

Council Meeting
Common Council
February 2, 2026

The regular meeting of the Common Council was held at 21 S. Elm Street, Zeeland, MI 49464 on Monday, February 2, 2026. Mayor Rick VanDorp called the meeting to order at 7:00 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, Marketing Director Abby deRoo, and City Clerk Kristi DeVerney

The Invocation was offered by Councilmember Perkins.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag

Consent Agenda

Motion was made by Councilmember Timmer and Supported by Councilmember Lam to approve the Consent Agenda.

1. Approve minutes of the City Council Work Study of January 20, 2026,
2. Approve minutes of the Regular City Council meeting on January 20, 2026,
3. Approve minutes of the Goal Setting Sessions of January 26 & 27, 2026,
4. Receive for information draft minutes of January 22, 2026, Shopping Area Redevelopment Board meeting,
5. Receive for information draft minutes of January 28, 2026, Personnel meeting.

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

Communications

Travis Herrera (22 N Jefferson St) had concerns about Spectrum being the only option for internet. He asked if the City of Zeeland had explored fiber internet. Assistant Manager Plockmeyer stated that there will be discussion with MetroNet in April or May.

Zeeland Historical Society's Interim Director, Audrey Roho & Ken Cole (Board Chair) gave an update on new exhibits along with Educational Kids Camp and Field Trips through the museum for 2nd graders. They are also conducting Fall Church Tours to local churches to view the architecture and stained glass.

City Managers Report

City Manager Klunder reported:

Citizen's Academy – The opportunity to apply for the 2026 Citizen's Academy is open from February 2 – February 13. Citizens can apply via the city's website at www.cityofzeeland.com.

Planning Commission – The Planning Commission will hold their regular meeting on Thursday, February 5. The primary item on the agenda will be consideration of selecting a consultant for the proposed master plan re-write. Assuming the Planning Commission offers a recommendation, this item would be on your February 16 agenda.

Lakeshore Advantage - The Lakeshore Advantage team held their annual meeting this past Thursday where they highlight accomplishments from the past year and outline their plans for the year ahead. Of note, the recruitment and decision by JR Automation to locate in Zeeland was one of the primary success stories in 2025 that Lakeshore Advantage highlighted and shared with the attendees.

Action Items

26.015 Employee Handbook Amendments

Motion was made by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen and Supported by Councilmember Timmer to accept the Personnel Committee's recommendation to approve updates to the Employee Handbook as presented

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

No Vote: None

Absent: None

26.016 Employee Appreciation Policy Amendment

Motion was made by Councilmember Timmer and Supported by Councilmember Lam to approve the Personnel Committee's recommendation to amend the Employee Appreciation Policy as presented.

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

No Vote: None

Absent: None

26.017 Snowmelt Special Assessment – Resolution No. 2

Motion was made by Councilmember Lam and Supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen to authorize Snowmelt Special Assessment Resolution No. 2 which sets a public hearing of February 16, 2026, to hear feedback on the proposed special assessment.

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

26.018 17 E. Main Boiler Design Contract Amendment

Motion by Councilmember Langeland and Supported by Councilmember Lam to approve Amendment No. 1 to the professional services agreement with GMB, in the amount of \$29,670, increasing the total contract amount to \$199,230.

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

26.019 Paw Paw Park Vegetation Management Contract Award

Motion by Councilmember Perkins and Supported by Councilmember Timmer to approve a contract with the Outdoor Discovery Center in the amount of \$10,000 for the continuation of the Paw Paw Park Vegetation Management Plan for its second year.

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

26.020 2025 Performance Incentive Program Approval

Motion by Councilmember Bult and Supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen to approve the Fiscal Year 2025/2026 Organizational Performance Incentive updated payment of 1.0% based on the measured achievement of the 2025 Strategic Action Plan and the pay calculation methodology outlined in the City's Organizational Performance Incentive Plan.

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

There being no further business, motion was made by Councilmember Langeland and Supported by Mayor Pro-Tem Gruppen to adjourn the meeting at 7:33 p.m. Motion carried. All voting aye.

Mayor Richard Van Dorp III

Kristi DeVerney City Clerk

MEMORANDUM OF-STUDY SESSION
Zeeland City Hall Council Chambers Monday, February 2, 2026
6:00 P.M.

Mayor VanDorp called the Study Session to order at 6:00 P.M.

