

CITY COUNCIL PROCEEDINGS

St. Louis, Michigan
February 3, 2026

The regular meeting of the Saint Louis City Council was called to order by Mayor Ralph R. Echtenaw on Tuesday February 3, 2026, at 6:00 p.m. in the City Hall Council Chambers.

Council Members Present: Mayor Ralph R. Echtenaw, Fares E. Azzam, Robin W. Hart, Mayor Pro Tem 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 , Bobbie Marr-Treasuer, Keith Risdon-Utilities Director, Calvin Martyn-DPW Superintendent, and Max Clever-Clever Surveying.

Mayor Echtenaw led the Pledge of Allegiance.

Approval of Agenda.

Moved by Hart, supported by Leonard, to approve the agenda for February 3, 2026. All ayes carried the motion.

Audit Presentation-Bobbie Marr.

Bobbie Marr reported on fiscal year ending June 30, 2025, audit findings with the council. As in previous years, the audit report conclusion was an unmodified, clean opinion.

Marr reviewed several points in the audit documents with the council including fund balances, pensions, basic financial statements and capital outlay.

City Council Minutes.

Moved by Palmer, supported by Azzam, to approve the minutes of the Regular Meeting held on January 20, 2026. 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 \$572,918.98. All ayes carried the motion.

Monthly Board Minutes.

City Council discussed the January 2026 Monthly Board Minutes.

Moved by Palmer, supported by Azzam, to receive the January 2026 Monthly Board Minutes and place on file. All ayes carried the motion.

Audience Recognition.

There were no comments.

Consent Agenda.

Mayor Echinaw requested approval/receipt of Consent Agenda items “a” through “f” as shown below:

- a. Payment to Malley Construction, Inc., for the DWSRF Grant Construction Project.
- b. Payment to Green Tech Systems, LLC for DWSRF Grant Construction Project.
- c. Payment to Delta College for Police Academy Sponsorship for Jasmine VanDyke & Josh Coty.
- d. Payment to Jett Pump & Valve for Rebuild of Hidrostal Pumps.
- e. Payment to Alpha Omega-Powell’s Services for Installation of Water & Gas Lines for Dam Ice Removal.
- f. Payment to MacQueen for Required Maintenance PM on Vactor Truck #50.

Moved by Leonard, supported by Hart to approve Consent Agenda items “a” through “f”. All ayes carried the motion.

Quote for Bandit Woodchipper.

Manager Giles requested members to approve the quote for the purchase of a Bandit Woodchipper Intimidator 15XP, in the amount of \$62,293.20. This woodchipper will replace the current 1995 Bandit Chipper.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Hart, supported by Leonard, to approve the quote for the purchase of a Bandit Woodchipper Intimidator 15XP, in the amount of \$62,293.20. All ayes carried the motion.

RESOLUTION FOR POVERTY EXEMPTION 2026-06

At a regular meeting of the City of Saint Louis, Gratiot County, Michigan, held in the Council Chambers of said City on the 3rd day of February 2026, the following preamble and resolution was offered by Council Member Azzam and supported by Council Member Leonard.

WHEREAS, the adoption of guidelines for poverty exemptions is required of the City of St. Louis Council; and

WHEREAS, the principal residence of persons, who the Board of Review determines by reason of poverty to be unable to contribute to the public charge, is eligible for exemption in whole or in part from taxation under Public Act 390 of 1994 (MCL 211.7u); and

WHEREAS, pursuant to PA 390 of 1994, the City of Saint Louis, Gratiot County adopts the following guidelines for the Board of Review to implement. The guidelines shall include but not be limited to the specific income and asset levels of the claimant and all persons residing in the household, including any property tax credit returns, filed in the current or immediately preceding year.

