MEETING OF THE BISMARCK EVENT CENTER AUTHORITY BOARD

2/4/2026 - MINUTES

AGENDA

1. Call to Order

The Bismarck Event Center Authority Board met in the Tom Baker meeting room on February 4, 2026, at 11:00 AM. Members present included Sheri Grossman, Joel Kostelecky, Jason Tomanek, Chad Wachter, and Mayor Schmitz. Members Mike Gardner and Jennifer Wilson attended the meeting via Teams.

2. Public Comment

No public comment was received.

3. Approval of Minutes

Member Wachter moved to approve the minutes as presented and member Grossman seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

4. Capital Improvement Plan Update

Jeff Ubl with Ubl Design Group, presented an overview of the Event Center's Capital Improvement Plan (CIP), which was developed from decades of prior studies and a comprehensive review of existing conditions, staff input, and City leadership discussions. The plan takes a global, phased approach and focuses first on deferred maintenance, then modernization, before any future expansion, with decision-making being guided by visitor experience, operations, revenue impact, and financial feasibility. Mr. Ubl explained that the CIP prioritizes stabilizing the facility by addressing urgent needs, particularly major arena infrastructure. These priorities include a long-overdue HVAC replacement, while ultimately directing long-term financial resources towards the Exhibit Hall. The plan includes a five-year near-term implementation within a 10-year outlook, annual reviews aligned with the City budget, and preservation of emergency and reserve funds. Near-term projects include arena HVAC modernization, facility-wide wayfinding and signage improvements, accessibility-driven restroom upgrades, arena roof replacement, parking lot repairs, and Exhibit Hall lighting and controls upgrades. Longer term plans include Exhibit Hall modernization and potential expansion planning. Mr. Ubl noted that additional recommendations include ongoing plan updates, better tracking and escalation of operational issues, digitization of building records, use of Indefinite Delivery, Indefinite Quantity (IDIQ) design contracts for continuity, and a list of smaller projects that can be advanced if funding allows.

The Board also discussed the design of a new mechanical HVAC system for the Event Center that meets key project goals: high energy efficiency, low operating and life-cycle costs, and ease of operation and maintenance. Decisions will need to be made as to who will operate and maintain the system, whether it be the City, the third-party management company, or a hybrid approach. The building hosts varying types of events which make advanced controls essential to efficiently manage temperature, ventilation, and air quality before and after events. The City does not currently have a dedicated HVAC staff member, which increases uncertainty around operations. The group agreed that more clarity is needed for operations and control responsibilities, with the preference being for the City to retain significant control while coordinating with the third party.

A. Overview of the CIP

B. 2026 CIP Projects

C. Building Controls and Operations Discussion

5. Oak View Group Contract and Negotiation Update

Mayor Schmitz requested that the item be restricted to an update and that a contract negotiation special meeting be scheduled to get both the Event Center Authority Board and representatives of Oak View Group (OVG) together to finalize contract negotiations. Mitch Anzivino, a representative of Jones Lang and Lasalle (JLL) addressed the board and noted that he understood the need to expedite the contract finalization process with the intended February 28, 2026, deadline. He will work with City staff and OVG to coordinate a meeting.

6. Event Center Operations Update

Amanda Yellow, Acitng Event Center Director, provided an update of the events that took place in January and also upcoming events for February and March.

7. Third Party Survey Discussion

Jason Tomanek, City Administrator, addressed the board with the idea of having a third party help develop surveys to improve the quality and usefulness of customer feedback. JLL has drafted a detailed survey, but there is concern that the length may be too long for respondents to complete thoughtfully. The intent of the surveys would be to gather meaningful insights beyond basic ratings, such as whether staff exceeded expectations. Administrator Tomanek said he will share the draft survey for the board to review for discussion at a later date.

8. Other Business

A. **Western North Dakota Honor Flight Request**

Diane Martin, a board member of the Western North Dakota Honor Flight, presented a request to use the Event Center for their pre-flight meetings. The Honor Flight organizes trips for veterans from Bismarck to Washington, D.C., providing a two-day experience to visit memorials, with full support including transportation, meals, medical staff, and goodie bags. They serve over 32 counties, have a waiting list of over 400, and operate entirely through volunteers and fundraising. The pre-flight meetings are essential to prepare veterans, guardians, and staff for travel, verify registrations, distribute clothing and goodie bags, and cover TSA and travel instructions. Meetings typically involve up to 200 people and take place from 10:00 AM to 4:00 PM. Ms. Martin requested the board recommendation to the City Commission for free use of the Event Center and a food exemption which would allow for the organization to bring in refreshments for the attendees.

Member Wachter moved to approve use of the Event Center twice per year free of charge for 2026 and 2027, and allow an outside food exemption, and Member Grossman seconded.

- Upon discussion, member Gardner noted concerns about setting a precedent for other organizations to request use of the Event Center free of charge.
- Administrator Tomanek noted that there is one other instance when the rent has been waived for use of the Event Center, which is the Capital City Christmas Breakfast with Santa event.
- The group discussed developing a policy or guidelines for how to address requests like this in the future.

Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

B. **Member Terms**

Administrator Tomanek started discussion on member terms for the board. He explained that certain positions are tied to specific roles, such as the Mayor, while others are regular board members. The board will need to establish term lengths and stagger start dates so that not all members rotate out at the same time. Term lengths are typically three to five years. The group will decide term lengths and rotation order at the next meeting.

C. **Code of Conduct**

Administrator Tomanek explained that the City Commission approved a Code of Conduct in 2024. The code was written primarily for the Board of City Commissioners, but it is shared with the various boards and committees to ensure that all members are aware of expected conduct at meetings.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting adjourned at 12:07 PM.