MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CITY COMMISSIONERS

7/28/2026 - MINUTES

CALL TO ORDER

The Board of City Commissioners met on July 28, 2026, at 5:15 PM in the Tom Baker Meeting Room, City/County Office Building, 221 North Fifth Street, Bismarck, North Dakota. Commissioners Connelly, Hull, Risch, Doll, and Mayor Schmitz were present.

FUTURE COMMISSION MEETINGS

August 11, 2026 & August 25, 2026
September 8, 2026 & September 22, 2026
October 13, 2026 & October 27, 2026

MISSION STATEMENT

Together, we deliver exceptional public service.

MEETING OF THE BOARD OF CITY COMMISSION

1. **PUBLIC COMMENT**

   A. Public Comment Policy: Restricted to items on the Consent Agenda, Regular Agenda, or the Prior City Commission Agenda, excluding public hearing items.

   No public comment was received.

2. **CONSENT AGENDA**

Commissioner Doll moved to approve the Consent Agenda as presented, and Commissioner Risch seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

   A. Consider approval of minutes

   B. Consider approval of personnel actions

   C. Consider approval of expenditures

   Vouchers: 1133661-1133967

D. Consider the request for approval from the Administration Department for the following:

   1. Receive bids and award the contract for the Bismarck Event Center Lighting and Control Modernization Project.

E. Consider the request for approval from the Bismarck Airport for the following:

   1. Disposal of a de-ice fluid storage tank for $5,000.00.

   2. Change order to Capital City Construction's contract for the Aircraft Rescue and Firefighting (ARFF) Building.

   3. A 150-day time extension on House of Color Contract.

   4. Architectural Contract with Ubl Design Group for the Design, Construction Administration and Construction Observation (CACO) of the Terminal Expansion Project.

F. Consider the request for approval from the Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health Department for the following:

   1. Adjustments to Public Health fee schedule.

G. Consider the request for approval from the Engineering Department for the following:

   1. Transferring watermain and appurtenances ownership located on the North Dakota (ND) State Capitol Grounds to the State of ND.

   2. Resolution approving the resolution of necessity for Park Improvement District No. PI 007.

3. Resolution approving a revised boundary map for Sewer Improvement District SE 576.

4. Resolutions creating the district, ordering the preparation of the engineer's report, approving the engineer's report, and directing the preparation of the plans and specifications for Sewer Improvement District SE 587.

5. Resolutions for declaring petitions have been received, creating the district, ordering the preparation of the engineer's report, approving the engineer's report, and directing the preparation of the plans and specifications for Street Improvement District SI 601.

H. Consider the request for approval from the Finance Department for the following:

1. Application for abatement.

I. Consider the request for approval from the Legal Department for the following:

1. Introduction of and call for a public hearing on Ordinance 6678 to amend sections 5-01-01, 5-01-06, 5-01-07, 5-01-13, 5-03-05, of the City of Bismarck Code of Ordinances Relating to Alcoholic Beverages and Civic Center Exception, and Repeal 5-01-20 Relating to Enclosed Booths and Access to Licensed Premises and 5-10-01 Relating to Sunday Opening of Grocery Stores

J. Consider the request for approval from the Police Department for the following:

1. Accept a donation of $2400.00 from Continental Resources for the K-9 Program.

K. Consider the request for approval from the Public Works - Service Operations Department for the following:

1. Permission to sell or dispose of City Assets at Public Sale.

L. Consider the request for approval from the Public Works - Utility Operations Department for the following:

1. Task Order 38 with Advanced Engineering and Environmental Services, LLC (AE2S) for the SCADA Project, Phase IV.

3. **REGULAR AGENDA**

A. Consider the request from Bismarck-Mandan Convention & Visitors Bureau Executive Director, Sheri Grossman, to present the 2025 CVB Annual Report.

Sheri Grossman, CEO of the Bismarck-Mandan Convention & Visitors Bureau (CVB), delivered an annual update highlighting tourism's economic impact, the CVB's funding sources, and major initiatives. Ms. Grossman reported substantial visitor activity tracked through Placer AI, noting millions of trips, hotel nights, and hundreds of millions in visitor spending. Ms. Grossman detailed the strong role of meetings and conventions, including significant future bookings and economic impact. Ms. Grossman also summarized the new Destination Master Plan, outlining long-term strategies across seven pillars to grow tourism, improve visitor experience, and strengthen community assets. The CVB launched new tools such as a community-wide events calendar, event microsites, an online store, and an AI-powered trip-planning guide. Ms. Grossman closed with data showing the sizable economic and tax impact of major conferences, emphasizing tourism's importance to local jobs, businesses, and overall community growth, and addressed questions about facilities, infrastructure, and future opportunities.

