

ASHLAND CITY COUNCIL

REGULAR MEETING MINUTES

January 5, 2026

A regular meeting of the Ashland City Council was held at the Ashland City Hall Council Chambers on the 5th day of January, 2026 at 6:00 p.m.

Present: Mayor James Anderson
 City Council President Chuck Niemeyer
 City Council Member Michelle Libal
 City Council Member Jerry Lofberg
 City Council Member Jim Pinkman
 City Administrator Jessica Quady
 City Attorney Mark Fahleson
 City Clerk Kristina Stoki

Others: Caleb Fjone, Bill Krejci

Notice of the meeting was advertised in the Ashland Gazette on January 2nd, 2026. The Mayor and all Council Members received advance notice of the meeting and a copy of the agenda as shown by the Acknowledgment of Receipt of Notice. All proceedings shown hereafter were taken while the convened meeting was open to the public.

Mayor Anderson called the meeting to order at 6:00 p.m. The Pledge of Allegiance was recited. Roll Call was taken, and a quorum was declared. Anderson noted the Open Meetings Act located on the south wall of the room.

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Pinkman to adopt the regular agenda.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Public comment opportunity given. No comments made.

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Pinkman to approve the third and final reading of Ordinance 1255 – AN ORDINANCE OF THE CITY OF ASHLAND, NEBRASKA TO EXTEND THE BOUNDARIES OF THE CITY AND INCLUDE WITHIN THE CORPORATE LIMITS OF, AND TO ANNEX INTO THE CITY OF ASHLAND, NEBRASKA A TRACT OF LAND THAT IS CONTIGUOUS AND ADJACENT TO THE CURRENT MUNICIPAL LIMITS AS MORE FULLY DESCRIBED HEREIN; DIRECTING THE SAME TO BE RECORDED BY THE SAUNDERS COUNTY REGISTER OF DEEDS; TO PROVIDE FOR THE REPEAL OF CONFLICTING ORDINANCES OR SECTIONS; TO PROVIDE FOR THE EFFECTIVE DATE THEREOF; AND ORDER THE PUBLICATION OF THE ORDINANCE IN PAMPHLET FORM.

City Attorney Fahleson read the title of Ordinance 1255 in full.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Libal to approve recommendation to the Nebraska Liquor Control Commission regarding a Special Designated Liquor License for the Nebraska Hop Growers Association at Ashland Brewing Company on March 21, 2026 from 12 p.m. to 4 p.m.

City Clerk Stoki stated this has been approved by Police Chief Brady.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

A discussion about Conex box regulations was held. Zoning Administrator Bill Krejci stated presently Conex boxes are allowed on commercial properties with a conditional use permit, but not on residential properties. Krejci showed pictures of many of the Conex boxes located around the City. This included Conex boxes on residential properties not permitted at all and Conex boxes on Commercial properties that have not obtained a permit. Krejci stated Conex boxes are allowed on residential properties during construction but then must be removed. Krejci stated the County [Saunders] does not have any regulations on Conex boxes so anything outside of city limits is not regulated. Krejci stated the City started regulating these in 2016 and none of the sites have had Conex boxes pre-existing that year. Krejci stated other communities have a variety of regulations, some similar to us and some different. Council President Niemeyer stated there needs to be a time limit on the use of Conex boxes and if there is going to be a storage need past that point, the property owner needs to look at putting a conventional building up. Niemeyer stated we are not collecting any tax revenue from the Conex boxes. Niemeyer stated the City has storage facilities [private business] in town that are rentable. Krejci stated stacking of containers is not allowed. City Attorney Fahleson and the Council stated there is a problem with commercial properties who have Conex boxes but have not requested the proper permit, and with residential properties who are not supposed to have them at all. Fahleson suggested going forward a maximum time period which could be implemented, and the City could legally push people to remove them but there may be reason why the City would not want to do this. Niemeyer asked if conforming requirements could be added. Fahleson stated yes that could be done. Krejci stated the permits get renewed each year and the fee is \$300 except the fee for the church is waived. Mayor Anderson stated Conex boxes should not be allowed in residential. Krejci stated they are not and the Council stated these have to go. Council Member Libal stated the enforcement needs to be all or nothing and the City cannot display any favoritism. Lofberg stated he will discuss this item with the Legion further. Council Member Pinkman requested a list be compiled of the ordinances in surrounding communities on this topic. Krejci stated he will put information together on what other communities have, it will be reviewed by the Planning Commission, and then the Planning Commission will give their recommendation. Krejci stated the Council can then act on that recommendation or change it. It was reiterated by the Mayor and Krejci that Conex boxes are not allowed on residential properties per the current regulations. The process of enforcing the ordinance for residential properties was discussed by all. Fahleson stated technically no notice is

needed but the City could send out a letter stating the Conex box needs to be removed in a certain timeframe. Krejci stated he has sent out a couple of notices. Krejci stated he will put this item on the Planning Commission agenda for the end of February.

