. #8, LLC Liquor License Application**

Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen and Supported by Councilmember Lam to approve the City Resolution that supports the El Rancho, In. #8 liquor licenses and approves the operating contract with El Rancho, Inc. #8.

Ayes: Bult, Lam, Perkins, Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen, Langeland, Timmer, Mayer VanDorp  
No Vote: None  
Absent: None

**26.009 El Rancho, Inc. #8, Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC)**

Motion was made by Councilmember Timmer and Supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen to approve the Michigan Liquor Control Commission (MLCC) Resolution recommending the El Rancho, Inc. #8 Class C, DDA/Redevelopment and SDM licenses “above all others”.

Ayes: Lam, Perkins, Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen, Langeland, Timmer, Bult, Mayor VanDorp  
No Vote: None  
Absent: None

**26.010 Board of Public Works Utilities Manager Contract – Robert Mulder**

Motion was made by Councilmember Lam and Supported by Pro-Tem Gruppen to approve the Board of Public Works Utilities Manager Contract for Robert Mulder.

Ayes: Perkins, Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen, Langeland, Timmer, Bult, Lam, Mayor VanDorp  
No Vote: None  
Absent: None

**26.011 Ottawa County Election Publishing Agreement**

Motion by Councilmember Langeland and Supported by Councilmember Lam to authorize the City Clerk to enter into the attached Agreement for Election Publishing Services with Ottawa County, subject to City Attorney approval.

Ayes: Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen, Langeland, Timmer, Bult, Lam, Perkins, Mayor VanDorp  
No Vote: None  
Absent: None

**26.012 Ottawa County Early Voting Printing/Mailing Agreement**

Motion by Councilmember Perkins and Supported by Councilmember Bult to authorize the City Clerk to enter into the attached Agreement for Early Voting Printing/Mailing Agreement

with Ottawa County, subject to City Attorney approval.

Ayes: Langeland, Timmer, Bult, Lam, Perkins, Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen, Mayor VanDorp

No Vote: None

Absent: None

**26.013 2026 Poverty Guidelines**

Motion by Councilmember Bult and Supported by Councilmember Lam to adopt the Federal Poverty guidelines as stated in State Tax Commission Bulletin Number 15 of 2025 for use by the Board of Review when considering 2026 Poverty Exemption applications.

Ayes: Timmer, Bult, Lam, Perkins, Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen, Langeland, Mayor VanDorp

No Vote: None

Absent: None

**26.014 Lincoln Cemetery String Trimming Bid Award**

Motion by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen and Supported by Councilmember Langeland to award a three-year contract, for Lincoln Cemetery string trimming services, for the 2026 through 2028 growing seasons to Near Shore Property Solutions in the amount of \$125,000.

Ayes: Bult, Lam, Perkins, Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen, Langeland, Timmer, Mayor VanDorp

No Vote: None

Absent: None

**Reports from City Councilmembers**

Mayor Pro-Tem Sally Gruppen noted that Al Dannenberg, one of the city representative on the Airport Authority, resigned his position from the Airport Authority. Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen thanked Al Dannenberg for his faithful service to the Airport Authority.

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilmember Timmer and Supported by Councilmember Bult to adjourn the meeting at 7:28 p.m. Motion carried. All voting aye.

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Mayor Richard Van Dorp III

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Kristi DeVerney City Clerk

MEMORANDUM OF-STUDY SESSION  
Zeeland City Hall Council Chambers Monday, January 20, 2026  
5:30 P.M.

PRESENT: Councilmembers - Mayor VanDorp, Mayor Pro-Tern Gruppen, Lam, Timmer, Perkins, Langeland and Bult (arrived at 5:42 p.m.)

ABSENT: None

Staff Present: City Attorney Donkersloot, City Manager Tim Klunder, Asst City Manager/Finance Director Kevin Plockmeyer, Community Development Director Maday, Marketing Director, and City Clerk Kristi DeVerney

Mayor VanDorp called the Study Session to order at 5:30 P.M.

**Board of Public Works Utilities Manager Contract – Robert Mulder**

BPW Chair Linda Boerman noted with current General Manager Andy Boatright having announced his intent to retire in September 2026, the Board of Public Works has undertaken a deliberate succession planning and selection process to ensure continuity of leadership for the Zeeland Board of Public Works.

