

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

St. Louis, Michigan
January 6, 2026

The regular meeting of the Saint Louis City Council was called to order by Mayor Ralph R. Echtingaw on Monday, January 6, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Council Members Present: Mayor Ralph R. Echtingaw, Fares E. Azzam, Robin W. Hart, William R. Leonard, Kevin D. Palmer.

Council Members Absent: None

City Manager:	Kurt Giles
City Clerk:	Jamie Long
Police Chief:	Richard Ramereiz

Others in Attendance Josh Leppien- Economic Development Director, Michael Hart, and Chief Bill Coty.

Mayor Echtingaw led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda.

Moved by Hart, supported by Leonard, to approve the agenda for January 6, 2026. All ayes carried the motion.

City Council Minutes.

Moved by Palmer, supported by Azzam, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on December 16, 2025. All ayes carried the motion.

Claims & Accounts.

City Council discussed the Claims & Accounts.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Leonard, to approve the Claims & Accounts in the amount of \$666,658.50. All ayes carried the motion.

Monthly Board Minutes.

City Council discussed the December 2025 Monthly Board Minutes. Mayor Echtingaw questioned why the board was just now receiving minutes from several boards for October 2025. Manager Giles stated he would check into it.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Hart, to receive the December 2025 Monthly Board Minutes and place on file. All ayes carried the motion.

Audience Recognition.

There were no comments.

Consent Agenda.

Mayor Echtinaw requested approval/receipt of Consent Agenda item “a” through “d” as shown below:

- a. Payment to Action Traffic Maintenance for Emergency Repairs to N. Main Street Guardrail.
- b. Payment to Malley Construction, Inc. for the DWSRF Grant Construction Project.
- c. Payment to ROWE for Engineering Services for the DWSRF Project.
- d. Receive Annual Vendor Conflict of Interest Disclosure & Summary of Vendor Purchases.

Moved by Leonard, supported by Azzam, to approve Consent Agenda item “a” through “d” All ayes carried the motion.

New Business.

Appointment of City Boards and Commission Members.

Manager Giles requested members appoint the following Board & Commission Members with the correction of Donna Kelley being removed from the original list, who has decided not to renew her term.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Palmer, supported by Hart, to appoint the following Board & Commission Members: Member Leonard abstained from the vote; motion passed with four ayes.

<u>Name</u>	<u>Board</u>
Sue Whitford	Board of Review Board of Special Assessments Planning Commission
Peggy Slavens	Board of Review

Bill Leonard	Board of Special Assessments
Robin Hart	Building Code Board of Appeals
Don Burch	Building Code of Appeals Housing Commission
Dan Doepker	Planning Commission Building Code of Appeals
Manny Nannan	DDA
Corey Bailey	DDA
Randy Mead	Parks & Recreation
Diandra Messer	Board of Review Planning Commission
Fares Azzam	Parks & Recreation
Craig Zeese	Parks & Recreation

Approve Designation of City Official Newspapers.

City Manager Giles requested City Council Members to designate the Gratiot County Herald and the Morning Sun as the City's Official Newspapers for the Year 2026.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Palmer, supported by Azzam, to designate the Gratiot County Herald and the Morning Sun as the City's Official Newspapers for the Year 2026. All ayes carried the motion.

Designation of Official Depositories.

Manager Giles requested members designate St. Louis Commercial Bank, Mercantile Bank of Alma/Ithaca, US Bank of Detroit, Isabella Bank of Breckenridge/Mt. Pleasant, Michigan CLASS and Huntington Bank as the Official Depositories for the year 2026.

Discussion was held. Mayor Echtinaw questioned why the city does not use any credit unions for their banking. Manager Giles stated that he would look into the reasoning for that.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Hart, to approve to designate St. Louis Commercial Bank, Mercantile Bank of Alma/Ithaca, US Bank Detroit, Isabella Bank of Breckenridge/Mt. Pleasant, Michigan CLASS and Huntington Bank as the Official Depositories for the year 2026. All ayes carried the motion.

Approve Designated Attorneys.

