

CLEARWATER CITY COUNCIL MEETING MINUTES
SPECIAL CITY COUNCIL WORKSHOP MEETING
MARCH 16, 2026

1. Call to Order: 6:30 p.m. at City Hall

- Mayor Lawrence called the Clearwater City Council to order Monday, March 16, 2026, at 6:30 p.m. in the Council Chambers. Members present were Mayor Lawrence, Council Members Schwinghammer, Crandall, and Everett. Member Senn was absent. Also present was City Administrator Smythe.

2. Discussion of Proposed Capital Projects

- Prior to the start of the discussion, Smythe gave a brief overview of the purpose and practices governing workshop meetings. This was for the benefit of new members.

a. CSAH 75 Roundabout Project

- Smythe gave an overview of staff's most recent meeting with MnDOT about this phase of the T.H. 24 Corridor Project. The estimated cost is approximately \$9 million. Because the city council did not give approval for this portion of the design in 2024, it is not on MnDOT's current project list. They stated it could be brought back as a city or county-led project. MnDOT has shared their preferred design. The key right now is to seek out grants or other sources of funding to kick-start this phase of the project.
- Members expressed that this is a priority project. They are very concerned about the bottlenecks that are expected at the County Road 75 intersection once the other phases of the project are completed and traffic is flowing freely.
- Members discussed feedback from the meeting with Representative McDonald at the Day at the Capitol event. He seemed supportive of this project and offered to attend a workshop with the city council and Senator Holmstrom to discuss further after the 2026 Legislative Session is completed.

b. Fire Hall

- Smythe shared a starting point design based on the Fire Hall built in Cokato. That project was \$2.9 million about 7 years ago. She estimates a similar design now with modifications to remove the ambulance areas would likely cost \$3.5 - \$4 million.
- Members discussed possible locations and funding options. Legislators in St. Paul appear more likely to support a rehabilitation project rather than a new build if the city requests bonding support. The city could also issue general obligation bonds if there is support.
- Members suggested keeping this project near the top of the list and revisiting the discussion after a workshop meeting with legislators.

c. El Dorado Park Pavilion

- Members revisited the proposed park pavilion at El Dorado Park. Smythe noted that the rugby team estimates the cost at \$1.3 -1.5 million, and the team has fundraised about \$225,000 to date. The team anticipates covering about \$500,000 with the city covering the remaining costs.
- Members asked what amount is left in the Local Option Sales Tax (LOST) fund after current projects are completed. Smythe stated we will have a better sense of that after the T.H. 24 project is bid out in April and the city's contribution determined.
- Members suggested revisiting once the city has a better estimate of the LOST funds that will remain after the trail and splash pad projects. Members also suggested this as a possible project for a LOST extension.

d. Depot Park Overlook

- Smythe showed the two concept designs that staff pulled together for the new Depot Park. One was a green space design that was meant to fit the \$60,000 budget which came from the grant from Lake Central Bank. The other is a more robust vision with a scenic overlook tower.

- Park Commissioners prefer the overlook design, as they feel the other design would not attract outside visitors to the city.
- Members like both designs. Members suggested pricing out the green space design with the possible addition of a replica caboose or other railroad element, then adding the overlook design to the LOST extension list of projects.

e. Houle Property

- Smythe explained the development proposal from Mr. Houle along with the concerns from the city planner. Zoning requirements, DNR regulations, and lack of road access limit the development options for this property. Members were not presently interested in pursuing the purchase of this property or the latest proposal from Mr. Houle.

f. Community Center

- Members discussed the last community center proposal, which had an estimated cost of around \$9 million. Members agreed that the city does not have the budget for this. Members thought this could be a project proposal for a LOST extension or could be revisited if the city continues to grow in population.

g. Library

- Members discussed the possibility of including the library in a future community center.
- Members also discussed the possibility of replacing the park pavilion at Lions Park with a new structure that could house the library and city hall. This would be on the city’s long-term wish list due to the cost.

h. Daycare Center

- Members suggested keeping this on the long-term wish list due to cost and uncertainty about the need.

i. Senior Center

- Members suggested keeping this on the long-term wish list but noted that Clearwater Estates does have a senior coffee gathering. Members also noted a need for transportation options.

3. Discussion of Local Option Sales Tax Extension

- Members considered the projects previously discussed and those with regional significance that could meet the state law requirements for extending the Local Option Sales Tax. Members agreed to pursue the following projects: El Dorado Park pavilion, overlook concept for Depot Park, and the Community Center proposal.

4. Discussion of Possible Sale of Huber Ave Property

- Members discussed the possible sale of the 13 acres owned by the city along Huber Avenue. Members’ consensus was that property in city limits is scarce and that the city has several proposed projects that may make future use of the property. Members agreed to hold onto the property for now.
- Members would also be willing to listen to offers for a portion of the property, depending on the proposed use.

5. Adjournment

- **MOTION** to adjourn by Crandall, seconded by Schwinghammer, all voted aye. **MOTION CARRIED 4-0.**
- Meeting adjourned at 7:59 p.m.

ATTEST

APPROVED

Annita M. Smythe, City Administrator

Andra Lawrence Wheeler, Mayor