Following a competitive internal selection process that included highly qualified internal candidates, the Board of Commissioners has voted to offer the position of Utilities Manager to Robert Mulder, currently serving as BPW Power Supply and Market Operations Manager. This offer reflects the Board's confidence in Mr. Mulder's leadership, institutional knowledge, and demonstrated ability to manage complex utility operations. He brings a strong combination of technical expertise, utility operations experience, and organizational leadership.

Pursuant to the City of Zeeland Charter, the Board is authorized, subject to City Council approval, to appoint a Utilities Manager and establish the terms and conditions of employment. To facilitate an orderly transition, the proposed Employment Agreement provides for Mr. Mulder to serve initially as Utilities Manager Designee, followed by appointment as Utilities Manager upon the retirement of the current General Manager Andy Boatright.

The proposed agreement is consistent with prior BPW executive employment structures, reflects competitive market compensation, and is intended to support leadership continuity and organizational stability during this planned transition period. City Attorney Donkersloot has reviewed and approved the proposed agreement for execution. During their regular meeting held on January 13, 2026, the Board of Commissioners voted unanimously to forward the Utilities Manager Employment Agreement to City Council for consideration.

**El Rancho, Inc. #8 Liquor License Application**

City Manager Klunder noted that on December 17, 2025, the City of Zeeland received a Class "C" DDA/Redevelopment and SDM liquor license application from El Rancho, Inc. #8 to serve on-premises and off-premises alcohol at 17 East Main Avenue. Per the City's Alcoholic Liquors Ordinance, our city team investigated the applicant

and the proposed use of the license. In addition to the application itself, there are some sections of our ordinance we like to bring specific attention to.

#### Section 4-8 Location where prohibited and Section 4.10 Compliance with Zoning

This property is properly zoned for alcohol sales. The applicant has obtained the necessary special land use and site plan approval from the Planning Commission (9.4.25) as required by the Alcoholic Sales Overlay District.

The proposed location is not more than 500' from a church or school. In this instance the proposed location is within 500' of North Street CRC. Under the city's ordinance, the sale of alcoholic liquors for consumption on the premises shall be prohibited within 500 feet of a church. However, the ordinance does provide that this provision may be waived by City Council where it is deemed to be in the best interests of the city. Our city team does believe it is in the best interest of the city for City Council to consider waving the 500' requirement. This recommendation is based on several factors. (1) The properties zoned within the Alcohol Sales Overlay District were established by the Planning Commission and City Council after careful consideration was given to only zone properties that did not appear to have an immediate negative impact on a church or school. (2) Under the city's Alcoholic Liquors Ordinance, Section 4-16 lists the priorities to be considered by City Council in license approval. Priority #2 is for a restaurant in the C-2 District (downtown) with a seating capacity of 100 or more people.

#### Section 4-9 Seating Capacity

Our ordinance requires a dining seat minimum of 25. Per the restaurants special use submittal to the Planning Commission on 9.4.25, they do exceed this requirement by providing a capacity of 132 seats.

#### Section 4-11 Application fee and payment of obligations to the City

The applicant did pay the \$400 application fee, and they do not have any outstanding taxes, utility bills, etc. owed to the city.

#### Section 4-13 Inspection of premises prior to license issuance

The construction plans for the project have been reviewed and approved by the Community Development Department. Appropriate permits have been obtained and inspections are being conducted. A certificate of occupancy will not be granted until all work is complete and compliant with codes/ordinances.

#### Section 4-14 Mandatory grounds for license denial

Mandatory grounds for license denial include such things as the applicant had a previous license revoked, the applicant does not own the premises or does not have a lease; the applicant has been convicted of a violation of any federal or state law concerning the manufacture or sale of liquor, or violations of appropriate building codes. At this time, staff have not identified grounds for mandatory license denial as outlined in our ordinance.