A discussion about the Railroad Underpass project was held. Quady summarized the item up to this point by stating the City applied for congressional funding in 2024 and were approved. Quady stated the application time period was very short. Caleb Fjone stated only 15 days. Quady stated the City did their best given the short time period and at that time had requested one million two hundred ten thousand dollars, and the City's match would be a little over four hundred thousand dollars, and the City was awarded this. Quady stated Federal Highway administered this and gave all of the funds to NDOT to administer, and the City has been working with NDOT on it. Quady stated NDOT has estimated the amount needed for the project will likely be three to four times the originally estimated amount. Quady stated NDOT has given the City a deadline to decide if they want to move forward with this project and commit those kinds of funds, as the deadline to obligate the funds is also tight for a project of this size, working with the railroad. Quady stated she asked Julie Ogden, the City Engineer with JEO, if the City decided not to move forward with the project what some alternatives were. Quady stated Ogden said they could do something parallel to the overpass, or over the tracks. Quady stated Ogden also had an idea to make the portion of Silver Street where the underpass is one-way and use one of the driving lanes for pedestrian traffic, or it is left two-way but control with a traffic light. Quady stated these ideas are much cheaper than boring a new underpass. Quady stated she isn't sure if Federal Highway will let the City use the funds for these other ideas but NDOT has a meeting with them and will ask. Quady stated NDOT will check to see if the City can use this initial funding for engineering and apply for more congressional funds for construction. Quady asked if none of those things pan out, if this is something the Council wants to move forward with knowing the City will have to come up with a couple million dollars for this versus a few hundred thousand. Niemeyer stated this project still does not solve the problem of creating more room for the initial approach to the tunnel. The alternative options mentioned were discussed further by all. Quady stated this project is going to cost so much more than initially thought partly because of working with the railroad. Quady stated engineering is the City's cost alone. Quady stated if the City keeps going with engineering and the railroad says no, the City could be out a few hundred thousand dollars and there are no guarantees. Quady stated there is an NDOT contact that deals primarily with the railroad who said it could go either way. Quady stated NDOT is telling the City trains will have to stop and the City will have to pay for that. Fahleson asked if the City has spoken to anyone at the Federal Delegation, because the railroad does listen to this entity. Quady stated initially yes but not since then as the City is waiting to see what Federal Highway says about the current questions and then the City will reach back out to the Federal Delegation.

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Pinkman to approve the consent agenda which included approval of the December 18th & 29th City Council meeting minutes, and approval of the pay requests from JEO Consulting Group Inc. for Ashland General Engineering \$1,851.25; for Ashland General Engineering \$601.25; for Ashland Water Supply Improvements in the amount of \$12,131.25; for

Ashland WWTF Screen Improvements in the amount of \$5,500.00; for Ashland Elm & Dale Street Improvement in the amount of \$9,409.00; for Ashland Road Program in the amount of \$3,000; for Ashland 2025 Rate Study in the amount of \$4,500.00; and for Ashland WWTF PER in the amount of \$1988.75.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Pinkman to approve the second half of the December 2025 Claims.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried

Mayor Anderson noted the new drop box for utility bills now available for people to use.

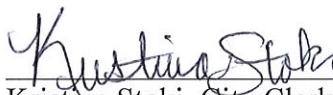
Caleb Fjone notified the Council of his resignation effective 1/31/2026 and expressed his gratitude to everyone. Fjone stated in his 5 here years a lot of good work has happened. Fjone stated he is going to be working for Beatrice and their economic and community development organization. Fjone stated the amount of people who have stepped up to do things is wonderful and the City is in a really good spot. Libal stated he has done a really great job and has brought the City a lot of grant funding. Fjone stated they are working on finding a good replacement.

Motion by Niemeyer, second by Pinkman to adjourn at 7:02 p.m.

Roll Call: Ayes: All Motion Carried



James Anderson
James Anderson, Mayor



Kristina Stoki
Kristina Stoki, City Clerk



I, the above signed City Clerk of Ashland, Saunders County, Nebraska hereby certify that the foregoing is a true and accurate copy of the proceedings had and done by the Council on January 5, 2026 that all of the subjects included in the foregoing proceedings were contained in the agenda for the meeting, kept continually current and readily available for public inspection at the office of the City Clerk; that such subjects were contained in said agenda for at least twenty four hours prior to said meeting; that said minutes from which the foregoing proceedings have been extracted were in written form and available for public inspection within ten business days or prior to the next convened meeting of said body.