To be eligible, all the following conditions must be met:

- 1) An applicant must own and occupy, as a homestead property, for which an exemption is requested.
- 2) An applicant must file Form 5737 Application for MCL 211.7u Poverty Exemption.
- 3) An applicant must file Form 5739 Affirmation of Ownership and Occupancy to Remain Exempt by Reason of Poverty.
- 4) An applicant must file all required additional documentation (such as federal/state income tax returns, including any property tax credit returns filed in the immediately preceding year or in the current year, with the assessor or board of review, or a signed *State Tax Commission form 4988, Poverty Exemption Affidavit*).
- 5) An applicant must produce a valid driver's license or other form of identification if requested.
- 6) An applicant must produce a deed, land contract, or other evidence of ownership of the property for which an exemption is requested, if requested.
- 7) An applicant must meet the federal poverty income guidelines as defined annually by the United States Office of Management and Budget.
- 8) An applicant must file an application for an exemption after January 1, but before the day prior to the last day of the board of review meeting.
- 9) If the property in question contains enough acreage that at least one or more buildable lots could be split from the main parcel under the land division act, the city will count the value of any additional parcel that could be split when calculating the applicant's total assets and that combined value shall not exceed the maximum total assets.
- 10) An applicant's total assets shall not be more than \$2,000. Please refer to MCL 211.7u for Income and Asset Test.
- 11) Fixed assets shall be limited to one house and one vehicle for the claimant and no house and one vehicle for each adult person residing with the claimant.

The following are the 2026 federal poverty income guidelines which are updated annually by the United States Department of Health and Human Services. The annual allowable income includes income for all persons residing in the principal residence.

Federal Poverty Guidelines for 2026 Assessments

Size of Family Unit	Poverty Guidelines
1	\$15,650
2	\$21,150
3	\$26,650
4	\$32,150
5	\$37,650
6	\$43,150
7	\$48,650
8	\$54,150
For each additional person	\$5,500

The City of St. Louis will only grant full poverty exemptions.
PA 191 of 2023 amends the poverty exemption to allow local units to grant a 75% partial exemption, in addition to the previously allowed 100%, 50%, and 25%, without prior approval by the State Tax Commission.

NOW, THEREFORE, BE IT HEREBY RESOLVED that the assessor and Board of Review shall follow the above stated policy and federal guidelines in granting or denying an exemption.

Ayes: Azzam, Leonard, Hart, Palmer, Echtenaw
Nays: None
Absent: None
Resolution declared adopted.

ORDINANCE NO. B-245

CONSUMERS ENERGY COMPANY GAS FRANCHISE ORDINANCE

AN ORDINANCE, granting to CONSUMERS ENERGY COMPANY, its successors and assigns, the right and authority to lay, maintain and commercially operate gas lines and facilities including but not limited to mains, pipes, services and valves on, under, along, and across public places including but not limited to highways, streets, alleys, bridges, and waterways, and to conduct a local gas business in the CITY OF SAINT LOUIS, GRATIOT COUNTY, MICHIGAN, for a period of thirty years.

THE CITY OF SAINT LOUIS ORDAINS:

SECTION 1. GRANT and TERM. The CITY OF SAINT LOUIS, GRATIOT COUNTY, MICHIGAN, hereby grants to Consumers Energy Company, its successors and assigns, hereinafter called "Consumers" the right and authority to lay, maintain and commercially operate gas lines and facilities including but not limited to mains, pipes, services and valves on, under, along, and across public places including but not limited to highways, streets, alleys, bridges, and waterways, and to conduct a local gas business in the CITY OF SAINT LOUIS, GRATIOT COUNTY, MICHIGAN, for a period of thirty years.

SECTION 2.CONDITIONS. No public place used by Consumers shall be obstructed longer than necessary during construction or repair, and shall be restored to the same order and condition as when work was commenced. All of Consumers' gas lines and related facilities shall be placed as not to unnecessarily interfere with the public's use of public places. Consumers shall have the right to trim or remove trees if necessary, in the conducting of such business.

SECTION 3.HOLD HARMLESS. Consumers shall save the City free and harmless from all loss, costs and expenses to which it may be subject by reason of the negligent construction and maintenance of the lines and related facilities hereby authorized. In case any action is commenced against the City on account of the permission herein given, Consumers shall, upon notice, defend the City and its representatives and hold them harmless from all loss, costs and damage arising out of such negligent construction and maintenance.