- Presentation

B. Consider and discuss the five design options and potential project funding for renovations to the City/County Building.

City Administrator Jason Tomanek, addressed the Commission regarding the plans for the City/County Building after Burleigh County vacates the first floor of the building. Administrator Tomanek noted that Endeavor North Design, PLLC has been helping to evaluate and address major deferred maintenance and future use of the City/County Building. Administrator Tomanek noted that the building faces significant issues, including aging HVAC, electrical and plumbing systems, the oldest elevator in all of North Dakota, and a basement meeting room that is not accessible or safe in an emergency.

Cole Johnson, an architect with Endeavor North Design, PLLC, presented five options A-E ranging from basic fixes to a full new construction. The five options include construction, contingency, escalation, soft costs, and multiphase construction assumptions.

- Option A: Minimal work / Essential upgrades — Option A focuses solely on essential infrastructure updates needed to keep the City-County Building operational for the next decade or two. This includes major replacements and repairs to HVAC systems, the aging elevator, roof, and core plumbing and electrical components. No functional or layout improvements are made, and the commission chamber would remain in the basement with its current accessibility and safety limitations. The estimated total cost for this option is roughly $11–$13 million.

- Option B: Moderate Renovation — Option B introduces noticeable upgrades to public access and internal workflow. The commission chamber would be moved from the basement to the first floor, although ceiling height and column spacing remain limiting factors. Several key departments—Administration, Human Resources, and Legal—would be relocated to improve daily public interaction. The plan also includes a redesigned central area called "Heritage Hall" to create a better first impression for visitors. Overall, public flow is improved without major structural changes. Estimated costs fall in the mid $20 millions to low $30 millions.
- Option C: Enhanced Renovation With Structural Changes — Option C builds on the improvements of Option B but adds significant structural work to create a modern, high-ceiling commission chamber comparable to a new building. This option requires removing existing columns and portions of the second floor above the chamber. It also introduces a new south entry plaza made possible through a potential land swap. These enhancements provide better civic presence, accessibility, and public navigation but come with major complexity and cost. The estimated total is higher than Option B, landing in the high $30 millions.
- Option D: Major Renovation / New Chamber Addition — Option D creates a new commission chamber and lobby as an addition on the south side of the building, avoiding the expensive structural modifications required in Option C. This new public-facing area greatly improves accessibility, visibility, overflow capacity, and security, resulting in a more intuitive and modern civic identity. Internal department layouts are reorganized to create clear separation between public and staff areas. Although substantial, the structural work is less complex than Option C, and the estimated cost falls in the mid–upper $30 millions, slightly lower than Option C.
- Option E: New Building Construction — Option E proposes constructing an entirely new city hall on a nearby site at Fifth and Thayer. The new building allows for an efficient, purpose-built layout and includes underground parking, although limited in capacity. While this option offers the best long-term design flexibility and modern standards, it is the most costly and would leave the current building without a planned reuse. The estimated cost for new construction is $46–$50 million.

During discussion, the Commission agreed that Options A, C, and E are not feasible based on scope of work and unrealistic price points. The Commission expressed a desire to keep the project under $30 million, making options B and D the most viable. Option B appears to be financially achievable, while Option D offers the best functional and civic improvements despite higher costs. The Commission directed staff and design team to refine Options B and D and return in late August with updated cost estimates, funding strategies that limit borrowing, potential energy-efficiency upgrades, and ways to keep the project in budget.

C. Public Hearing on Ordinance 6673 to create a special assessment district for annexed properties.

Mayor Schmitz opened the public hearing. No public comment was received.

Commissioner Connelly moved to approve as presented, and Commissioner Hull seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

D. Public hearing on Ordinance 6676, a zoning map amendment from the A – Agriculture and CG – Commercial zoning district to the CG – Commercial zoning district, major subdivision final plat titled Berg Acres Addition, and Development Agreement.

Senior Planner Jenny Wollmuth addressed the Commission regarding Ordinance 6676, a zoning map amendment from the A – Agriculture and CG – Commercial zoning district to the CG – Commercial zoning district, major subdivision final plat titled Berg Acres Addition, and Development Agreement.

Mayor Schmitz opened the public hearing. No public comment was received.

