



Contents

I.	NORTH MANKATO’S VISION, VALUES AND GOALS	2
II.	GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES	3
III.	ROLE OF THE MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, CITY ADMINISTRATOR.....	3
IV.	ROLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL CITY COUNCIL MEMBER	5
V.	ROLE OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS SERVING IN COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS	8
VI.	COMMUNICATION	8
VII.	CITY DEPARTMENTS.....	9
VIII.	SUPPORT, TECHNOLOGY, AND LEGAL COUNSEL	11
IX.	MEDIA RELATIONS	12
X.	CODE OF CONDUCT.....	13
XI.	ETHICAL LEADERSHIP	14
XII.	SOURCES OF CITY AUTHORITY	15
XIII.	CITY COUNCIL COMPENSATION, TRAINING, AND TRAVEL.....	15
XIV.	COUNCIL MEETINGS.....	16
XV.	OPEN MEETING LAW AND DATA PRACTICES.....	18
XVI.	RULES TO GOVERN BY.....	19
XVII.	RESOURCES	21



I. NORTH MANKATO’S VISION, VALUES AND GOALS

A. Vision

North Mankato is a growing and safe community with outstanding recreational assets, well-maintained infrastructure, vibrant business districts and neighborhoods, and provides residents with an excellent quality of life.

B. Values

- Adaptability:* The ability to adjust means and methods to resolve changing situations.
- Excellence:* Going above and beyond expectations.
- Responsibility:* Taking ownership and being accountable for performance.
- Integrity:* Being honest, impartial and aligning actions with principles.
- Leadership:* Achieving a common goal by motivating others.
- Civility:* Using polite, reasonable, and respectful behavior in our conduct, understanding the roles of each participant, and respecting the process for decision-making

C. Goals & Strategic Program Areas

Goals	Strategic Program Areas
Outstanding Recreational Assets	Library, Parks, & Trails
Well Planned & Maintained Infrastructure	Public Works & Infrastructure
Safe Community	Public Safety
Growing & Vibrant Business, Industrial, & Residential Districts	Community & Economic Development
Excellent Quality of Life	Legislation, Administration, & Public Engagement



II. GOVERNANCE PRINCIPLES

The city council governs North Mankato with the best interests of all citizens as its first priority. In conducting its business, the governing body will maintain a focus on the vision, goals and strategic policy documents adopted by the city council.

The city council commits to conducting its business adhering to the highest ethical, legal, and fiduciary standards.

A spirit of openness, candor, and mutual respect for the input and opinions of others are critical to the city council's ability to govern effectively. City council members are expected to spend the time necessary to attend meetings and come prepared and informed on the issues.

City council members are expected to actively participate as needed on city council committees and task forces. Attendance at committee and task force meetings is as important as attendance at city council meetings.

III. ROLE OF THE MAYOR, CITY COUNCIL, CITY ADMINISTRATOR

A. City Council

The city council includes a mayor and four council members. Each must be eligible to vote in Minnesota, registered to vote and a resident of the city. Council members are elected at large and must continue to reside within the City of North Mankato during their term. Each person on the council, including the mayor, has one vote.

Effective management of a municipality is achieved when elected officials and appointed executives clearly understand and agree on their roles as defined by their form of government, state statute, and code of ordinances. In North Mankato, the city council is the legislative body, and its members are the community's decision makers. City powers are vested in the city council, except as otherwise specified by Minnesota Statutes. The council ensures all obligations and duties imposed on the city by law are implemented. Recognizing the city council exercises its authority or takes action as one body, individual council members cannot act on behalf of the city.

The city council is also the organization's legislative body. Council members approve the tax rate, adopt the budget and set the city's vision. The council provides leadership for the community by identifying issues or opportunities and then implementing goals and strategies to solve problems. Council members focus on city policies, the city vision, ordinances and intergovernmental affairs. Some examples include land use development, comprehensive planning, capital improvement projects and strategic planning.

The city council vests the city administrator with authority to implement policy through the direction of operations and execution of strategic plans. In this sense, North Mankato's government works similarly to a large corporation with a part-time Board of Directors (Council) that sets policy and a CEO (City Administrator) that carries out the policy and provides professional management of the day to day operations.



