

Brooklyn Park Charter Commission Meeting Minutes Wednesday, October 8, 2025

1. Call to Order/Roll Call

Present: Chair Dennis Secara, Commissioners, Barbara Bor, Shamara Freeman Amy Hanson, Peggy Larkin, Susan Mabera, LaDawn Severin, Gregory Szach; Paula Weakly, Sheldon Willaims; Council Liaison Nichole Klonowski, and Staff Liaison Devin Montero

Absent: Sunday Alabi (excused)

2. Public Comment – None.

3. Additions/Approval of the Agenda of October 8, 2025

Motion Commissioner Bor, Second Commissioner Hanson to approve the agenda as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

4. Approval of Minutes

4.1 JUNE 11, 2025, MEETING

Chair Secara asked the Commissioners if there were any substantial changes to the minutes.

Motion Commissioner Hanson, Second Commissioner Larkin to approve June 11, 2025, meeting minutes as presented. The motion passed unanimously.

5. Old Business – None.

6. Reports of Officers, Boards, and Standing Committees – None.

7. New Business

7.1 Charter City Petition Requirements

Chair Secara stated the city received information from the League of Minnesota Cities bringing attention to a potential compliance issue on petitions. He stated there was the requirement for a column or space for the date of birth if signing the petition. He stated the city charter had various petition forms and the LMC provided a petition model.

Staff Liaison Montero stated the petitions in the Charter were:

- *Section 4.07, Nomination Petitions*
- *Section 5.02, Petition (no example provided in the charter)*
- *Section 6.04, Form of Petition and Signature Papers (Initiative)*
- *Section 6.12, Form of Petition and Signature Papers (Referendum)*

He stated after reading the Minnesota Rule, there might be additional items to add to the petitions presented the highlighted items to the commissioners. He stated he was waiting to hear from the city attorney whether those items were required on the petitions.

- *Signers Oath-“I swear (or affirm) that I know the contents and purpose of this petition and that I signed this petition only once and of my own free will.”*
- *“All information must be filled in by person(s) signing the petition unless disability prevents the person(s) from doing so.”*
- *“All information on this petition is subject to public inspection.”*

He presented an example of the Nomination Petition with all proposed items. He stated he also wanted a clarification from the city attorney that was currently stated in the charter, if that was similar to the “signers oath”.

From the City Charter:

“and we individually certify that we are qualified registered voters and that we have not signed more nomination petitions of candidates for this office than there are persons to be elected thereto.”

Signers Oath:

“I swear (or affirm) that I know the contents and purpose of this petition and that I signed this petition only once and of my own free will.”

Commissioner Hanson stated she liked how the Charter’s sentence was worded.

Chair Secara asked if they would present to the Council the changes as one amendment or an amendment for each section.

Staff Liaison Montero stated all sections would be presented in one ordinance change.

Commissioner Hanson stated she liked the example where the year of birth had its own column on the example petition.

Staff Liaison Montero stated he would bring it back in November with the city attorney’s comments to begin the process; set the public hearing, first reading and second reading of the ordinance amendment.

Chair Secara stated it seemed like it was a simple change but wanted to make sure they were doing it right and the city attorney would get back to the Commission on it.

Commissioner Larkin stated the city charter sentence and the signer’s oath were two different things people were attesting to. She stated one said, “I haven’t signed more petitions” and the other said, “I’ve only signed it once”.

She stated they were attesting that they understood what the petition was about and attesting that they only signed it once.

8. Correspondence/Communications

8.1 Council Liaison Update on Council Actions

Council Liaison Klonowski stated the Council had a work session this week on PFAS, and if anyone was tracking it, it was the forever chemicals. She stated the city partnered with other

cities on a lawsuit against 3M and got \$1.5million to go towards a study for solutions for the city. She stated the city had multiple wells out of compliance. The city had 13 wells, and one was completely out of compliance and was high on PFAS and took it offline and not using it.

She stated it was a large quantity of water that was produced by that well and they were exploring a couple of options on how to treat it. She stated the PFAS was moving in plumes in the aquifers and if they treat one well, they might end up having another well out of compliance down the road. She stated they were looking at options for treating half of the water to remediate the PFAS out of it. She stated they were going to apply for grants federally and statewide, but it was very expensive at \$50 or \$60 million, and the costs kept going up. She stated the unfortunate thing was it had kicked the can down the road of talking about water softening which they still needed to do. She stated they were exploring if that could be done, treat the PFAS and then soften half the water, if that would have an effect.

She stated there was a lot of complexity to it when treating hard water, there was sludge and didn't know if the sludge left over from the water would also have PFAS and then would have to pay an exorbitant price to get rid of that. She stated she knew residents were upset about the hard water, but PFAS was cancer causing and it was going to take precedent.

She stated the other major item the council was going through was the budget cycle. She stated it hit the news it was 12% but no one on the Council wanted 12% as that number was presented to the Council. She stated they voted at the last meeting to get it down to 7% and asked Finance Director Green to come back and let the Council know what they would have to cut and what it would look like if they went from the requested 12% to 7%.

She stated the groundbreaking of the central fire station was also coming up.

Commissioner Bor asked if the \$1million from 3M was distributed and not just for Brooklyn Park.

