



City of Fort Atkinson
City Manager's Office
101 N. Main Street
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538

**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM
TUESDAY, NOVEMBER 18, 2025 – 7:00 PM
CITY HALL – SECOND FLOOR**

MINUTES

1. Call meeting to order

President Jaeckel called the meeting to order at 7:00 pm.

2. Roll call

Present: Cm. Huckabee, Cm. Johnson, Cm. Lescohier, Cm. Schultz and President Jaeckel. Also present: City Manager, City Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director, Director of Public Works, Director of Neighborhood Services, City Attorney, Police Chief, Public Works Superintendent and Library Director.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

President Jaeckel led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Consent Agenda

Cm. Johnson moved, seconded by Huckabee to approve the Consent Agenda as presented items #4.a. to #4.f. Motion carried.

- a. Review and possible action relating to the **minutes of the November 4, 2025, City Council meeting** (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
- b. Review and possible action relating to the **minutes of the November 4, 2025, Plan Commission meeting** (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
- c. Review and possible action relating to the **minutes of the November 5, 2025 Police and Fire Commission meeting** (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
- d. Review and possible action relating to **building, plumbing, and electrical permit report for October** (Draeger, Director of Neighborhood and Building Services)*
- e. Review and possible action relating to the City Clerk-issued **License and Permit Report for November** (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
- f. Review and possible action relating to **City Sewer, Water, and Stormwater Utility Financial Statements as of October 31, 2025** (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*

5. Public Hearings

None.

6. Public Comment for Matters on the Agenda

David Frigo, 409 Milo Street - spoke on the resolution for annual garbage and recycling fee. He stated some residents are unhappy and asked for more information to be made available.

John Hausz, 104 Jefferson Street - would like the Council to not approve the budget until answers can be provided by supervisors. He noted various pages and asked about specific line item amounts.

Adam Thompson, 365 Ramesh Avenue - spoke on the resolution for annual garbage and recycling fee. He supports the Council adopting the Resolution.

7. Petitions, Requests, and Communications

- a. *Artist recognition, Marcus Tauch (Houseman, City Manager)*
Manager Houseman shared appreciation for artist, Marcus Tauch. No action was taken.

8. Resolutions and Ordinances

- a. *Review and possible action relating to a Resolution approving an **annual garbage and recycling fee** for properties and customers receiving the service to be placed on the property tax bill in the City of Fort Atkinson, Jefferson County, Wisconsin (Houseman, City Manager)*

Manager Houseman refreshed that the City Council took action at the meeting on August 5, 2025, to approve a proposal from John's Disposal for curbside garbage and recycling collection services starting on January 1, 2026. The proposal included a five-year contract, which renews automatically unless either party terminates. The initial cost of the contract is \$19.25 per unit per month. With an estimated number of units receiving service of 3,959, that equates to \$914,529 per year or \$231.00 per unit per year. The special charge will be on the 2025 tax bill, payable in 2026, for services to be rendered in 2026. If the City Council chooses to remove this service from the tax levy, then State Statutes require the City to reduce the property tax levy by the amount equivalent to the cost of the garbage collection fees from the 2013 levy (2014 budget), or roughly \$506,236. The proposed cost per unit for the curbside garbage and recycling collection service is \$231.00 and is included in the 2026 Fee Schedule, which is on the agenda for possible action.

Lescohier moved, seconded by Johnson to approve the resolution adding an annual garbage and recycling fee for properties and customers receiving the service to be placed on the property tax bill in the City of Fort Atkinson. Motion carried.

- b. *Review and possible action relating to a **Resolution Adopting the 2026 Annual Budget and Setting the Property Tax Levy for the City of Fort Atkinson, Jefferson County, Wisconsin** (Houseman, City Manager)*

Manager Houseman presented the City of Fort Atkinson 2026 Operating Budget, the 2026

Capital Improvements Project (CIP) budget, and the 2027-2031 CIP Plan for possible action by the City Council. The proposed budget document is posted separately on the City's website for review. As outlined in the budget resolutions, the total necessary levy needed to support the City's 2026 operations is \$9,344,051, including the TIDs. The total assessed value of the property within the City is \$1,305,311,000, which equates to a City Mill Rate of \$7.16 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. The total necessary levy needed to support the City, Jefferson County, the Fort Atkinson School District, and the Madison Area Technical College District in 2026 is \$27,616,963.73, which equates to an overall Mill Rate of \$21.16 per \$1,000 of assessed property value. Note that this does not include the school levy tax credit, which can reduce the overall mill rate by up to \$2.15 per \$1,000 of value.

Cm. Huckabee moved, seconded by Cm. Johnson, to amend the 2026 annual budget by striking the new full-time Building & Facilities Manager position in the Department of Building and Neighborhood Services with directions to start to return in 2027 with a phased-in or alternative plan utilizing sharing services, contractors and/or a part-time position.