In addition to duties set forth in state statute, the city council is expected to fulfill the following roles:

1. Determine and uphold the city's vision, goals, and strategic planning documents.
2. Hire the city administrator.
3. Authorize new city staff positions.
4. Ensure an effective strategic planning process.
5. Ensure adequate resources are provided.
6. Develop, monitor and strengthen the city's programs and services.
7. Enhance the city's reputation.
8. Ensure legal and ethical integrity, maintain accountability and exercise fiduciary oversight.
9. Orient new city council members after they are elected.
10. Create and eliminate committees and task forces as appropriate.
11. Assess the city council's performance.
12. Provide for leadership continuity.
13. Address difficult policy problems.
14. Build capacity among the city council to work effectively together.

B. Mayor

The mayor acts as the presiding officer and ceremonial representative at public events and functions on behalf of the city council. If the mayor cannot participate in a meeting, the mayor pro tem assumes the mayor's duties. The mayor participates in all deliberations of the council in the same manner as other members and is a voting member of the council in all matters unless a conflict of interest exists. The mayor is often a spokesperson for the council – articulating actions taken or fielding questions about the city's intentions and policies. The mayor also makes appointments to the various commissions with the consent of the city council.

C. City Administrator

The city administrator serves the council and community and brings local government projects and programs to citizens on the council's behalf. The city administrator prepares the budget, recruits, supervises/hires/terminates department directors and is the council's chief advisor. Citizens and council members rely on the city administrator to provide unbiased and objective information while presenting both sides of an issue and information about long-term consequences.

The city administrator is responsible for the city's administrative duties; council members should work with the city administrator about items related to city employees, inquiries or other city topics. City staff executes council policy and actions and provides information to keep the



council informed. The city administrator and department directors provides staff direction and guidance through the chain of command.

The city administrator is appointed by the city council and directs all city staff. Chain of command operates as follows;

- Citizens to the city council.
- City council to the city administrator.
- City administrator to department directors and then to subordinate staff.

The city administrator is the only staff member hired by the council; it is important that requests for information or community issues be brought directly to the city administrator. The city administrator is in the best position to provide a response because many issues involve multiple departments or work may already be in progress.

If a council member wishes to influence actions, decisions, recommendations, workloads, work scheduled or staff priorities, that member must work with other council members to do so as a matter of council policy. The full city council retains the authority to accept, reject or amend staff recommendations on policy matters.

Like many other city administrators, North Mankato's City Administrator belongs to the International City/County Management Association (ICMA), a professional and educational association for city administrative officers that was founded in 1914. ICMA's mission: "to strengthen the quality of local government through professional management."

IV. ROLE OF AN INDIVIDUAL CITY COUNCIL MEMBER

A. General Expectations

Know the city's vision, goals, strategic programming documents, policies, programs, services, strengths, and needs.

Perform duties of a city council member responsibly, and with energy and enthusiasm.

Be an active advocate for city legislative policies to policymakers.

Participate in the city's nomination process as needed and assist in identifying strong candidates for appointment positions.

Approach all issues with an open mind, objectively evaluating all input and information.

Remain informed about trends in the field of municipal governing.

Bring good will and a sense of humor to the city council's deliberations.

City council members are expected to conduct themselves in their personal life in a manner that does not reflect poorly on the city or themselves as a member of the governing body.



Serve in leadership positions and undertake special assignments willingly and enthusiastically.

B. Meetings

Prepare for and participate in city council meetings.

Willingly serve on committees and task forces as needed.

Actively participate in city council and committee discussions consistent with your knowledge, conscience, and convictions.

Suggest agenda items periodically for the city council and committee meetings to ensure that important, policy-related matters are addressed.

C. Decision-making

Each city council member is expected to be actively involved in city council discussions. City council members must share their opinions, listen to the opinions of others, and make an effort to see issues from the variety of perspectives other city council members may bring. If a city council member holds a view that has not been voiced, it is his or her obligation to share that opinion during the deliberations – not simply before or after the meeting.

Any city council member who believes that he or she has a financial conflict of interest on any decision must disclose such a conflict to the city council before the discussion begins and recuse himself or herself from the discussion and the vote. For purposes of this Handbook, a conflict of interest is a known transaction or relationship which presents or may present a conflict between city council member's obligations to the city and the city council member's personal, business, or other interests.