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

ABSENT: None

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

Employee Handbook Amendments

City Manager Klunder noted that at the January 28, 2026, Personnel Committee meeting, these changes were presented to the Committee with the Committee subsequently recommending that they be brought to City Council for approval.

Below is a summary of recommended changes for the Employee Handbook.

- Overall: Updated terminology to replace City Clerk/Personnel Assistant with Human Resources
- Exemption Status: Clarified language to better define exempt vs non-exempt positions
- Promotions and Transfers: Removed requirement to send all open positions to each department for posting. Instead allow flexibility to post based on position and departmental needs.
- Paid Vacation:
 - Aligned with 2025 Union Contracts, adding 6 weeks of vacation for 29 years of service.
 - Clarified qualified overtime to align with tax changes⁸
 - Defined distribution of paid time off upon separation
- Alternate Paid Vacation: Added 6 weeks after 23 years of service, consistent with 2025 Union Contract changes. Paid Personal Leave: Reduced years of services required to receive an additional day, in line with 2025 Union contracts
- Holidays: Added holiday benefit guidelines for part-time employees
- Tuition Reimbursement Program: Updated approval process and adjusted reimbursement amount to match IRS standards.
- Longevity Pay: Increased amounts to align with 2025 Union Contracts
- When You Leave: Clarified that group insurance ends on the day active employment ends
- Travel Appendix F: Added guidance on carpooling for cost savings and developed guidelines outside of the policy for paid travel time
- Health Appendix G: Increasing the opt-out health amount from \$1,000 to \$2,500
- Fire Provisions Appendix H:
 - Updated to ensure employees attending required training or certification are paid for their time.
 - Adjusted work period to align with FLSA standards for overtime exemption.

- Matched vacation benefits (6th week) to regular employees.

Employee Appreciation Policy Amendment

City Manager Klunder noted City Council maintains numerous policies that guide decisions. One such policy is an Employee Appreciation Policy that guides uniformity and budgets for such things as recognizing milestone anniversaries, the annual employee event, training events, project meetings, etc. With the hiring of an HR Specialist, we need to amend the policy to note that our HR Department will help coordinate components of the policy implementation rather than the City Clerk's Office.

The proposed Amended Employee Appreciation Policy changes wording from the City Clerk/Personnel Assistant to the HR Department. Additionally, while we're updating the policy, we recommend that the referenced Meals and Incidental Expenses rate (currently \$64.00) be updated to the most current rate (\$74.00) for our area.

The policy amendment was brought before the Personnel Committee at their January 28, 2026, meeting and they did recommend that City Council approve the policy amendments.

Snowmelt Special Assessment Resolution No. 2

Assistant City Manager Plockmeyer reported that at the last City Council meeting, staff presented City Council with the Snowmelt Special Assessment report outlining the proposed operation, maintenance, and future replacement costs associated with the downtown snowmelt system. This report included an overview of the total estimated cost, the proposed assessment term, and the properties proposed to be included within the special assessment district.

Based on that discussion, staff are requesting City Council approval of Snowmelt Special Assessment Resolution No. 2. This resolution tentatively determines the necessity of the public improvements, establishes the proposed special assessment district, and sets a public hearing date of February 16, 2026, to hear feedback on the proposed special assessment.

17 E. Main Boiler Design Contract Amendment

Assistant City Manager Plockmeyer reported that at its July 7, 2025, meeting, City Council approved a professional services contract with GMB for the design of the boiler plant at 17 East Main to support current and future snowmelt expansion. As design work progressed, an unforeseen condition was identified that requires modification of the originally approved contract scope.

Midway through the design process, it was discovered that the proposed vertical chase intended to be used for boiler venting had already been fully occupied by venting equipment serving the restaurant located at 17 East Main. As a result, the original venting approach was no longer feasible. To address this condition, GMB was required to redesign the venting system and reorganize the layout of the boiler equipment within the basement.

These changes were not known or reasonably identifiable at the time the original contract was approved and represent a changed condition encountered during design. To keep the project moving forward and aligned with the planned snowmelt expansion schedule, the redesign work should move ahead as part of the overall design effort.

Approval of the amended design services, in the amount of \$29,670, is necessary at this time to maintain project momentum and avoid schedule impacts.

Paw Paw Park Vegetation Management Contract Award

Assistant City Manager Plockmeyer stated that over the past year, the City has been implementing the first phase of a comprehensive vegetation management plan for Paw Paw Park. This effort was initiated in response to concerns regarding overgrowth, reduced visibility within the park, and the increasing presence of invasive plant species.