Cm. Huckabee stated, yes we have a reduction in the levy and with the class and compensation study and adding another full-time permanent ongoing position, I think that is a lot to ask in a year. When this role was first presented with an overview of the responsibilities of this position, I can see where it is going to be a very valuable position to ensure the longevity and condition of the facilities. But as I was digging into this and asked for more information specifically who's been historically responsible, for these tasks, it became clear to me that the facility maintenance does not seem to have a scheduled, prioritized or unified system of plan maintenance. My perception is that it has been a bit more reactive instead of a proactive system, which I know this new position would absolutely get us to be more proactive, which will be a very good thing. But I'd like to see the Staff take the next year to come up with a standard workflow and plan maintenance schedules that can be applied to the respective facilities, concentrating on how efficiencies can be implemented using our existing department managers with delegation and staff. If the budget is approved tonight, the implementation of the classification and compensation adjustments will go into effect 2026. Adding this new and permanent manager in the same year as implementing those changes which are well deserved and I am in full support of, feels like asking a bit too much of our residents in a single year. We're in a good position to wait on this, as a lot of our facilities have undergone major repairs already or are newly constructed. I'm not feeling the urgency on this position and look forward to hearing from my fellow council members.

Cm. Johnson asked if we have a prospective person for this position. Manager Houseman stated we have a draft job description, but not a finalized one, and we do not plan on hiring for this position until 2026. One of the reasons department managers don't have a proactive approach to facility management right now is because they are busy working on the operations of their departments and trying to also manage their facilities at the same

time. It would be beneficial for all facility managers, police chief, fire chief, superintendents of public works operations, museum and library directors. It would be very challenging to add a goal like that to their already full plate for 2026. There is a reason we are asking for this position, and that is because they are not able to get that proactive work done under the current staffing.

Cm. Lescohier stated he jotted numbers down through the budget presentation: 38 rooftops with 11 HVAC systems and in total \$126 million in building assets. I think this position is well justified. I think expecting the Library, Museum Directors or Police Chief to get up on a rooftop and maintain things in the past, Wastewater Superintendent to care for those buildings is not a strong strategy to stay on top of maintenance. Staff has done a tremendous job caring for the buildings, but it takes a ton of time away from what they are hired to do when something goes wrong, and things do go wrong in newer or aging buildings. I think this position is justified.

President Jaeckel added that he was hesitant in the beginning when this position was presented, but from his first term here, he pushed to get the municipal building roof repaired. Just last month, the senior center roof was repaired. This is where this position is going to help, hopefully by extending the lifetime of these buildings. We just put up a very nice DPW building and that was due to lack of maintenance for over 50 years. I feel like this is a good position to be moving forward and looking to add to the team.

President Jaeckel took a vote on the motion. Motion failed 2-3, Huckabee and Johnson in favor and Jackel, Schultz, and Lescohier against.

Cm. Lescohier moved, seconded by Cm. Schultz to adopt Resolution Adopting the 2026 Annual Budget and Setting the Property Tax Levy for the City of Fort Atkinson, Jefferson County, Wisconsin. Motion carried unanimously.

- c. *Review and possible action relating to a **Resolution Confirming the Total Levy for Taxing Jurisdictions in the City of Fort Atkinson and Determining the Mill Rate** (Houseman, City Manager)*

Cm. Schultz moved, seconded by Cm. Johnson to adopt Resolution Confirming the Total Levy for Taxing Jurisdictions in the City of Fort Atkinson and determining the Mill Rate, Jefferson County Wisconsin. Motion carried unanimously.

- d. *Review and possible action relating to a **Resolution establishing the 2026 Schedule of Fees for the City of Fort Atkinson, Jefferson County** (Houseman, City Manager)*

Cm. Huckabee moved, seconded by Cm. Johnson to adopt Resolution establishing the 2026 Schedule of Fees for the City of Fort Atkinson, Jefferson County. Motion carried unanimously.

9. Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees

- a. *City Manager's Report (Houseman, City Manager)*

No action was taken.

10. Unfinished Business

None.

11. New Business

None.

12. Miscellaneous

None.

13. Public Comment for Matters Not on the Agenda

John Hausz, 104 Jefferson Street - spoke on an invasive species conference in Milwaukee.

14. Claims, Appropriations and Contract Payments

- a. Review and possible action relating to the **Verified Claims** presented by the Director of Finance and authorization of payment (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
Cm. Schultz moved, seconded by Cm. Huckabee to approve the list of Verified Claims as presented. Motion carried unanimously.

15. Adjournment

Cm. Schultz moved, seconded by Cm. Johnson to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 7:57 pm.

Respectfully submitted,
Michelle Ebbert
City Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director