In deciding how to vote, city council members are expected to take into account the collective interests of all citizens and to vote what they believe to be the common interest – in other words, to vote on city council actions with the best interests of all citizens in mind.

After a vote is taken, unless the decision violates his or her core values, each city council member is expected to support the majority decision of the board. In all circumstances, regardless of how the individual city council member voted on his or her personal view of the city council's decision, he or she is expected to fully describe and accurately characterize the city council's discussions and the rationale behind the outcome of the city council's deliberations.

D. Speaking on City Council Matters

If it is asked or inferred that an individual board member speak on behalf of the city, city council members should defer to the city administrator or mayor and other official spokespersons or refer to official city policies and positions.

City council members are expected to be available as needed, within reason, to testify or advocate for the city's official positions, and they must not actively speak against the city's position.



E. Relationship with Staff

Provide advice and support to the city administrator.

Avoid special requests for extensive information, without prior consultation with the city administrator or mayor.

F. Managing Conflicts

Serve the city as a whole rather than any special interest group or constituency.

Maintain independence and objectivity and do what a sense of fairness, ethics, and personal integrity dictate.

Except in limited circumstance permitted under Minnesota law, never accept (or offer) favors or gifts from (or to) anyone who does business with the city.

G. Accountability and Fiduciary Responsibilities

Exercise prudence with the board in the control and transfer of funds.

Read and understand the city's financial statements and otherwise help the city council fulfill its fiduciary responsibility.

V. ROLE OF CITY COUNCIL MEMBERS SERVING IN COMMITTEE APPOINTMENTS

A. Purpose of City Council Appointments

The purpose of city council appointments to certain organizations or committees serving the city is to ensure the diverse perspectives of these groups are fully and continually reflected in city council deliberations. City council appointees are encouraged and expected to bring the views of these various entities to city council deliberations. However, as a city council member, each of these individuals has the preeminent responsibility and duty to govern and make decisions based on what they believe to be in the best interest of the City of North Mankato.

B. Expectations

The expectation and obligations of city council members serving in committee assignments are identical to those of other city council members, as delineated in the Governance Principles, Role of the Board and Role of an individual City Council member, with the sole variation being identified in Section IV of this Governance Handbook.

City council members designated for committee assignments to affiliate organizations are expected to be a two-way communication conduit between the city and those organizations.

VI. COMMUNICATION

The need for regular communication between the city administrator and council is essential to maintain open communication. The council establishes policy and programs, and the city administrator executes council actions. The city administrator keeps the council informed and is sensitive to council issues. Similarly, council members need to keep the city administrator apprised of constituent concerns and future issues.

The city administrator provides information between the council and city staff. The city administrator is responsible for communicating the city's position about policy matters to outside agencies on the council's behalf.

The city administrator ensures council members receive copies of correspondence that will assist them in policy-making, provides other documents to the council on a regular basis, such as status reports, executive summaries and other information vital to the council member's positions.

Holds workshops and study sessions to provide a detailed presentation of beneficial information.

Schedules council/staff retreats to focus on topics and enhance information exchange.

Encourages presiding members to meet with the city administrator prior to the council meeting to review agenda items.

Has an open-door policy so individual council members can meet with the city administrator on an impromptu and one-on-one basis.



VII. CITY DEPARTMENTS

A. City Departments

The City of North Mankato is a nonpartisan local government. Professional staff formulates recommendations in compliance with council policy and not influenced by political factors for the good of the organization. The city administrator is responsible for the day to day management of the city. The city administrator supervises the organization through department directors. There are nine city departments:

B. Library

The North Mankato Taylor Library provides numerous programming opportunities and community outreach services. In addition to a wonderful collection of physical and electronic materials, the library conducts children, young adult, and adult programming, book clubs, and hosts numerous presentations. A community meeting space is available to the public at the library.

C. Finance/Utility Billing

Finance staff is responsible for administering all financial accounting and reporting functions for the city. Finance staff also compiles and produces North Mankato's fiscal budget and city financial statements. The department maintains debt and treasury management, internal audits, budget control, purchasing, accounting activities, payroll, utility billing, risk management, and other general administrative tasks.

