



**CITY COUNCIL MEETING
IN PERSON AND VIA ZOOM
TUESDAY, FEBRUARY 17, 2026 – 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: Council members Huckabee, Johnson, Lescohier, Schultz and President Jaeckel. Also present: City Manager, City Attorney, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director, Director of Public Works, Director of Neighborhood Services, Public Works Superintendent, Library Director and Police Chief.

3. Pledge of Allegiance

President Jaeckel led the Pledge of Allegiance.

4. Consent Agenda

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

- a. *Review and possible action relating to the **minutes of the February 3, 2026, City Council meeting** (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
- b. *Review and possible action relating to the **minutes of the February 10, 2026, Plan Commission meeting** (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
- c. *Review and possible action relating to **building, plumbing, and electrical permit report for January 2026** (Draeger, Building Inspector/Zoning Administrator)*
- d. *Review and possible action relating to the City Clerk-issued **License and Permit Report for February** (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
- e. *Review and possible action relating to **City Sewer, Water, and Stormwater Utility Financial Statements** as of January 31, 2026 (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*
- f. *Review and possible action on a **Special Event: American Legion Memorial Day Parade** on May 25, 2026, from 10:30 am - 12:00 pm, beginning at American Legion and ending at Evergreen Cemetery (Ebbert, Clerk/Treasurer/Finance Director)*

5. Public Hearings

None.

6. Public Comment for Matters on the Agenda

None.

7. Petitions, Requests, and Communications

a. *Presentation relating to the **Fort Atkinson Critical Home Repair Program** proposal (Melissa Songco, CEO, and Elaina Rodriguez, Project Manager, Habitat For Humanity of Waukesha, Jefferson, and Rock Counties)*

Habitat for Humanity Chief Executive Officer Melissa Songco and Project Manager Elaina Rodriguez presented a proposed program that addresses the need for critical repairs for homes in Fort Atkinson. The goal of the program is to provide critical repairs, such as roofs, windows, siding, porch, accessibility, and code remediation, to low-income residents. Habitat would service as the general contractor for the projects. Their team would develop the scope of work, collect bids, and ensure quality repairs and completion of work. Habitat would not complete the work themselves — they will hire local licensed contractors to perform the work. The project cap would be \$20,000 per project, and Habitat expects to be able to support up to 25 projects if the City and the Fort Atkinson Community Foundation invest in the program. The City is proposing to invest \$250,000 from the AHF for this project. As a reminder, all funds in the AHF are increment and interest from the closed (or closing) tax increment districts. Potential properties for the program would be identified through the City's code enforcement services, City staff, and/or an application process managed by Habitat. The Plan Commission would review and approve the program eligibility guidelines. In addition, City staff would provide the Plan Commission with a monthly update on the Program, including the number of applications submitted, communication efforts, and eventually projects completed. Habitat staff would provide the Plan Commission with an annual report relating to the projects completed, before and after pictures, and remaining funds available. One of the significant benefits of working with Habitat on this program is that there is no staffing support needed from the City. The City's investment would be a grant to Habitat to administer the program and distribute funds. Their administrative and overhead costs would be recouped through partial loan repayment by the homeowner. The program represents a way for AHF funds to be distributed into the community to address critical repairs quickly using local contractors. If approved, the program is expected to launch in June 2026 and the funds are estimated to last for three years.

No action was taken.

b. *Support Person of the Year Recognition-Mindy Fry (Bump, Police Chief)*

No action was taken.

8. Resolutions and Ordinances

- a. *Review and possible action on a Resolution allocating funds from the City's Affordable Housing Fund to Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha, Jefferson, and Rock Counties for the **Fort Atkinson Critical Repair Program** (Houseman, City Manager)*

Manager Houseman referenced the Affordable Housing Fund ("AHF") (Fund 9), that was established through the extension of Tax Increment Districts 6, 7, and 8 for one additional year. In the adopted 2026 budget, the City identified a goal of working with a consultant to establish AHF programs and policies. A request for proposals has been issued, and proposals will be presented to the City Council in March. If the City Council approves the investment of \$250,000 into the program, City staff and Habitat staff will apply to the Fort Atkinson Community Foundation for matching funds. The estimated number of projects in the presentation (25) is based on the total of \$500,000, which includes both investments. However, if the FACF does not approve the matching grants, City staff would still like to move forward with the \$250,000 investment in the program, which would result in about 12-13 projects.

Huckabee moved, seconded by Johnson to adopt the Resolution allocating \$250,000 from the City's Affordable Housing Fund to Habitat for Humanity of Waukesha, Jefferson, and Rock Counties to support the Fort Atkinson Critical Repair Program. Motion carried.

