

The Ellsworth City Council met in regular session at 6:08 p.m. at City Hall on December 8, 2025, with Mayor Pro-Tem Funk presiding, and the following council members present: Phipps, Olson, Sogard arriving at 7pm, and Holden arriving at 6:20pm. Also in attendance were Brian Zimmerman, Ashley Platte, Barry Anksorus, Ottie Maxey, Carla Hasstedt with MIDAS, students from ISU College of Design Kenzi Carrigan, Natasha Moreno, Calysa McManus, Adam Shelley, Carly Lincoln, Lawren Neal, Cooper Gibsen, Tyrique, Brody Gordon, and their instructor Julie Robison.

AGENDA APPROVAL: Motion by Olson, seconded by Phipps to approve the agenda. Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried.

CONSENT AGENDA: Motion by Olson, seconded by Phipps to approve the following items listed on the consent agenda:

- a. Motion to approve November 25, 2025 council minutes.
- b. Motion to approve December 8, 2025 payment of claims.
- c. Motion to approve Itron meter reading annual subscription renewal.
- d. Motion to approve annual cemetery contributions, Greenwood \$625, and Homewood \$2750.

Roll call votes 3-0. Motion carried, and claims hereby made a portion of these minutes.

PUBLIC FORUM: None Present

ISU COLLEGE OF DESIGN – COMPREHENSIVE PLAN PRESENTATION: Students from ISU College of Design have been working on a 10-year land use and development plan for the City of Ellsworth during their fall semester. Students presented their recommendations based on survey work, community planning sessions, polling, and data-based research. The core priorities include: improving infrastructure, maintaining housing and cost-of-living affordability, strengthening community connections, increasing civic engagement, continuing to prioritize family-oriented living, supporting parks and recreation, encouraging sustainable growth, and focusing on safety and long-term livability. The printed and completed Comp Plan will be hosted on the city website after mid-January, and copies will remain in City Hall for reference. This Comp Plan can be used for context and visioning, including as a roadmap for decision-making and capital improvement planning.

MIDAS LMI SURVEY FOR CDBG GRANT APPLICATION: Carla Hasstedt with MIDAS was present to discuss with Council the roles and process for Council-led survey work in Ellsworth. Carla discussed the specific structure, number of randomly selected households, and questions that will be addressed in the survey. The goal will be to divide up the list of required survey households among the Council and have the survey work completed by the end of January.

LIBRARY: NONE PRESENT

FIRE/EMS: NONE PRESENT

ECA: Ashley Platte was present to ask the Council if the ECA could plant a live evergreen tree in the pocket park next to City Hall. The Council discussed the new Comp Plan, including a redesign of that space, and that everyone should review the renderings before deciding whether an evergreen would fit in the space. Ashley asked the Council if the ECA could host a Trivia Night event in the Community Center on February 20th with a weather-related back-up date of February 27th. This event would include hiring a licensed bar/wine vendor to serve at the Trivia Night. Motion by Olson and second by Holden to approve use of the Community Center, including a licensed and insured alcohol vendor, for a Trivia night on February 20th or 27th. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried. Ashley shared with the Council that the ECA decided at their last meeting to donate \$2000 to help cover the costs of the spring covered dugout project at the ballfield. The City is grateful for the continued support from the ECA for improvement projects. Ashley reminded the Council and the community that this coming Saturday at the fire station, there will be a Christmas celebration including the arrival of Santa, cookie decorating, a chili supper, and activities for youth from 4:30pm to 7pm.

EMPLOYEE CELL PHONE POLICY: Councilman Phipps discussed the need for employee cell phones for both public works employees in addition to the city clerk cell phone. Clerk Eckers will find out from Verizon what the cost would be for two additional lines and phones by the next Council meeting.

CITY COUNCIL EMAILS: Councilman Phipps discussed the desire to pursue email address for each council person and mayor. Clerk Eckers will find out if there is additional cost involved through Web Host for additional emails for discussion at the next Council meeting.

ONE TIME PAY INCREASE: Motion by Phipps and second by Olson to approve one time pay increases for city staff, including EJS officers as follows:

COUNCIL MINUTES/CLAIMS

Nick Vanlangen \$250

Heidi Eckers \$250

Lanz Reed \$250

Allen Watts \$50

Marvin Nelson \$50

CITY OF ELLSWORTH

Lee Knickerbocker \$250

Kalib Morton \$250

Roxann Boyce \$100

Terry Painton \$50

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Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried

PUBLIC WORKS: a. Supervisor Vanlangen updated Council on a repair done to the transformer pole at IAS with the help of Midland Power today. b. Water plant updates from Supervisor Vanlangen included continued troubleshooting of a flowmeter valve that caused alarms at the water plant. Supervisor Vanlangen also informed Council that the existing water tower will need to be cleaned this spring, and he will get quotes from the company that has done this for the City in the past.

EMPLOYMENT MATTERS: Council Member Olson moved that the City Council enter into closed session pursuant to Iowa Code § 21.5(1)(i) to evaluate personnel performance to prevent needless and irreparable injury to that individual's reputation and that individual has requested a closed session.

The motion was seconded by Council Member Phipps.

Roll call vote was taken:

Olson – Aye

Phipps – Aye

Funk – Aye

Holden – Aye

4-0. Motion carried.

Council entered closed session at 8:19pm.

Council returned to open session at 8:55pm.

Motion by Holden and second by Phipps to suspend employee starting immediately, with return to work being December 16. This 5-day workday suspension is without pay but with continued benefits. Employee cannot be on city property or operate city equipment during the time of the suspension and will turn in keys. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried.

Motion by Holden and second by Phipps to require the employee to complete a return to work plan formulated by Council and Personnel Committee during closed session, including specific requirements. This return to work plan needs to be signed by the employee prior to returning to work on December 16. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried.

WATER TREATMENT CONSULTANT CONTRACT: Councilman Phipps discussed conversations he has had recently with DNR officials about the current affidavit operator contract. The city will prepare an extended contract by the next Council session, and current affidavit operator Alan Hanson will be present to give the Council updates on the current status of the water plant.

CITY HALL UPDATES: a. Resolution 12-8-2025 to set annual mileage rate reimbursement of .70 cents per mile presented to council. Motion to approve by Phipps and seconded by Holden. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried. b. Clerk Eckers updated the Council on the intention to meet with department heads by the end of December to begin budget planning for FY27. c. Clerk Eckers invited the Council to the presentation of the RIPPL grant award by Ellsworth TelCom and IA Area Development Group to the City at 8:15am on December 19th at City Hall. d. Oath of Office taken by Brian Phipps for a 4 year term to commence January 1, 2026.

ADJOURNMENT: Mayor Pro-Tem Funk called for adjournment. Motion by Olson and seconded by Holden to adjourn. Roll call votes 4-0. Motion carried. Meeting adjourned at 9:22 pm.

/s/ William Funk, Mayor Pro-Tem

/s/ Heidi Eckers, City Clerk

X _____
William Funk, Mayor Pro-Tem

X _____
Heidi Eckers, City Clerk