D. Police

The North Mankato Police Department maintains 24/7 patrol of the community, responds to calls for service, conducts and clears investigations, provides security for community events, recruits reserve officers, provides traffic control, coordinates the city's emergency management (natural disasters, missing person, river rescue, terroristic, hazardous material), conducts public education, maintains the civil defense system (tornado sirens), participates in numerous regional emergency management teams, tactical response teams, and the regional drug task force. The staff works closely with other city departments, residents, businesses, and other governments to reduce crime, provide a sense of safety and security and improve the quality of life for those who visit, live and work in the City of North Mankato and the region.

E. Fire

North Mankato's Fire Department is made up of volunteers who respond to fires, general alarms, and vehicle crashes. Ambulance service is provided by Gold Cross. The department has a chief and officers elected by the members who meet the qualifications of the positions and conducts numerous training and community support functions.

F. City Clerk

The Clerk's office is responsible for recording and preparing council minutes, packets and agendas, recording the Port Authority's minutes, packets, and agendas, oversees the city's

record retention, provides the human service function of the city, oversees the contract for information technology services, serves as the public information officer, issues public service announcement, produces the bi-annual city newsletter, issues various licenses, conducts local elections, staffs the HRA and KTV boards, and maintains the City Code.

G. Community Development

The Community Development Department issues building permits, conducts building inspections, manages the rental licensing program, manages the CDBG allocations, staffs the Planning & Zoning Commission, conducts plan reviews, inspects construction projects, enforces numerous city codes, serves as the staff representative to the Metropolitan Planning Organization, administers the wetland bank provisions, oversees the traffic and safety committee, and produces numerous planning documents. The department is responsible for planning and managing North Mankato's physical growth and expansion with an emphasis on orderly growth for land use and development, downtown development and neighborhood preservation.

H. Public Works

Public works manage many vital functions, to ensure North Mankato has a clean, healthy, safe and enjoyable environment. Public works staff ensure clean drinking water is provided to citizens, wastewater is effectively collected and transported to the Mankato Wastewater Treatment plant, oversees garbage and recycling collection, provides well-designed and maintained streets, walkways, storm drains, parks, and public landscaping. In addition, other services including spring clean-up, fall clean-up, and leaf pick-up. The public works department sweeps streets, patches street, seals streets, oversees building maintenance, hangs flags and banners, manages the brush pile, televises/jets sewers, hauls grass clippings, repairs concrete curbs, conducts manhole inspections, repairs manholes, paints crosswalks, repairs sewer/water main breaks, repairs/installs signs, conducts weather event cleanups, flushes fire hydrants, inspects & repairs fire hydrants, exercises valves, conducts water samples, maintains lift stations, Performs utility locates, plows snow, and provides flood controls.

I. Caswell Sports

Caswell Park has operated for over thirty years as one of the nations' premier softball complexes. The park serves local needs and attracts local, state, and national tournaments. In addition to softball, in 2013 Caswell North Soccer Complex was completed and serves local and state tournaments. The park is the city's primary tourist attraction.

J. Port Authority

The Port Authority was established by an act of the Minnesota Legislature and acts as the city's economic development arm. Responsible for acquiring and developing industrial property in the North Port Industrial Park, the Port Authority also issues low-interest loans to businesses, serves as an overall support to the community's businesses, and considers requests for business incentives. Each member of the city council is appointed to the Port Authority Commission yearly.

VIII. SUPPORT, TECHNOLOGY, AND LEGAL COUNSEL

A. Staff Support

Staff support is done in response to requests from the city council as a whole. Requests for information, service-related needs, or policy positions should be considered as an item of the city council meeting agenda. Staff will complete work within a council established timeline if directed by council action.

B. Mailboxes

council members receive conference materials at meetings and in their mailboxes at the City Hall.

C. Technology

To enhance council member's service to the community and their ability to communicate with staff and the public, the city provides meeting facilities and office equipment for city business. For members who do not have or do not wish to use personally-owned computers, cell phones, or iPads for city business, the city provides technology equipment with necessary software, the internet, and email capabilities.