- b. *First reading of an Ordinance to repeal and recreate Article III of Chapter 86 of the City of Fort Atkinson Code of General Ordinances relating to **Recycling** (Navin, Director of Public Works)*

Director Navin stated the Wisconsin DNR is requesting the City repeal and recreate the City's recycling ordinance. This update is necessary to align City code with new Wisconsin Department of Natural Resources (DNR) administrative rules that went into effect on July 1, 2025. The City's existing recycling ordinance was originally adopted in 1994 to comply with state solid waste recovery laws. However, in May 2024, the Governor approved new administrative rules (specifically affecting Chapter NR 544) to update effective recycling program criteria. To be recognized by the DNR as having an "effective recycling program" under §287.11, Wis. Stats., the City is mandated to adopt these updated rules.

Maintaining this status is not optional if the City wishes to remain eligible for state recycling grants. Adopting this ordinance ensures the City continues to receive state recycling grant funding, which helps offset the costs of the City's local recycling program. Failure to update the ordinance would jeopardize these funds and potentially put the City out of compliance with state law.

Huckabee moved, seconded by Johnson to direct the City Manager to prepare the ordinance for a second and possible third and final reading at the meeting on March 3, 2026. Motion carried.

- c. *First reading of an Ordinance to repeal Section 95-160 of the City of Fort Atkinson Municipal Code relating to sunset and reporting requirements of the **ATV/UTV Ordinance** (Houseman, City Manager)*

Manager Houseman provided that the Fort Atkinson City Council enacted an ordinance allowing ATV/UTV use on the City's streets in November 2023, which became effective on

April 8, 2024. The ordinance included a two-year automatic sunset without additional Council action in section 95-160. Without action, the ordinance would no longer be in effect on April 8, 2026. At the Ordinance Committee meeting on February 3, 2026, staff presented the current ordinance for review by the Committee. Staff recommended that the 6-month reporting requirement in Section 95-160 be eliminated. After discussion among the Committee, they provided staff with direction to remove Section 95-160 from the ordinance, which would eliminate both the reporting requirement and the sunset after two years.

Johnson moved, seconded by Huckabee to direct the City Manager to prepare the ordinance for a second and possible third and final reading at the meeting on March 3, 2026. Motion carried.

9. Reports of Officers, Boards, and Committees

- a. *City Manager's Report (Houseman, City Manager)*
No action was taken.

10. Unfinished Business

- a. *Review and possible action relating to a Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Fort Atkinson and Alexander Dogaru of TAP LLC relating to rental payments in support of the **Boost Fort Atkinson** program (Houseman, City Manager)*

Manager Houseman referenced that in 2024, the City Council authorized funding to support the Boost Fort Atkinson downtown pitch competition through the City's Fund 8-Lodging/City Scape/Room Tax fund at \$16,000. City staff and the Fort Atkinson Area Chamber of Commerce applied for matching funding through the Fort Atkinson Community Foundation's grant program. The total of up to \$32,000 was allocated to support a partnership with UW-Whitewater Enactus for the Boost Fort Atkinson program. The Boost Fort Atkinson program ran in winter 2024-2025, with the final winner crowned in April 2025. Tidy Tails dog grooming won the competition and a year of rent at a downtown location. The City continues to pay rent for the remainder of the award year, which is anticipated to end on May 31, 2026. As of January 12, 2026, the City has spent \$12,135 on the program, including 8 months of rent, the award reception, and the payment to Enactus for their work on the project. The anticipated total with the remaining four months of rent is \$15,135, leaving a projected \$16,865 of funds available to support another project.

Huckabee moved, seconded by Johnson to approve the Memorandum of Understanding between the City of Fort Atkinson and Alexander Dogaru of TAP LLC relating to rental payments in support of the Boost Fort Atkinson program. Motion carried.

11. New Business

a. *Review and possible action relating to a contract for the design work associated with the re-striping of **Janesville Avenue** (Navin, Director of Public Works)*

Director Navin reminded of the Janesville Avenue Corridor Plan that was formally adopted on June 3, 2025, identifying the conversion of the current four-lane undivided roadway into a three-lane facility—consisting of two 12-foot travel lanes and one 16-foot center Two-Way-Left-Turn-Lane (TWLTL)—as a priority "short-term" improvement. Staff requested proposals for the design work to re-stripe Janesville Avenue to a TWLTL to better understand associated costs, logistics, and intersection impacts of this proposed change identified in the Corridor Plan. Staff received proposals from three companies listed in the table below. Graef - USA Inc. submitted a proposal that meets the needs of the City at the lowest cost of \$13,500. This project was identified in the adopted 2026 budget in the Capital Improvements Program. \$24,600 was allocated for the study from the City's Transportation Fund (Fund 5). The revenue sources that support Fund 5 include levied funds (property taxes), vehicle registration fees, grants, and state aids. It was confirmed this was to only provide a study for the TWLTL. Staff does not have the experience to perform such a study therefore seeking bids from qualified vendors to conduct the design contract.

