

**City of Rock Creek
City Council Meeting
Approved Minutes
April 2, 2026**

Mayor Dick Johnson, called the City Council meeting to order at 6:00 PM.

Members present:

Mayor Dick Johnson, Council Members: Nancy Rys, Don Ramberg, Dan Saumer

Members Absent:

Sam Christenson

Others present:

Public Works: Curt Kubesh, Deputy Clerk Ashley Rauschnot, City Attorney Amanda Johnson, Don Burger, Chelsy Lindman, Craig Saari, Rydberg and Sons Representatives, Amy Thomspson, Kevin McCall, Bjorkland Companies Representative

Pledge of Allegiance

Consent Agenda

Dan Saumer motioned, seconded by Don Ramberg to approve the minutes and disbursements as follows:

- *March 5, 2026 City Council Meeting Minutes*
- *March 12, 2026 Work Session Special City Council Meeting Minutes*
- *March 19, 2026 Work Session Special City Council Meeting Minutes*
- *March 26, 2026 Work Session Special City Council Meeting Minutes*
- *March Disbursements*

Motion carried unanimously.

Social Media Policy

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dan Saumer to adopt Section 1004.08: Social Media Policy. Motion carried unanimously.

Interim City Administrator

There was concern regarding the bidding process for gravel bids at the February 2026 City Council meeting. Subsequently, the City received a letter raising concerns that Nancy Rys should not be voting on items as a City Council member while also serving as the Interim City Administrator. This letter was forwarded to the City Attorney for review.

The City Attorney was surprised to learn that Nancy Rys had been appointed as Interim City Administrator. Additional information was obtained regarding Sandra Pangerl's resignation in February 2026 and the City Attorney's recommendation. At that time, City Council members were under the impression that the City Attorney had recommended appointing Nancy Rys as Interim City Administrator. Council members were also not provided with an agenda for the February 12, 2026 Emergency Council Meeting.

It was later determined that the City Attorney had, in fact, provided Sandra Pangerl and

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Mayor Dick Johnson with a detailed agenda recommending the appointment of Ashley Rauschnot as Interim City Administrator, along with a draft resolution reflecting that recommendation.

Dan Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dan Saumer to appoint Ashley Rauschnot as the Interim City Administrator with Mayor Dick Johnson and Councilmember Nancy Rys as the Council Committee assigned to oversee the position. Motion carried unanimously.

Councilmembers will discuss a retroactive pay increase for Ashley Rauschnot in her role as Interim City Administrator at the April 16, 2026 Special City Council Meeting.

The City acknowledges that here could be a perception of a conflict of interest for a sitting Councilmember to also hold the Interim City Administrator position. During the March 2026 City Council Meeting, two motions were voted on by Councilmember Rys while she was also acting as the Interim City Administrator. Importantly, both motions were passed unanimously by the Council. The Council notes that, based on the unanimous approval of all members present, the outcome of the motions would not have been affected had Councilmember Rys abstained from voting. This statement is entered into the record for the purposes of clarification and to affirm the validity of the Council's actions taken at the meeting.

Nancy Rys motioned, seconded by Don Ramberg, to allow Ashley Rauschnot, as Interim City Administrator, to work up to 40 hours per week, with the added flexibility to work from home on an as-needed basis outside of regular office hours. The motion carried unanimously.

Gravel Bid Review

There was extensive discussion regarding the gravel bid procedure. The City Attorney clarified the distinction between the Public Bidding Process, as outlined in Minn. Stat. 471.345, subd. 3, and the solicitation of quotes under Minn. Stat. 471.345, subd. 5. The Public Bidding Process must be followed if a project is anticipated to exceed \$175,000. For projects between \$25,000 and \$175,000, the City is required to obtain at least two quotes, which do not need to be advertised, sealed, or opened at a meeting.

Given this information, and the fact that the City did not accept the lowest bid at the February 2026 City Council Meeting for gravel hauling, the Council discussed rescinding the prior bid award and reissuing the project through the quotation process.

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dan Saumer, to rescind the prior gravel hauling bid award, reject all submitted bids, and direct staff to solicit at least two quotes for the project pursuant to Minn. Stat. 471.345, subd. 5, with consideration of quotes at the April 16, 2026 Special City Council Meeting. Motion carried unanimously.

Schedule Audit

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Nancy Rys reported that she spoke with an accountant at Curry, Meyers, and Associates, who indicated that the type of audit the City is requesting would not be provided through a typical accountant audit, which generally focuses on amounts of \$10,000 or more. Councilmembers asked the City Attorney for recommendations on an auditor who could ensure the City's books are "a clean slate" for the incoming City Administrator.