#### Section 4-15 Discretionary grounds for license denial

Discretionary grounds for license denial includes such things as alcohol sales would not be incidental or subordinate to other permitted uses on the premises; the location is inappropriate due to such

things as inadequate parking, traffic concerns, etc.; the applicant does not appear to have the appropriate financial capability to run an establishment; they have made false representations on their application; or they have been convicted of misdemeanor alcohol possession and/or alcohol driving offenses. For this establishment, they are required to have at least fifty percent of the gross revenue derived from food and non-alcoholic beverage sales. Additionally, as City Council is aware, concerns about inadequate parking availability for the restaurant have been expressed at recent Planning Commission and City Council meetings. In both cases we have determined that there is adequate parking in our immediate downtown parking area, in addition to on-site parking, to serve the restaurant.

#### Section 4-16 Priorities to be considered by City Council in license approval

It has been previously noted in this report that the proposed establishment meets priority #2 of license considerations by City Council.

#### Section 4-17 Term of licenses; license approval granted subject to certain conditions

License term will coincide with the State. Our ordinance does provide that City Council may provide for certain conditions with the approval of a license. Please note however that these conditions are with the applicant as the LCC will not allow the city to approve a license with conditions other than such things as compliance with final building, health, and local law enforcement inspections. The city is proposing an Alcohol License and Business Operations Contract with El Rancho, Inc. #8. It covers such things as timely payment of obligations to the city, compliance with ordinances of the city, etc.

#### Section 4-19 Dancing and Entertainment on Licenses Premises

According to the applicant's city application, they do not intend to have dancing and/or entertainment on the site. However, should they desire to do so, under our ordinance they must obtain the appropriate permits from the State (and Police Chief) and there are various facility requirements in our ordinance that must be met.

#### Section 4-22 Hours of Sale

The applicant does propose Sunday hours from 11 a.m. – 9 p.m. Per the city's recent ordinance change, alcohol sales are allowed on Sundays after 12 p.m. (noon).

### **Snowmelt Operation and Maintenance Special Assessment District Report**

Asst. City Manager Kevin Plockmeyer noted City Council authorized Snowmelt Operation and Maintenance Special Assessment Resolution No. 1 at the January 5, 2026 City Council meeting that directs *the City Manager to prepare a report which shall include necessary plans, profiles, specifications, and detailed estimates of the cost, an estimate of the life of the improvement, a description of the assessment district, recommendations as to what portion of the project must be borne by the Special Assessment District and the portion, if any, to be borne by the City, and such other pertinent information as will permit the City Council to decide the cost, extent, and necessity of the improvement proposed.*

#### Plans, Profiles, and Specifications

This project involves the operation and maintenance of several systems that have either been constructed or will be constructed in the very near future. As such the plans, profiles, and specifications have been approved by City Council over the past number of years. These projects include:

Elm Street Reconstruction – Awarded by City Council on 3/20/2017

City Hall Boiler Replacement Project – Awarded by City Council on 6/28/2017 Howard Miller

Boiler Replacement Project – Awarded by City Council on 3/16/2020 Library Alley and

Cherry Street Project – Awarded by City Council on 2/26/2021 Main Avenue Snowmelt and

Streetscape – Awarded by City Council on 2/4/2023

Church Street Reconstruction Project – Affirmed by City Council on 12/1/2025

### Project Phasing

As has been noted, some of the systems have already been completed and portions have yet to be completed. Because this is the case, we would expect the following phasing as to when it is expected that the system will be operational for specific parcels:

South of Main along Elm – Currently Operational

North Side of Cherry – Currently Operational

Area Surrounding the Howard Miller Library – Currently Operational South of Main between 146 and 150 East Main – Currently Operational

Area along Main from State to approx. 180' east of Maple – Currently Operational

East Side of Church from Central to Washington – Anticipating 2026-2027 Heating Season West

Side of Church from Central to Cherry – Anticipating 2026-2027 Heating Season West Side of

Church from Main to Washington – Anticipating 2026-2027 Heating Season

### Detailed Estimates of Cost

The original goal of City Council, as outlined in the 2023 special assessment report, was to establish a sustainable funding model for the snowmelt system by accounting for both ongoing operating costs and long-term maintenance and replacement needs. To achieve this, the report outlined an approach that proposed dividing the annual fee into two components: a commodity or heating charge to cover the cost of natural gas used to heat the glycol, and a readiness to serve or capital charge to fund future maintenance and replacement of system infrastructure.