Manager Giles requested Council Members to approve the designation of attorneys, Braun, Kendrick, Finkbiner PLC and Cummings, McClorey, Davis & Acho PLC, Smith Boville PC, Plunkett & Cooney; Varnum LLP, Miller Canfield: Keller, Thomas PC, for the year 2026.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Hart, supported by Leonard, to approve the designation of attorneys Braun, Kendrick, Finkbiner PLC and Cummings, McClorey, Davis & Acho PLC, Smith Boville PC, Plunkett & Cooney; Varnum LLP, Miller Canfield: Keller, Thomas PC, for the year 2026. All ayes carried the motion.

Resolution 2026-01 Annual State Trunkline Right of Way Permit.

City Manager Giles requested Council Members adopt Resolution 2026-01 for the Michigan Department of Transportation State Trunkline Right of Way Permit Application.

The following preamble and resolution were offered by Member Azzam, and supported by Member Leonard:

RESOLVED WHEREAS, the City of St. Louis

hereinafter referred to as the "MUNICIPALITY," periodically applies to the Michigan Department of Transportation, hereinafter referred to as the "DEPARTMENT," for permits, referred to as "PERMIT," to construct, operate, use and/or maintain utility or other facilities, or to conduct other activities, on, over, and under State Highway Right of Way at various locations within and adjacent to its corporate limits;

NOW THEREFORE, in consideration of the DEPARTMENT granting such PERMIT, the MUNICIPALITY agrees that:

1. Each party to this Resolution shall remain responsible for any claims arising out of their own acts and/or omissions during the performance of this Resolution, as provided by law. This Resolution is not intended to increase either party's liability for, or immunity from, tort

claims, nor shall it be interpreted, as giving either party hereto a right of indemnification, either by Agreement or at law, for claims arising out of the performance of this Agreement.

2. If any of the work performed for the MUNICIPALITY is performed by a contractor, the MUNICIPALITY shall require its contractor to hold harmless, indemnify and defend in litigation, the State of Michigan, the DEPARTMENT and their agents and employee's, against any claims for damages to public or private property and for injuries to person arising out of the performance of the work, except for claims that result from the sole negligence or willful act of the DEPARTMENT, until the contractor achieves final acceptance of the MUNICIPALITY. Failure of the MUNICIPALITY to require its contractor to indemnify the DEPARTMENT, as set forth above, shall be considered a breach of its duties to DEPARTMENT.
3. Any work performed for the MUNICIPALITY by a contractor or subcontractor will be solely as a contractor for the MUNICIPALITY and not as a contractor or agent of the DEPARTMENT. The DEPARTMENT shall not be subject to any obligations or liabilities by vendors and contractors of the MUNICIPALITY, or their subcontractors or any other person not a party to the PERMIT without the DEPARTMENT'S specific prior written consent and notwithstanding the issuance of the PERMIT. Any claims by any contractor or subcontractor will be the sole responsibility of the MUNICIPALITY.
4. The MUNICIPALITY shall take no unlawful action or conduct, which arises either directly or indirectly out of its obligations, responsibilities, and duties under the PERMIT which results in claims being asserted against or judgment being imposed against the State of Michigan, the Michigan Transportation Commission, the DEPARTMENT, and all officers, agents and employees thereof and those contracting governmental bodies performing permit activities for the DEPARTMENT and all officers, agents, and employees thereof, pursuant to a maintenance contract. In the event that the same occurs, for the purposes of the PERMIT, it will be considered as a breach of the PERMIT thereby giving the State of Michigan, the DEPARTMENT, and/or the Michigan Transportation Commission a right to seek and obtain any necessary relief or remedy, including, but not by way of limitation, a judgment for money damages.
5. The MUNICIPALITY, will, by its own volition and/or request by the DEPARTMENT, promptly restore and/or correct physical or operating damages to any State Highway Right of Way resulting from the installation construction, operation and/or maintenance of the MUNICIPALITY'S facilities according to the PERMIT issued by the DEPARTMENT.
6. With respect to any activities authorized by PERMIT, when the MUNICIPALITY requires insurance on its own or its contractor's behalf it shall also require that such policy include as named insured the State of Michigan, the Transportation Commission, the DEPARTMENT, and all officers, agents, and employees thereof and those governmental bodies performing permit activities for the DEPARTMENT and all officers, agents, and employees thereof, pursuant to a maintenance contract.