The City Attorney stated that a forensic audit is the type of review the City is seeking and indicated she will follow up with Ashley Rauschnot within the next week regarding additional information.

Combining City Administrator/Deputy Clerk

The City Attorney clarified several points regarding the combination of the two roles. She noted that while it is legal to hold both positions, certain rules must be followed. She also stated that, technically, the term "City Administrator" is not legally recognized. The officially recognized titles are typically City Clerk, Deputy Clerk, and Treasurer. The title "City Administrator" is generally used when the roles of Clerk and Treasurer are combined. Further discussion on this matter will take place at the next City Council Work Session meeting scheduled for next Thursday.

Swanson Haskamp Consulting Proposal

Jennifer Haskamp submitted a consulting proposal to the City to provide services on an as-needed basis, including assistance with the ordinance book and applications received by the office. Don Ramberg expressed opposition to engaging Swanson Haskamp, stating his concern that the firm typically works with larger cities than Rock Creek.

The City Attorney noted that she has previously worked with Jennifer Haskamp and spoke highly of her qualifications. She further stated that there are limited firms offering this type of service and that Jennifer Haskamp currently works with the City of Grant, which, like Rock Creek, does not operate municipal sewer or water services.

Nancy Rys and Dan Saumer expressed interest in meeting with Jennifer Haskamp. The Council agreed to invite Swanson Haskamp to attend the June City Council meeting and to also invite Planning Commission members to be present.

Councilmembers asked that Ashley Rauschnot send Jennifer the City Comp Plan and Ordinance book before that meeting.

Department Reports

Planning Commission

Nancy Rys requested that the Planning Commission discuss the possibility of implementing a moratorium on data centers at their next meeting. There is a general consensus that data center development may begin expanding into more rural

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communities in the near future.

Public Works

Tree Quotes:

Curt Kubesh presented a quote previously received from Obi's at the March meeting for the removal of several trees within the City. At that time, the City Council requested that he obtain at least one additional quote.

Kubesh presented a second quote from Haavens. The quotes were as follows:

- Obi's: \$2,684.00
- Haavens: \$1,900.00

During discussion, Mike Besta stated that he had not been asked to submit a quote and indicated he had a sealed bid that was lower than the quotes presented. Curt Kubesh and Don Ramberg expressed concerns about accepting a quote from Besta due to prior work in which stump grinding was insufficient, causing interference with grading equipment.

The Council conducted a roll call vote on whether to accept Besta's quote. Nancy Rys, Dan Saumer, and Dick Johnson voted in favor, with Don Ramberg opposed. The sealed quote from Besta was then opened:

- Besta: \$1,200.00

Dan Saumer motioned, seconded by Dick Johnson, to accept Besta's quote of \$1,200.00, contingent upon confirmation that it includes removal of all required trees. Mike Besta confirmed that it does. Motion carried with Nancy Rys voting aye and Don Ramberg voting nay.

Part-Time Public Works Applications

Due to a full agenda, discussion was postponed. The City Attorney advised that the Public Works Department may proceed with interviewing applicants and present a single candidate as a recommendation to the City Council for consideration and potential hire.

Fire Substation Signs

Another quote was received from Craig Saari for the signs for the new Fire Substation. The quotes received were as follows:

Gateway Sign [Installation Not Included]

4 x 8 Sign

- \$525

Public Works Sign for Service Door

- \$35

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No Parking – Two Signs Included

- \$110

Colors by Craig [Installation Included]

4 x 8 Sign

- \$525 | Installation Included
- *Optional Upgrade for Thicker Material*
 - \$600 | Installation Included

Longer Sign

- \$700

Public Works Sign for Service Door

- \$75

No Parking – Two Signs Included

- \$100

Nancy Rys motioned, seconded by Dick Johnson, to accept the quote from Colors by Craig for a thicker 4x8 sign, two “No Parking” signs for the Fire Substation, and a Public Works sign for the service door on the new Public Works Building, totaling \$775, including installation. Motion carried unanimously.

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Substation Fire Truck Lettering

Rush City requested approval to place sponsor recognition lettering on the Fire Substation truck. The lettering will read:

“Sponsored By: Grandy Lions, Rock Creek Lions, and City of Rock Creek.”

Dan Saumer motioned, seconded by Don Ramberg, to approve the lettering.

Motion carried unanimously.

Bob Carlson says the lettering should be completed within a week of Council approval.

Timber Ridge Preventative Maintenance

Curt Kubesh presented three quotes for preventative maintenance at Timber Ridge:

- SealTech, Inc.: \$5,376.00
- Prefer Paving: \$7,700.00
- Premier: \$2,310.00

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dan Saumer, to accept the quote from SealTech, Inc.