D. Legal Counsel

Legal counsel for the city is the city attorney. The city attorney is the legal advisor to the council, its committees, commissions and boards, the city administrator and all city officers and employees on any legal question involving an official duty or any legal matter pertaining to city affairs. General city attorney legal responsibilities:

- The city attorney provides legal assistance necessary for formulation and implementation of legislative policies and projects.
- Represents the city's interest, as determined by the city council, in litigation, administrative hearings, negotiations and similar proceedings.
- Prepares or approves ordinances, resolutions, contracts and other legal documents to best reflect and implement the purposes and intentions of the city council.
- Keeps city council and staff apprised of court rulings and legislation affecting the legal interest of the city. The city attorney represents the city council as a whole and not individually.

IX. MEDIA RELATIONS

A. Media Inquiries

Council members are encouraged to refer all media inquiries to the city administrator prior to council discussion and vote on an item. After a vote has been taken, individual council members may comment on their decision. It's understood that individual council member decisions may not be reflective of the council's majority vote.

Following these guidelines is important to the democratic process because it helps avoid creating the public perception that a vote or decision has been made on a topic. That perception may discourage the public from engaging in the democratic process.

The city administrator communicates on the city's behalf in interviews, publications, news releases, on social media sites and related communications. The city administrator is in the best position to provide a response because many issues involve multiple departments or work may already be in progress. On occasion, the department director will handle interviews and communications on behalf of the city administrator.

B. Further media guidelines

Upcoming agenda items, issues or discussion topics: Wait to provide information until the topic is voted on, communicating that a decision has not been made which allows the public process to work by keeping the issue open for citizen input. If a council member discusses the issue with the media before a decision is made, there is potential that the public may be confused about the council's direction. This may create a public perception that a vote or decision has been made on a topic and discourage the public from engaging in the democratic process or other citizen engagement sessions.

Routine or public information: Provide media with the information and notify the city administrator of the request.

Other information: (City personnel, potential litigation, controversial issues, opinion on a city matter, or if unsure of the type of question) Work with the city administrator on these topics. The city administrator typically works with staff on these issues and can present the discussion scope or topic.

X. CODE OF CONDUCT

The mayor and city council members are dedicated to promoting values and integrity of local government and democracy and committed to governing efficiently and effectively. After taking the oath of office as a city council member, they agree to conduct themselves in accordance with the following code of conduct:

- The professional and personal conduct of council members must be above reproach and avoid the appearance of impropriety. Members should refrain from abusive conduct, personal charges or verbal attacks upon the character or motives of other members of the council, boards, commission, staff or the public intended to disrupt and not further the city's business.
- Council members maintain the confidentiality of information concerning property, personnel or legal affairs of the city. They shall neither disclose confidential information, without proper legal authorization nor use such information to advance their personal, financial or other private interests
- A council member does not use the official position to secure special privileges or exemptions for themselves or others.
- Each member supports the maintenance of a positive and constructive workplace environment for city staff, private citizens and businesses dealing with the city. Council members will recognize their roles, as delineated in the City Charter, City Code, and state statutes and individual dealings with city staff.
- No member shall, except as specifically permitted by Minnesota Statutes, accept or receive any gift of substance, whether in the form of money, services, loan, travel, entertainment, hospitality, promise or any other form under circumstances in which it could be reasonably expected to influence the member in the performance of the members' official duties or intended as a reward for the members' official actions.
- Members of the council will not testify in their capacity as a council member, before any other board, commission, administrative officer or agency of the federal government, the state of Minnesota or any county or other municipal corporation, including cities, except as provided.

Exceptions to policy:

- A council member may testify if they are testifying in such capacity under a lawfully issued subpoena.
- In the event, the council has designated the member or members to act as a spokesperson for the council as a whole to explain the majority vote or council's position.
- Council members serve as a whole when representing the official policies and positions of the city council. If speaking as an individual citizen, it's important to share that is the perspective being presented and not on behalf of the city or council. In addition, council members refrain from testifying orally or in writing as to any quasi-judicial matter being heard or having the possibility of being heard by the council.

XI. ETHICAL LEADERSHIP

A. Ethical Leadership

Ethical leadership is vital to the functioning of the city and to maintain the public's trust and confidence in the city and democratic process.