Council Liaison Klonowski stated the \$1 million was just for the city and cities in the east metro got significantly more because there were large plumes of PFAS there and directly related. She stated the scientist thought the plume was moving towards the Mississippi river and studying it to see if there was another pollution source of it. She stated the \$1.5 million was specifically for studying how they would remediate it.

Commissioner Bor asked if there was a scientific group studying it and how they would treat the water. She asked who was hired to look at the issue.

Council Liaison Klonowski stated the city had contracted with WSB. She stated the representative explained all sorts of science and showed the Council the diagrams of the facilities. She stated it was a carbon filter that collected the PFAS and the PFAS itself didn't break down because it was a man made chemical and the bonding of it was strong because it was not natural. She stated if they took the PFAS, put in a thimble and hit with ultraviolet light, that broke up the bond and got back to being natural elements. She stated it could be removed but would have to build an expensive water filtration system to collect it, because it was a carcinogen at any level.

Commissioner Bor stated if they didn't treat the hard water, they broke it down to filtration and to have the water go through filters, the filters would plug up a lot faster in the expense of that. Council Member Klonowski stated that was catch 22, if the water was treated first, the sludge could have PFAS and would pay high amounts. She stated they had been exploring options,

tying into the Mississippi was expensive, and if the plume was moving that way, they might face that problem later.

Tying into the Minneapolis Water District and that was exceptionally expensive to build the pipeline all the way down and the city's water bills would increase by two times, and no one liked the sound of that.

Commissioner Weakly asked if the Council looked at buying water from Maple Grove. She stated Osseo bought their water from Maple Grove and must be pipes at least as far as Osseo.

Council Liaison Klonowski stated Maple Grove didn't produce enough water to service those and they didn't want to do it. She stated they also talked about whether the city was to build out a bigger water structure, could the city sell water to other cities. She stated there wasn't the need for it with Maple Grove as they invested significantly in water softening and a water treatment plant but not enough to give the city water.

Commissioner Severin asked where Champlin got their water from.

Council Liaison Klonowski stated they did approach them a couple of years ago, when the Council first started exploring all of it and they didn't need the regional water. She stated if they had their own water, it was not enough to support the city either. She stated the city couldn't put a well too close to Champlin because they would be drawing too much out of the aquifer at the same time and neither would be getting water. She stated it was a lot of hydrogeology and science. She stated the Council asked a lot of questions, why couldn't they put in more wells because some of the wells were in proximity but one was out of compliance and the one that was close wasn't and was confusing.

Commissioner Severin asked how deep most of them were.

Council Liaison Klonowski stated they were at various depths and there was a deep aquifer that was clean but couldn't touch it. She stated the state regulated away from it because people were drawing from it and was having impacts to other aquifers. She stated there were many aquifers, seven or six and the city was tying into two and the contamination was in both.

Chair Secara stated the city had a high-water table naturally, probably the same soil drain.

Council Liaison Klonowski stated the water was safe overall and the water treatment staff were making sure to tell people the water was clean. She stated PFAS was everywhere, it was in rain, soil, food, makeup, diapers, fire retardant and in a lot of things. She stated overall, the city's water was decent PFAS-level-wise compared to other cities.

Commissioner Severin asked if the 7% increase in property taxes was up for debate or was that going to go to a vote.

Council Liaison Klonowski stated the Council debated, and the Council had conversations twice. She stated the Council had a work session about it and then had a Council meeting with public comments and conversations in the chambers about it. She stated, unfortunately, a news article went out saying the Council was looking at a 12% and that was inaccurate and a lot of people came to the meeting upset about it. She stated the Council had asked for a 7% or lower and the challenge the Council had was a lot of new staff were safety related and mostly fire staff.

She stated years ago the city transitioned over to full-time firefighters and had been running on a skeleton crew with people out with various reasons and the firefighters were working more than they should which put everyone in a safety risk. She stated they ended up having to hire about seven firefighters and that was where the need was at the 3% or 4% increase was. She stated it was mostly safety and some police officers too and safety in general took a huge portion of the budget annually.

Chair Secara stated Hennepin County also requesting 7% or 7.5% and that would be about 15%.

Council Liaison Klonowski stated there was also going to be an information mailer that went out with everyone's property tax assessment to see what the city was asking with the county, school board and relative to dollar percentages and what was funding for the city. She stated if anyone had questions when they got the mailer, to reach out to the city and they would be happy to answer their questions. She stated if they thought 7% was too high to come to the next Council meeting and speak on it. She stated some council members wanted a zero percent but that was very challenging.

Commissioner Bor stated there were other cities that did some increases in their fire departments, deferred the taxation and kicked the can down the road. She stated they would be paying more taxes for the safety aspect of what was needed for their cities as they went away from volunteer coverage, they hadn't paid and prepared professionally.

8.2 Amendments to Sections 2.06 and 4.03

Chair Secara stated that the amendments to Section 2.06 and 4.03 had gone into effect and after two and half years of patience and hard work, he thanked the commissioners. He stated the ordinance was approved on June 23 and now in effect.

9. Adjournment

Motion Chair Secara, second by Commissioner Hanson to adjourn the meeting. The motion carried unanimously.

The meeting adjourned at 7:30 p.m.

Respectfully submitted,

Devin Montero
Staff Liaison