SECTION 4.EXTENSIONS. Consumers shall construct and extend its gas distribution system within said City and shall furnish gas service to applicants residing therein in accordance with applicable laws, rules and regulations.

SECTION 5.FRANCHISE NOT EXCLUSIVE. The rights, power and authority herein granted, are not exclusive.

SECTION 6.RATES and CONDITIONS. Consumers shall be entitled to provide gas service to the inhabitants of the City at the rates and pursuant to the conditions as approved by the Michigan Public Service Commission. Such rates and conditions shall be subject to review and change upon petition to the Michigan Public Service Commission.

SECTION 7.REVOCAION. The franchise granted by this ordinance is subject to revocation upon sixty (60) days written notice by either party. Upon revocation this ordinance shall be considered repealed and of no effect past, present or future.

SECTION 8.MICHIGAN PUBLIC SERVICE COMMISSION JURISDICTION. Consumers remains subject to the reasonable rules and regulations of the Michigan Public Service Commission applicable to gas service in the City and those rules and regulations preempt any term of any ordinance of the City to the contrary.

SECTION 9.REPEALER. This ordinance, when enacted, shall repeal and supersede the provisions of any previous Consumers' gas franchise ordinance adopted by the City including any amendments.

SECTION 10. EFFECTIVE DATE. This ordinance shall take effect on March 3rd, 2026.

We certify that the foregoing Franchise Ordinance was duly enacted by the City Council of the CITY OF SAINT LOUIS, GRATIOT COUNTY, MICHIGAN, on the 3rd day of February, 2026.

Moved by Leonard, supported by Palmer, to adopt Ordinance B-245-Consumers Energy Company Gas Franchise.

Yeas: Leonard, Palmer, Azzam, Hart, Echtenaw
Nays: None
Abstain: None
Absent: None
Ordinance Adopted.

Introduction of Water Supply Cross Connection Ordinance-Amended.

Manager Giles introduced Article IV. Water Supply Cross Connection Ordinance updates. The city's existing ordinance was lacking in the section requiring testing and qualifications of those individuals doing the testing, as it was adopted prior to the requirement being added. This ordinance's updates are proposed for adoption on February 17, 2026.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Leonard, to introduce the Water Supply Cross Connection Ordinance Updates. All ayes supported the motion.

As-Needed Professional Services & Training.

Manager Giles requested members to approve the quote from Clever Surveying & Engineering for As Needed Professional Services and Training in the amount of \$25,000.

Discussion was held.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Leonard, to approve the quote from Clever Surveying & Engineering for As Needed Professional Services and Training in the amount of \$25,000. All ayes carried the motion.

City Manager Report.

Manager Giles reported that Chuck Sandro from The Healthy Pine River has contacted him, requesting a contribution for this year. Chuck will present the information to council at the next meeting.

Manager Giles reported that there were three water-main breaks over the weekend.

Manager Giles reported that the meeting with state representatives went well and he will send a thank you to the representatives for their time.

Manager Giles reported that Farabee is scheduled to work on the fuel tank upgrades February 9th-February 23rd.

Manager Giles reported there were discussions on vegetation management, a possible pilot program to treat some areas in front of parks, including Leppien Park. He may bring a contribution suggestion back to council in the future.

Manager Giles reported that last week a representative from Insulgard took another look at our possible architectural security upgrades. They are considering just upgrading the finance counter and police department with ballistic resistance glass. Leppien reported that he does not yet have that quote.

Manager Giles gave council a memo and brief update on the Electrical Distribution Capital Improvement Plan. Giles reported that not much has been done with that project at this time.

Manager Giles reported that Josh and Elsie have sent out an employee survey to get feedback on the annual employee appreciation dinner. He will report results at a later date.

City Clerk Report.

Nothing to report.

Police Chief Report.

Chief Ramereiz reported that he would be out of the office for the remainder of the week for a conference in Grand Rapids. Ramereiz said he will be available by phone and Forshee would be filling in at the office in his absence.

Council Comments.

Nothing to report.

Public Comments.

There were none.

Adjournment.

Moved by Azzam, supported by Leonard, to adjourn at 7:21 p.m. All ayes carried the motion.

Jamie Long, City Clerk