B. Key traits of ethical leaders

Recognize that ethical questions may be complex. As a result, they are willing to seek and accept the advice of knowledgeable officials such as the city administrator, city attorney or city staff.

Understand that ethical conflicts are inevitable and should be dealt with forthrightly. Elected officials are human and citizens of their community. On occasion, it is expected that they will have needs or roles in their private lives that conflict with public office obligation. Ethical officials are open about potential conflicts of interest and follow applicable rules for disclosing and dealing with the conflict (such as refraining from voting on a particular issue) to avoid even the appearance of impropriety.

Driven by fairness. The most ethical council members recognize that many city decisions will have an adverse, as well as positive outcomes and they, therefore, strive to make the best decision as defined by its ultimate fairness to all concerned. This often means making impartial decisions on the merits of the issue alone, while disregarding personal allegiances. It can also mean taking into account interest of citizens who are not present or who have not otherwise commented, but who are nonetheless affected by a decision. Ethical officials try to make decisions in the best interest of all in the community, not just those who show up at a meeting or protest the loudest.

Know the importance of conscientious and ethical government as a value in itself. Ethical council members do not use their office or authority for revenge, prestige, or personal gain. Ethical council members recognize that government is a human institution. As a result, the human motivations of those in government will determine if the government itself is effective or ineffective, good or bad, ethical or unethical. Ethical council members care enough to make a positive difference and then act accordingly.

XII. SOURCES OF CITY AUTHORITY

The U.S. Constitution does not mention cities. However, cities are influenced by the federal government indirectly through state governments and directly through participation in the federal funding of programs. Minnesota State Constitution authorizes the Minnesota legislature to provide for the “creation, organization, administration, consolidation, division and dissolution of local government units and their functions, for the change of boundaries thereof.” The legislature provides general formation of cities, and additional city powers may be broadened or restricted by state statute. The legislature does provide cities some discretion over policy areas as long as consistent with state statutes.

By the organizing powers afforded to it by the state of Minnesota, North Mankato is incorporated in what is referred to as a “Statutory City-Optional Plan A” found in Chapter 412 of the Minnesota Statutes as well as other statutes that apply to municipal governing. Although all statutory cities have the same basic powers, the City Code allows them to select one of several forms of organization. In addition to the Statutory Codes organizing the city, the city council is responsible for adopting and enforcing provisions of the local Code of Ordinances.

XIII. CITY COUNCIL COMPENSATION, TRAINING, AND TRAVEL

A. Compensation

Council salaries are set by ordinance (must be adopted at least six months before the election). Salary increases are effective the first meeting in January after the November election. City council members are paid as regular employees and can contact the finance director regarding the necessary payroll documents needed prior to receiving compensation.

B. Travel Budget

Each council member may spend \$3,000 annually for both training and travel. These funds can be used for training opportunities from organizations such as the League of Minnesota Cities, the National League of Cities, or the Coalitions of Greater Minnesota Cities.

C. Travel

Travel involving an overnight stay – Provide prior notice to the city administrator before traveling on overnight business explaining the trip’s purpose, travel dates and other details.

Travel expenses – A per diem will be issued to city council members for meals and incidentals following notice of an upcoming travel or training according to rates set in in the city’s travel policy.

Lodging expenses – Lodging reservations can be made on behalf of the city council member by staff, or council members may request reimbursement based on a single-room rate per person. Government discounts should be used wherever possible.

Transportation – Transportation costs are reimbursed at the most reasonable means of transport. For example, if an elected or appointed official chooses to fly first class, the city



reimburses the coach rate, and the official pays the difference. If lower-cost alternatives to frequent flyer miles are available, it's recommended to use those.

Meal costs for official functions (political or professional organizations) are paid at full actual cost (even if the cost exceeds rates above).

There is no reimbursement for alcoholic beverages.

Expenses are not reimbursed for a spouse, guest, those not employed by the city, or other persons not authorized to receive reimbursement under this policy or state regulations.

Reimbursement may be claimed by one person for several employees or officials eating together. Please list all names on the reimbursement claim.

To request approval for rental cars, contact the city administrator.