The commodity charge was calculated using historical average gas usage, the prior year's average gas cost, and the total square footage served by the system. Using average system usage of 36,636 THM, a 2022–2023 gas cost of \$0.92 per THM, and 36,527 square feet of snowmelt area, the resulting commodity charge was calculated at \$0.92 per square foot on an annual basis. This amount was intended to remain fixed during an assessment cycle and adjusted in future cycles as conditions changed.

The readiness to serve or capital charge was developed by evaluating the major system components, their useful life, and the total investment made in each. Based on the investments and estimated lifespans identified in 2023, the annual capital cost was calculated at approximately \$123,200, which equated to \$1.19 per square foot when the system was fully built out to 103,479 square feet. For 2026, that amount is projected at \$1.10 per square foot. . As part of the current 2026 special assessment cycle, staff intends to levy only the commodity or heating charge at a rate of \$0.92 per square foot.

### Estimated Life of the Improvement

The life of a snowmelt system is a function of the useful life of its individual parts. While the piping and tubing may have a life greater than 60 years, the useful life of the pumps and boilers is anticipated to be between 20 and 30 years. In a normal application, the useful life of the sidewalk which contains the snowmelt tubing may be 20 to 30 years, but because it is not exposed to the traditional freeze/thaw cycle of a normal sidewalk neighboring communities have experienced useful lives eclipsing the 30-year useful life cycle. Because this is the case, as included in the detail estimates of cost, the useful life of the system is estimated to be as follows:

Snowmelt Boilers, Pumps, Heat Exchangers, Etc. – useful life of approximately 20 years.

Snowmelt Piping, Tubing, Insulation – useful life of approximately 50 years.

Valves, Manifolds, Glycol, and Sensors – useful life of approximately 25 years.

### Special Assessment District

The assessment district is described as the properties abutting the following areas:

- Main Avenue from State Street east through the parcel at 421 East Main Avenue
- Elm Street from Main Avenue to Cherry Avenue
- Church Street from Central Avenue to Washington Avenue
- The North Side of Cherry Avenue from Elm Street to Church Street.

### Cost of the Project to be borne by the Special Assessment District

Each parcel in the special assessment district will be billed the \$.92 commodity charge and will not be charged the \$1.10 capital charge per square foot of snowmelt with the following considerations:

Parcels exempt from a special assessment will be paid for by the city at large. This includes the following parcels:

- Zeeland Public Schools – 320, 405, and 410 East Main Avenue
- United States Postal Service – 155 East Main Avenue and 20 North Church

Square footage of snowmelt on each parcel will be calculated using the following assumptions. Areas that are outside the areas outlined will be considered the responsibility of the city:

- will be the responsibility of the city.
- Crosswalks Bump outs are the responsibility of the city.
- Corner lots are calculated to the lot line. Corner sidewalks are only calculated in instances where the snowmelt connects to the snowmelt in an adjacent parcel. Corner lots are charged for the frontage with the least amount of assessable square footage of snowmelt.
- Square footage is calculated from the back of curb (or inferred back of curb) to edge of snowmelt nearest the face of building.
- Sidewalk square footage along Elm Street is calculated based on a sidewalk width of 9' (based on similar sidewalk widths in the district Cherry, Main west of Church, etc.). Public passageways are the responsibility of the city, aside from areas reserved for private use.

In addition to the considerations listed above, entities for which we have a shared-use parking agreement (North Street CRC, First CRC, and Second Reformed) will be modified to reflect that sidewalks with snowmelt that abut a leased parking lot will be paid for by the city at large.

Finally, snowmelt systems on private property not included in an easement or other such operating agreement will be charged both the commodity charge and the capital charge.

The estimated cost to operate and maintain the snowmelt system for the term of this special assessment cycle is \$245,920.86 per year which is calculated based on a total of 121,743 square feet of snowmelt at \$2.02 per square foot (\$.92 operating charge plus \$1.10 capital charge). The City is proposing to pay for \$202,759.96 of this total cost or 82% of the operating costs. This \$202,759.96 is broken down as follows:

- \$49,395.50 represents the capital charge that will be covered by the “endowment” within the Snowmelt Operations Fund.
- \$24,282.42 represents the amount of the special assessment within district that cannot be specially assessed (United States Postal Service and Zeeland Public Schools).
- \$34,622.80 represents the special assessment on the City of Zeeland parcels and passageways not included in the special assessment.
- \$94,459.24 represents the square footage on specific parcels that has been excluded from the special assessment (both capital and commodity charge) per the exceptions listed above.