7. The incorporation by the DEPARTMENT of this resolution as part of a PERMIT does not prevent the DEPARTMENT from requiring additional performance security or insurance before issuance of a PERMIT.
8. This resolution shall continue in force from this date until cancelled by the MUNICIPALITY or the DEPARTMENT with no less than thirty (30) days prior written notice to the other party. It will not be cancelled or otherwise terminated by the MUNICIPALITY with regard to any PERMIT which has already been issued or activity which has already been undertaken.

BE IT FURTHER RESOLVED, that the following position(s) are authorized to apply to the DEPARTMENT for the necessary permit to work within State Highway Right of Way on behalf of the MUNICIPALITY.

Title and/or Name:

Kurt Giles, City Manager

Keith W. Risdon, PE, Public Services Director

Yea: Azzam, Leonard, Hart, Palmer, Echtinaw

Nay: None

Resolution Declared Adopted this 6th day of January, 2026.

Cash Rent Contract.

Manager Giles requested approval of the Cash Rent Contract between the City of St. Louis and Gadde Farms, which allows Gadde Farms to rent the 75 tillable acres that is owned by the City located in Section 4 of Arcada Township in the amount of \$10,000.00 for the 2026 growing season.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Leonard, to approve the Cash Rent Contract between the City of St. Louis and Gadde Farms in the amount of \$10,000.00 for the 2026 growing season. All ayes carried the motion.

Appointment of Michael Hart to the Library Board of Trustees.

Manager Giles requested members to approve the appointment of Michael Hart to the Library Board of Trustees.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Leonard, to approve the appointment of Michael Hart to the Library Board of Trustees. Member Hart abstained from the vote; four ayes carried the motion.

Set Public Hearing for Transfer of IFE's.

Manager Giles requested members to set the public hearing to consider approval for the transfer of IFE's to Engineered Plastic Components, formerly known as Plasti-Paint for January 20, 2026, at 6:00 p.m.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Hart, supported by Leonard, to set the public hearing to consider approval for the transfer of IFE's to Engineered Plastic Components, formerly known as Plasti-Paint for January 20, 2026 at 6:00 p.m. All ayes carried the motion.

City Manager Report.

Manager Giles reported that Jennifer Aldrich will be starting employment at the city next week as Payroll Clerk. The current Payroll Clerk, Ashley Bullard is transferring to the open Utility Billing Clerk Position.

Manager Giles reported that he has received the architectural security updates quote and they are still waiting for another quote. The figures for the upgrades came back higher than expected.

Manager Giles reported that copies of the audit are available. Giles informed the council that there has not been a formal presentation scheduled yet. Giles stated that they could either opt for a formal presentation from the firm, or Finance Director Marr could attend a future meeting to discuss the audit.

City Clerk Report.

Clerk Long reported that she should have the necessary packets needed for running for council in the 2026 elections next week. Two council members' terms and the mayor term will be up for reelection.

Police Chief Report.

Chief Ramereiz reported that two new crossing guards, Timothy Schultz and Freda Degnan started on January 5th. They are stationed on Main and State Street and I&K at Carrie Knause.

Chief Ramereiz reported that the police academy starts on January 12th for Josh Coty and Jasmine Vandyke. Ramereiz reports they have been doing ride alongs with some of the officers.

Council Comments.

There were none.

Public Comments.

There were none.

Adjournment.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Leonard, to adjourn at 6:34 p.m. All ayes carried the motion.

Cemetery Board of Trustees Meeting - Call to Order.

Mayor Echtinaw called the Oak Grove Cemetery Board of Trustees Meeting to order on January 6, 2026 at 6:34 p.m.

Cemetery Board Minutes.

Moved by Trustee Azzam, supported by Trustee Leonard to approve the minutes of the regular meeting held on January 7, 2025. All ayes carried the motion.

Cemetery Annual Report.

Moved by Palmer, supported by Azzam to receive the annual report and financials and place on file. All ayes carried the motion.

Public Comments.

There were none.

Adjournment.

Moved by Trustee Leonard, supported by Trustee Azzam, to adjourn the Oak Grove Cemetery Board of Trustees meeting at 6:35 p.m. All ayes carried the motion.

Mayor Echtinaw called the council meeting back in session at 6:35 p.m.

Other Business.

There was no other business.

Audience Recognition.

There were no comments.

Adjournment.

Moved by Azzam supported by Leonard to adjourn at 6:36 p.m. All ayes carried the motion

Jamie Long, City Clerk