Personal vehicles may be used for city business. Mileage for business use is reimbursed at the Internal Revenue Services' allowable mileage rate.

XIV. COUNCIL MEETINGS

A. Regular meetings

The council decides public meeting times and places. Currently, the council meets the first and third Monday of the month at 7:00 p.m. If a legal holiday occurs on one of these Mondays, the council meetings will be held the next business day. All meetings are held in compliance with Minnesota's open meeting law. All regular and special meetings dates and times are posted at the front entrance of City Hall and online.

All regular and special council meetings are videotaped and broadcast on public access television and archived online.

The council may decide its rules and order of business for its meetings as outlined in the City Code.

B. Special Meetings

Special meetings are any meetings other than a regular meeting and can be scheduled by the mayor or two council members. These meetings could be scheduled to address additional business or other pending items the council was unable to discuss at a regular meeting or needs to address before the next regularly scheduled meeting.

Any special meeting must conform to Minnesota's open meeting law. Council members are notified of special meetings on the day prior to the meeting. Written notices are posted at least three days before a special meeting. Those who have filed a written request for notice for special meetings are also notified.

C. Closed meetings

The North Mankato city council may meet in a closed meeting:

- To consider strategies for labor negotiations.
- To evaluate the performance of an individual the council has authority over (i.e. City administrator).
- Attorney-client privilege.
- Purchase or sale of property.
- Security briefings.

The city council must follow Minnesota's open meeting law procedures to hold a closed meeting. Before a meeting can be closed, the council must state on the record specific grounds for permitting the meeting closed and describe the subject to be discussed. All closed meetings (except those closed as permitted by the attorney-client privilege) must be electronically recorded at the public body's expense. Unless otherwise provided by law, recordings must be preserved for a least three years after the meeting date.

If a closed meeting is to evaluate an individual's performance, this individual's name must be announced before closing the meeting. If this individual requests an open meeting, advance notice must be provided so he/she can make an informed decision about opening the meeting.

D. Work Sessions

Work sessions provide an opportunity for council members to discuss items that may be a future agenda item or for informational purposes. Several work sessions are held about the city's budget prior to its finalization and levy at the end of the year. Other work sessions are held as needed. Work sessions are held in a less formal atmosphere, using a consensus-building approach. No formal action can be taken.

E. Emergency Meetings

The city council has the statutory authority to call emergency meetings, which require immediate council consideration. For example, a meeting may be called if there is a state of emergency, such as a natural disaster, to declare a local emergency. The media and public are notified of emergency meetings.



XV. OPEN MEETING LAW AND DATA PRACTICES

A. Open meeting law

With only a few exceptions, city council meetings, including committees, subcommittees, board, and commission meetings are open to the public. The open meeting law ensures the public are fully informed about decisions made by elected officials and also ensures the public's right to participate in city council actions.

Whenever the council meets the following information should be available to the public:

- Date, time and location

The public should be able to:

- Watch the meeting and be present
- See how council members vote on issues
- Receive printed information the council has at the meeting
- Have a summary of the council minutes

Any scheduled gathering of the city council must give proper notice and be open to the public. Chance meetings and social gatherings are excluded; however, council members cannot discuss or receive information on official business in private social settings.

There are few exceptions to the open meeting law and specific requirements regarding notice and subject of closed meetings. Strict adherence to these requirements is necessary to avoid violating the statute. The city attorney should be consulted when the council is considering conducting a closed meeting.

Council members who intentionally violate provisions of the open meeting law are subject to personal liability up to \$300 in civil penalties per single occurrence. If a council member has three or more intentional violations, the result is forfeiture of the right to serve on the city council.

B. Minnesota data practices act

Minnesota's data practices act gives the public access to city records and data to balance the public's right to know with respect for individual's privacy. The act presumes that government data are public and accessible for inspection and copying unless a federal law, state statute, or temporary classification of data notes otherwise. Since there are significant penalties for willfully releasing private and confidential data council members should consult the city administrator when there are questions about what information is public and private.

In addition, a city that violates any provision of the data practices act is liable for any damage as a result of the violation.