Commissioner Connelly moved to approve as presented, and Commissioner Doll seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

E. Public hearing on Ordinance 6677, a zoning map amendment from the A – Agricultural and RT – Residential zoning districts to the RT – Residential zoning district, and major subdivision final plat titled DCN Addition.

Senior Planner Jenny Wollmuth addressed the Commission regarding Ordinance 6676, 6677, a zoning map amendment from the A – Agricultural and RT – Residential zoning districts to the RT – Residential zoning district, and major subdivision final plat titled DCN Addition.

Mayor Schmitz opened the public hearing. No public comment was received.

Commissioner Risch moved to approve as presented, and Commissioner Connelly seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

F. Consider the request from the Administration Department to provide an update on the Strategic Plan.

Assistant City Administrator Doug Wiles provided a second quarter update on the City's Strategic Plan, which includes 177 tasks that are nearly 24% complete. Assistant Administrator Wiles explained that some tasks are marked as disrupted, which means that their progress paths have changed due to new circumstances, and are not necessarily negative issues. Examples include land acquisition for a fire station, ADA compliance updates to the City's website, and timeline changes related to a Rural Health Transformation grant. Assistant Administrator Wiles also highlighted completed work, such as the half-cent sales tax extension. The commission expressed appreciation for the transparency and workload involved. Assistant Administrator Wiles confirmed that the strategic plan remains a flexible, living document that can be adjusted as needed.

G. Consider the request to receive and approve the City's 2027 preliminary budget, budget requests, and Budget Committee recommendations.

Finance Director Ryan Skor and City Comptroller Eric Lund provided the 2027 Preliminary Budget. Director Skor opened with an overview of the budgeting process, statutory requirements, accounting standards, and timelines. He explained departmental submissions, committee review, and how recommendations were formulated. Comptroller Lund provided a comprehensive walkthrough of the general fund, revenue projections, fund balances, committed reserves, and key cost drivers. Comptroller Lund emphasized conservative revenue forecasting, intentional use of reserves for planned projects, and major spending areas, particularly public safety and personnel costs. Comptroller Lund noted required property tax calculations under House Bill 1176 and clarified that mill levy rates will adjust downward as valuations change.

The Commission discussed fund balance categories, staffing requests, operational cost pressures, public safety capital needs, and utility rate increases. Comptroller Lund outlined major 2027 iniatives, including Fire Station 6, the new police station, equipment replacement cycles, street maintenance, and large enterprise-fund projects such as the airport expansion, wastewater plant improvements, and flood control. Commissioners raised questions and comments about efficiencies, staffing levels, electric vehicle adoption, nonprofit funding requests, employee compensation methods and ways to encourage cost-saving ideas from employees and departments.

Finance Director Skor and Comptroller Lund affirmed that approval of the preliminary budget allows staff and Commissioners to refine department-specific adjustments before final adkoption in September. Commissioners Doll and Hull were invited to meet with departments as they were not part of the earlier Budget Committee process.

Commissioner Doll moved to approve the 2027 Preliminary Budget as presented and Commissioner Hull seconded. Upon a roll call vote, all voted aye. M/C.

4. **OTHER BUSINESS**

A. Commissioner Risch noted that the City is currently revising its building code, and Building Official Brady Blaskowski is seeking input from builders and anyone interested, but has not received many responses. He noted that this is a good opportunity for residents to suggest changes, especially if certain requirements don't truly improve safety. Commissioner Risch also noted that Public Works Service Operations is trying to ease inconveniences caused by changes in garbage collection by providing two roll-off containers for tree branch collection. The Containers are located in North Bismarck near Ash Coulee water tower and one in South Bismarck near the Cottonwood parking lot on Santa Fe near 12th Street. Residents can deposit tree branches up to four inches thick but are encouraged to use the bins responsibly and avoid dumping inappropriate items.
B. Commissioner Connelly expressed gratitude to the Police Department, Cencom, and medical support staff, for their work and support during a difficult situations that occurred within the last 48 hours. He thanked everyone for their support in the community.
C. Administrator Tomanek recognized Bismarck-Burleigh Public Health Director Renae Moch for her recent appointment to the National Associaiton of County and City Health Officials, representing Region 8 (Colorado, Montana, North Dakota, South Dakota, Utah, and Wyoming). She is the first representative from North Dakota to serve on this national board and will hold a four-year anointment, progressing through leadership roles starting as vice president. Administrator Tomanek noted that his honor highlights both her professional accomplishments and the value of having a rural community voice at the national level.

ADJOURN

There being no further business to discuss, the meeting was adjourned at 7:57 PM.