The vegetation management plan was intentionally developed as a multi-year approach. Many of the invasive species present in Paw Paw Park require repeated treatments over several growing seasons to be effectively controlled or eradicated.

Year one focused on initial invasive species control, assessment of site conditions, and establishing a framework for ongoing management, while year two will build on that work by continuing targeted treatment of invasive species, monitoring areas previously addressed, and adjusting management strategies as needed based on observed conditions. Continuing into the second year is critical to maintaining progress already made and preventing re-establishment of aggressive species, and pursuing this plan supports the City's long-term vision for Paw Paw Park as a natural, accessible, and well-managed public space.

To complete the second year of work, we recommend entering into a contract in the amount of \$10,000 with the Outdoor Discovery Center, whose staff have the specialized expertise necessary to perform invasive species management and monitoring within sensitive natural areas.

2025 Performance Incentive Program Approval

City Manager Klunder reported that in the 2025/2026 Budget City Council authorized up to 1% of base wages for an organizational performance incentive payment. Under the program guidelines the calculated payment is based on the City's measured performance in relation to our strategic action plan.

Despite a significant amount of time, albeit necessary time, shifted toward working through the oversight of the potential Mead Johnson project and some unfortunate disruptions in service delivery within the City Clerk's Office, our team still managed to make substantial progress, or complete, several action steps in 2025. To name just a few, they included things such as downtown parking management, snowmelt expansion, support for JR Automation, new electric generation planning, financial sustainability report and the hiring of an HR Specialist. With these accomplishments, plus progress on many other action steps and operational goals, based on our assessment of the 2025 Strategic Action Plan scorecard, our city team accumulated 77 points on the 2025 scorecard. For reference, point totals since the program inception have been:

2015	87.14
2016	85.96
2017	93.38
2018	84.81
2019	91.70
2020 (Covid)	62
2021	83
2022	80

2023	85
2024	87
2025	77
Average	83.36

Under the program’s pay calculation methodology, a measured point total of 70 – 79.99, equates to a 90% distribution of the budgeted amount per the program’s guidelines. Thus, if approved by City Council, qualifying employees are eligible for a .9% payment (min. \$50) given the 77 points on our scorecard assessment.

After the City Council reviewed the scorecard assessment of 77 points (.9% payment), it was a unanimous decision to raise the points to 80 and raise the payment to 1% due to the significant amount of time some projects took, and unfortunate disruptions of service that occurred in 2025.

2026 Strategic Action Plan Framework

City Manager Klunder reported that on January 26 and 27 City Council and the administrative leadership team met to review accomplishments in 2025 and to set the framework for the 2026 Strategic Action Plan. When we left the planning session on January 27, we had a listing of 48 goals that had been voted upon by Council and our administrative team. While discussion ensued on how many of the 48 goals would be incorporated into the annual strategic action plan, we did not finalize that list. Nor did we spend time determining if the goals fit within existing commitments (vibrant downtown; strong, safe and connected neighborhoods; economic and community development; infrastructure and city services; culture, parks and recreation; financial sustainability; organizational culture) or if new proposed commitments emerged.

Since the end of the January 27 session, members of our administrative team have been evaluating the ranked goals in order to suggest a framework for the 2026 Strategic Action Plan to City Council at your February 2nd work/study session. Based on our evaluation, we suggest the following for City Council’s consideration:

- Our recommendation is that City Council maintains goals that received 6 or more votes with one addition of a goal that received 5 – Implementation Plan for New Electric Generation. We have identified these goals on the spreadsheet that lists all goals with their corresponding vote tally. A few notes:
 - We recommend 4 individual goals related to Washington Avenue and Parking get combined into 2 goals – Washington Avenue and Parking.
 - We recommend “concrete recreational games” moves from a goal to more of an operational item.
 - With the above recommendations, we would maintain 22 goals (30+ in the previous two years) in the Strategic Action Plan.
 - The recommendation to add “Implementation of New Electric Generation” to the goals list is because electric generation would be an ongoing goal from 2025, and because of the significant long-term impacts this will have on our entire community.