Motion carried unanimously.

Grader Tire Quotes

Curt Kubesh presented three quotes for grader tires:

- Glen’s Tire: \$11,426.00
- Pomp’s Tire: \$8,407.20
- A-1 Tire: \$8,556.20

Nancy Rys motioned, seconded by Don Ramberg, to accept the quote from A-1 Tire. Motion carried unanimously.

Chloride Quotes

Curt Kubesh presented two quotes for road chloride application:

- Northern Salt: \$1.75
- Central MN Dust Control: \$1.35

Dan Saumer motioned, seconded by Nancy Rys, to accept the quote from Central MN Dust Control. Motion carried unanimously.

Safety Committee

City-Wide Clean-up Day

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dan Saumer to approve the date of April 18, 2026 for the City-Wide Clean-up Day at no cost to the residents, following flyer rules. Motion carried unanimously.

Office Updates

Thank You: The City received a thank you card from the Erling Olson family.

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Pay Rate Clarification: Nancy Rys requested that the City investigate the pay rate of the City Center Cleaner, as it appears he may be earning less than other part-time employees.

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dick Johnson to approve the increase of pay to the City Center Cleaner to match the rest of the part-time employees if necessary. Motion carried unanimously.

Low Impact Business Permits:

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Nancy Rys to approve Low Impact Business Permit LIB-26-003 for M&M Companies. Motion carried unanimously.

Dick Johnson motioned, seconded by Don Ramberg to approve Low Impact Business Permit LIB-26-004 for Jay Wenker Trucking Company. Motion carried unanimously.

Display Cabinet: The Rock Creek Lions Club requested permission to place an additional display cabinet in the City Center.

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dan Saumer, to approve the placement of an additional display cabinet in the City Center by the Rock Creek Lions Club. The motion carried unanimously.

Election Training/Office Hours: Deputy Clerk Rauschnot has upcoming election training on Tuesday, June 23, 2026, and Wednesday, August 5, 2026, which may impact office hours if coverage is unavailable. Nancy Rys indicated she may be able to cover the front desk on the June date but not in August. The Council will revisit this matter in one to two months. Nancy Rys also noted that Nancy Rys may be available to assist with coverage in the future, depending on her schedule.

Water Line Connection: Bob Carlson presented a quote from Carlson Heating & Sheetmetal, not to exceed \$850, for connecting a water line to the water tank in the Fire Substation.

Nancy Rys motioned, seconded by Don Ramberg to accept the quote for the water line hook-up. Motion carried unanimously.

Fire Substation Fire Truck Invoice: The City received an invoice from the City of Rush City detailing expenses related to the Fire Substation fire truck, totaling \$50,672.64. Dan Saumer noted that the City has received donations from the Grandy Lions for \$20,000 and the Rock Creek Lions for \$10,000 toward the fire truck, and that the City of Rock Creek has pledged \$20,000 toward the purchase.

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dan Saumer, to pay \$50,000 toward the fire truck invoice. The motion carried unanimously.

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National Weather Service Duluth Spotter Training: Bob Carlson wanted to make sure the public was aware of this free event to learn about: NWS Severe Weather Tools, Storm Spotting & Reporting, Weather Safety and Preparedness. Free: Open to Public Online and In-Person Classes.

SCAM Emails: Ashley Rauschnot reported that a resident received a fraudulent email, appearing to be from the Rock Creek Planning Commission, requesting payment of \$3,900 with wire instructions. Rauschnot advised the resident that the email was a scam and not from the City. Council members directed Rauschnot to post a warning on the City's Facebook page to alert the community.

Wildwood Support Invoice: Ashley Rauschnot presented the first invoice from Wildwood Support, the company hired to develop an employee handbook. The invoice totals \$120.00 and includes a detailed breakdown of time and services.

Operating Permit: Nature Shore Resort: The operating permit for Nature Shores Resort has been finalized by Amy Thompson, City Sewer Inspector, and reviewed by Don Ramberg. Ashley Rauschnot will contact Josh Froelich to schedule a time to sign the operating permit, along with the outstanding Conditional Use Permit. Amy Thompson, Josh Froelich, and Ashley Rauschnot will meet to review all requirements related to the operating permit.

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Nancy Rys, to establish an annual operating permit fee of \$50 per permit to be added to the fee schedule. The motion carried unanimously.

Don Ramberg motioned, seconded by Dan Saumer to adjourn at 8:24PM. Motion carried unanimously.

Ashley Rauschnot

Deputy Clerk