XVI. RULES TO GOVERN BY

A. Land use laws

The Municipal Planning Act grants cities the authority to regulate land use and provides the framework and road map all cities must follow. Cities regulate land use through three basic tools:

1. Comprehensive plan
2. Zoning ordinance (including the zoning map)
3. Subdivision ordinance

Although cities are not required to adopt all three tools when engaged in municipal planning, each tool serves a separate and essential purpose. These tools harmonize and interact in important ways to protect and promote sound city development.

First, the comprehensive plan helps the city look to the future and guides current development in administering its zoning ordinance and subdivision ordinance. The subdivision ordinance regulates land division into smaller lots and the creation of blocks and neighborhoods with safe streets, appropriate environmental features, and character. Finally, the zoning ordinance regulates the use and density of city zones such as commercial, residential and industrial purposes, both segregating and combining uses where appropriate to prevent congestion, environmental contamination, and other negative human health hazards.

A **zoning map** divides the community into different land uses to assist the city in planning and permitting future growth. There are 15 different categories for zoning, and each has specific standards. Two ways to vary from zoning standards include a “variance” or a conditional use permit.

A **variance** allows the individual property owner to “vary” from permitted use of the land or required rules for the property.

Conditional use permits are granted based on certain standards being maintained or established at the time issued. The permit is granted with a set of conditions that must be followed, or the permit can be revoked.

Due process: People who own land in areas that can be impacted will be informed and also given an opportunity to provide input before any plan/work moves forward.

B. Public Improvements

Two types of improvements are petitioned and city initiated. A petitioned project occurs when a citizen who owns 35 percent or more of the affected property signs a petition asking the city to make improvements. A city-initiated project is an improvement identified in the community investment plan. A city-initiated project requires a 4/5 vote of the council, whereas a petitioned project only requires a simple majority.

C. Process for improvements

- The city notifies all affected property owners.
- A meeting is held prior to the first formal council meeting to provide information to the property owners.
- The first council hearing is the project feasibility hearing where citizens present their opinions about the project.
- The second council hearing is the assessment hearing that establishes the property owners cost for the project.
- If the cost of the completed project is less than the assessment, property owners are notified, and the correct amount is assessed. No assessment is made until the project is completed. This is in accordance with Minnesota Statutes, Chapter 429 (<https://www.revisor.leg.state.mn.us/statutes/?id=429>), which explains the complete process in detail.

D. Actions requiring ordinances

An ordinance can pertain only to one subject and can be introduced by any council member at a special or regular council meeting. The council can reject, adopt or amend the ordinance. Any amendment that changes an ordinance's substance requires the process to be repeated. Most ordinances (unless otherwise stated differently) become effective 30 days after adopted or published.

E. Licenses and permits

The city has the authority to license and require permits for activities within its jurisdiction. Licensing and permitting regulates activities and provides oversight for inspection in the public interest. The city exercises its police power to protect and promote the public's welfare and safety through the licensing process. More information about licenses and the licensing process can be found in Title XI of North Mankato's City Code.

XVII. RESOURCES

League of Minnesota Cities (LMC)

www.lmnc.org

The League of Minnesota Cities provides information, education, and training to elected officials and staff. LMC has an annual conference that provides an opportunity to connect with other member cities to learn how they have handled opportunities and issues. Throughout the year, the LMC provides legislative updates on the upcoming session and the implication of any new legislation.

League of Minnesota Cities Handbook for Minnesota Cities

<http://lmc.org/page/1/handbook-for-mn-cities.jsp>

The League of Minnesota Cities (LMC) assists cities by lobbying, providing training and serving as a resource for cities. The LMC handbook provides information about council member roles and responsibilities, laws regulating council action and special council requirements.

Minnesota state law

<https://www.revisor.mn.gov/pubs/>

Minnesota state law establishes many rules and regulations for Minnesota cities.

National League of Cities (NLC)

www.nlc.org

The National League of Cities advocates and promotes cities and towns, provides programs and services, keeps leaders informed of critical issues, strengthens leadership skills by offering numerous training and education programs, recognizes municipal achievements, partners with state leagues and provides opportunities for involvement and networking.

Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities (CGMC)

www.greatermncities.org

The Coalition of Greater Minnesota Cities is geared toward greater Minnesota issues and provides an opportunity for council members to network with other cities in outstate Minnesota.