CC Goal Setting 1.27.26

Goal	Votes	Downtown	Neighborhood	Econ. Comm Dev.	Infrast. city service	Park/Rec	Financial	Org. Cult	Notes
Washington Avenue Development	13	x		x					Combine
Mead Johnson Implementation	12		x	x	x	x			
JR Automation Implementation	12			x	x		x		
Park & Rec Master Plan Update	12				x	x			
Roundabout at Main and Fairview	11			x	x				
Feel the Zeel 20th Anniversary Planning	11	x	x	x	x			x	
Facility Improvement Plan	10				x				
Regional Biosolids Facility	9		x	x	x		x		
Master Plan Rewrite	9	x	x	x	x	x			
Funding Mechanisms for Capital Facility Improvements	9						x		
Underground Utilities - State, Washington, Lincoln	9		x		x				
Future Visioning with Schools	9		x		x				
Second Exit From Public Safety Building	9				x				
Legal Succession Planning	9				x				
Snowmelt Expansion Phase 3	8	x		x	x				
Business Loop I-196 Beautification	7				x				
Finance Staffing	7				x			x	
Succession Planning	7							x	
Concrete Rec Games at Parks	7					x			Support goal
Business Loop I-196 Crossing	6		x		x	x			
Expand Parking Options	6	x		x	x				Combine
Purchase Property for Washington Ave Redevelopment	6			x					Combine
Main Street Auto Redevelopment	6	x		x					
Parking Ordinance Review	6	x		x	x				Combine
Implementation Plan for New Electric Generation	5			x	x				
Aggressively Pursue Filling Empty Buildings	5								
Cherry Ave Medical Office Building Redevelopment	5								
Fire/Rescue Staffing	5								
Additional Murals	5								
Name Recognition Policy	5								
Parking Deck	4								
Permanent Story Walking	4								
Recreation Center	3								
Single Refuse Hauler	3								
Greater Transparency - Stream Meetings	3								
Washington Avenue Beautification	2								
Lincoln Avenue Improvements	2								
474 W Main Ave Redevelopment	2								
Howard Miller Site Reuse	2								
HMCC as Welcome Center	2								
Huizenga Park Pickleball Court Lighting	2								
Unhoused Population Plans	2								
Maple St Two-Way Conversion	2								
Employee Retention	1								
Small Footprint Housing	1								
More Pickleball Courts	0								
Overnight On street Parking	0								
More EV Chargers	0								

- An analysis of the suggested goals for 2026 would indicate that they do align with the 7 commitments to achieve the Vision (Feel the Zeel) the city has pursued since 2021 (and variations of the commitments in years prior to that). As a reminder, we define those commitments as follows:
 - Vibrant Downtown – Revitalize the heart of the community and encourage a downtown that is financially affordable and competitive, physically attractive, fun and energetic.
 - Strong, Safe and Connected Neighborhoods – Encourage and maintain pedestrian friendly neighborhoods that are attractive, welcoming and inclusive, while offering a variety of housing types including high quality, historically-preserved housing stock that reflects residents’ pride in the community and where social interaction and resident engagement are valued.

- Economic and Community Development – Lead and facilitate strategic growth that is consistent with the City’s vision by building collaborative relationships and promoting a climate that is accommodating, identifies and utilizes resources to create development opportunities, and is responsive to emerging issues and trends.
- Infrastructure and City Services – Pursue excellence through the provision of quality infrastructure and comprehensive City services that are well maintained, inclusive and accessible, responsive, efficient and offer good stewardship of public resources.
- Culture, Parks and Recreation – Provide a robust array of engaging activities and public spaces throughout the community that are accessible, affordable and designed for people of all ages and stages of life. Individuals and families living outside the community will actively seek opportunities to travel to Zeeland for cultural and recreational endeavors.
- Financial Sustainability – Exemplify long-term financial strength through continuous improvement and innovation, planning for projects/programs beyond inception, diversifying financial resources and holding adequate financial reserves.
- Organizational Culture – To fulfill the commitments to spread Zeel, support an organizational structure that consistently holds to the City’s core values, seeks to build leaders, and celebrates our historic attributes, while also providing an organizational culture that is equitable and inclusive.

Should City Council agree with the above recommendations, our administrative team can then further develop the written 2026 Strategic Action Plan. That process will involve input from City Council over the next several work/study sessions identifying each goal’s outcome indicator and value statement. Our target is to have the plan completed in late March to early April.

There being no further items to discuss, Work study was adjourned at 6:48 P.M.

Kristi DeVerney, City Clerk