City of Bowlus
September 1, 2026
City Council Meeting Minutes

Mayor Travis Bartkowicz called the Bowlus City Council meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. Council Members Jessy Lashinski, Terri Trettle, Becky Hughs, Interim Treasurer Amber Brenny, and Interim Clerk Nicky Lahr were present. Also present were Sarah Seelen, Brad Psyck, Laura Montag, and Lucas Boyd. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited.

Guests: Susan Sweeter was not present; however, she submitted a land use permit application. Nicky and Travis will review the application. Terri made a motion to approve the permit pending ordinance review. Jessy seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor. Nicky will inform Ms. Sweeter of the findings.

Consent Agenda: Jessy made a motion to approve the consent agenda, including disbursements and the August minutes, with two corrections to the minutes: the Committee Update meeting was scheduled for August, not June, and the investment amount was corrected. Becky seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Treasurer's Report: Amber reported that the First Responders were looking into rejoining the City so they could be eligible for workers' compensation and liability insurance. She recommended reintegration at this time so the workers' compensation audit runs smoothly. Lucas offered to maintain their own checkbook, but it was explained that the money would have to run through the City. Jessy made a motion to approve the reintegration of the First Responders into the City. Becky seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Jessy also made a motion to approve Amber to open a new fund account for the First Responders. Terri seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Amber was able to contact Minnesota Power to have the old fire hall disconnected from power. A disconnection request will be signed by the Mayor to proceed.

Amber prepared the 2027 budgets in preparation for the 2027 preliminary levy decision and shared that there were very few changes from the previous year. Travis made a motion to approve a 12% increase over 2026 for the preliminary budget. Jessy seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor. Nicky will submit the preliminary budget to the County before the deadline.

The City received the third AFFF settlement payment in the amount of $1,774.99.

Fire Department Report: Brad presented a proposed 3% increase for the upcoming year's fire protection contracts with Swan River, Two Rivers, Sobieski, and the City of Bowlus. Terri made a motion to approve the 3% increase. Jessy seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Brad explained that a letter is typically sent out in October informing everyone of the upcoming year's costs and will work with Nicky and Amber on this.

Brad inquired about a credit/debit card. He often submits reimbursements and is looking for an easier way to manage purchases. Jessy made a motion to approve a card for Brad. Becky seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Utility Department Report: Sarah stated that the Banyon program is not backed up. Banyon offers an annual rate for backup services. Jessy made a motion to approve the service, and Terri seconded the motion. The motion passed with all in favor.

Sarah also asked if a utility folder could be created on the Google Drive. Nicky will help facilitate this.

The Council discussed potential changes to monthly utility billing and future water and sewer rate increases. Further research will be conducted regarding rates and billing options.

The next utility readings will take place on October 1. Sarah also shared that she will be out of town from October 12–20, along with Josh.

Public Works Department: Joe was not present; however, Travis reported on his behalf. Potential equipment needs for testing static and pumping water levels may be needed. The equipment would be considered under the existing water budget.

The Council discussed road repairs and resurfacing. Hansen Paving reviewed the City streets and provided recommendations for priority areas. Drainage issues near the cemetery and the area near the gas station were also discussed. Further engineering review and cost estimates will be considered.

Community Center Report: Laura shared that the towel dispenser in the men's room is broken and will work with Nicky to find a repair or replacement. She turned in $980 for the month.

Clerk's Report: Nicky renewed the Fire Department's CD at Magnifi after pulling out $60,000 for the truck purchase. She also reported that the land use permit application has been added to the City's website.

Committee Updates: Travis reported that the committee met on August 19, and the next meeting date has not yet been set. They discussed Sourcewell grants and are working on the application. They also followed up on the missing swing and will look for a possible replacement. The zipline appears to be fine.

The committee is also working with Rural Water to review the City's utility rates to determine if an increase is necessary and, if so, how much.

The Council discussed the old ballpark and potential improvements in preparation for future grant opportunities, including removal of old fencing and the concession stand.

Old Business: Terri made a motion to move $200,000 from the general fund into CDs at Pine Country Bank at the best available rate and term. This will be done by staggering four $50,000 CDs to ensure money is available if needed. Jessy seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Travis made a motion to approve Resolution 26-9-1 for the Impact Grant application to fund the purchase of a new lawn mower and brush auger attachment, with a total estimated cost of $34,704. The grant is available for up to $50,000. The purchases will only be made if the grant is awarded. Jessy seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor. Travis will submit the application, which is due September 23.

New Business: Lucas and Josh reported on plans to relocate the hockey rink closer to the park. The proposed location was discussed with the County, and property lines were reviewed. The group is exploring options for a permanent rink, including grant funding and construction costs.

The Council discussed a proposal from Bolig for grant-writing services at a cost of $5,000 annually, plus 2% of grants secured. The Council had questions regarding the 2% fee and what services it would cover. The Council requested additional information and tabled the matter until the October meeting.

The Council discussed the Community Center operating at a deficit. Much of the deficit was attributed to unexpected electrical and pavilion repairs, while rental activity remains strong. The Council discussed rates, promotional discounts, and future bookings. It was decided to allow the Community Center to continue operating through the end of the year without a fund transfer and reassess the financial position at that time.

Terri made a motion to continue LMC liability insurance coverage at the same coverage as previous years. Becky seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Mayor/Council Updates: Travis stated that Joe is seeking a pay increase of $100 per month for water and the same for sewer. Becky made a motion to approve the pay increase effective January. Jessy seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

The City plans to apply for a $2,000 Boost Grant to replace three City laptops.

Jessy made a motion to adjourn at 8:35 p.m. Becky seconded the motion, and it passed with all in favor.

Looking Forward: The next Council meeting is October 5.

Nicky Lahr
Interim City Clerk