The remaining \$43,160.90 will be assessed to benefitting parcels.

### Special Assessment Term

While special assessment resolution no. 1 authorizes a special assessment period of up to 10 years, staff would recommend a period of 2 years.

### Next Steps

At your next meeting (February 2<sup>nd</sup>), we will likely bring forth Special Assessment Resolution No. 2, which will set a public hearing likely on February 16 to gather feedback from the general public about the proposed special assessment.

### **Lincoln Cemetery String Trimming Bid Award**

Asst. City Manager Kevin Plockmeyer reported that for the past two years, the City has privatized the string trimming work at Lincoln Cemetery. This approach was taken after the elimination of the SWAP program with Ottawa County, which resulted in the City no longer being able to perform this work in-house. Outsourcing this service has allowed staff to maintain expected service levels while addressing staffing limitations.

Bids were solicited for string trimming services at Lincoln Cemetery for the growing seasons of 2026 through 2028. In an effort to attract more competitive pricing and provide cost stability, staff elected to bid this work as a three-year contract rather than a single season. Bids were opened on January 13, 2026, and two bids were received.

Based on the bid tabulation, Near Shore Property Solutions submitted the lowest responsible bid in the amount of \$125,000 for the full three-year term. Staff have reviewed the bid and confirmed it meets the specifications outlined in the bid documents. While the City has not previously worked with Near Shore

Property Solutions, staff have spoken with the company and believe they can perform the work and have a clear understanding of what will be required to successfully complete the contract.

### **Ottawa County Election Publishing Services**

City Clerk Kristi DeVerney reported that Ottawa County has prepared an agreement with the City Clerk for Council to approve as these are statutory responsibilities that the Clerk is responsible for and have already budgeted for. Additionally, the contract was formulated on concepts that Ottawa County believes will not be easily altered based on a few different reasons surrounding the simplicity of the contract overall:

- Publishing Contract – this is something our jurisdiction and Ottawa County already do. Ottawa County simply put these services in a contract as they realized that they likely should have been under contract for these already but were missed.

### **Ottawa County Early Voting Printing/Mailing Agreement**

City Clerk Kristi DeVerney reported that Ottawa County has prepared an agreement with the City Clerk for Council to approve as these are statutory responsibilities that the Clerk is responsible for and have already budgeted for. Additionally, the contract was formulated on concepts that Ottawa County believes will not be easily altered based on a few different reasons surrounding the simplicity of the contract overall:

- Early Voting Notice – this is something that happens once every two (2) years and is strictly guided by statute already. The language follows what statute already indicates but just labels who will be doing what.

### **2026 Poverty Guidelines**

Community Development Director Tim Maday reported that the State Tax Commission has amended the guidelines to be used by Michigan Boards of Review in 2026 for determining eligibility of property owners that may request a poverty property tax exemption.

State Tax Commission Bulletin No. 15 of 2025 requires local government approval of guidelines and an asset level test to be used by the Board of Review when considering applications for poverty exemptions. Bulletin No. 15 also states that the local governing body shall not set the poverty guidelines lower than the federal poverty guidelines which are listed below. Example: The income level for a household of 3 people **shall not** be set lower than \$26,650; however, the local governing body may set the income level for a family of 3 people **higher than** \$26,650.

Below are the federal poverty guidelines proposed for use by the Board of Review in considering poverty exemption applications for **2026**:

<b>Size of Family Unit</b>	<b>Poverty Guidelines</b>
1	\$ 15,650
2	\$ 21,150
3	\$ 26,650
4	\$ 32,150
5	\$ 37,650
6	\$ 43,150
7	\$ 48,650
8	\$ 54,150
For each additional person	\$5,500

Poverty Guideline Schedule

**Closed Session**

Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen and supported by Councilmember Timmer to enter into Closed Session at 6:15 P.M. for purposes of reviewing pending litigation and an attorney's opinion. Motion carried by all voting aye.

City Council reconvened from Closed Session at 7:01 p.m.

There being no further items to discuss, Work study was adjourned at 7:02 P.M.

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Kristi DeVerney, City Clerk