Lescohier moved, seconded by Johnson to approve the design contract for the Janesville Avenue Permanent Signing & Pavement Marking Plan to Graef-USA Inc. for \$13,500 and authorize the City Manager to execute. Motion carried.

b. *Review and possible action relating to **Robert Street and South 3rd Street Intersection Study** (Navin, Director of Public Works)*

Director Navin stated that between November 24 and November 25, 2025, staff received three formal Traffic Review Requests from residents expressing safety concerns regarding the pedestrian crossing at this intersection of Robert Street, Janesville Avenue, and S. Third Street. These requests were prompted by a pedestrian being struck by a vehicle on October 20, 2025, as well as several observed near-misses. Specific concerns raised by the public include:

- Perceived insufficient time provided by the pedestrian crossing beacons.
- Vehicles traveling southbound on Robert Street failing to stop at the intersection.
- Dangerous vehicle movements, specifically right-hand turns from S. 3rd Street onto Robert Street while pedestrians are in the crosswalk.

At the December 11, 2025, Transportation and Traffic Review Committee meeting, staff was directed to conduct a formal analysis of the intersection and provide recommendations for safety improvements. Due to the technical nature of traffic signal timing and the legal requirements for crash pattern analysis, staff sought professional proposals to ensure any proposed modifications meet safety and engineering standards. Staff received two proposal for a traffic analysis of this intersection JT Engineering, Inc. and Transportation Analysis & Design, Inc. (TADI).

Huckabee moved, seconded by Johnson to approve the contract with JT Engineering, Inc.

at a cost not to exceed \$9,800.00 to study the Robert Street/Janesville Avenue & 3rd street intersection, and authorize the City Manager to execute. Motion carried.

- c. *Review and possible action relating to the **Dwight Foster Public Library website redesign project** (Lippert, Library Director)*

Director Lippert provided that the library's website was last redesigned in 2016 by TallGuy Productions. In April 2024, the Department of Justice issued a final rule with specific requirements for state and local government entities regarding web and mobile app accessibility. The Dwight Foster Public Library, as part of the City of Fort Atkinson, must comply with the rule by April 26, 2027. The library intends to pursue a Fort Atkinson Community Foundation designated fund grant to cover the website development cost of \$7,500. Additionally, the library intends to pursue a Bridges Library System non-competitive innovation grant to cover the year 1 hosting and maintenance cost. After year 1, the library plans to include the annual hosting and maintenance costs in the library's operating budget. Pursuing grants to cover the initial costs would allow the library to proactively proceed with a website redesign now. On Monday, February 9, 2026, the Library Board approved moving forward with the website redesign project with Revize and applying for a Fort Atkinson Community Foundation designated fund grant to pay for the website development cost. Lippert stated that she was informed by the Community Foundation that a grant would be awarded for the development cost.

Lescohier moved, seconded by Johnson to approve a website redesign project with Revize and applying for a Fort Atkinson Community Foundation designated fund grant to cover the initial website development cost of \$7,500. Motion carried.

- d. *Review and possible action relating to an **Offsite Backup Data Agreement** between the City of Fort Atkinson and the City of Whitewater to host off-site data backup storage equipment for the Fort Atkinson Police Department (Bump, Police Chief)*

Chief Bump stated that in 2021, the Police Department set up a redundant off-site data backup system as a fail-safe in case of a disaster that impacted the department's facility. The data backup system, which has been in place and working for the past five years, was housed at the City of Whitewater server room. The data backup system was installed under a written agreement by email between department heads at the time, and the work was completed by the City's IT provider and Whitewater's IT Department. The City of Whitewater indicated that they are supportive of maintaining this backup system in their facility as is. However, they requested an Agreement between the municipalities. The attached Offsite Backup Data Agreement was drafted and reviewed by both Whitewater and Fort Atkinson. A legal review was completed by the City Attorney. The Agreement provides an accurate description of purpose and need and follows the original intent of the backup system.

Huckabee moved, seconded by Johnson to approve the Offsite Backup Data Agreement between the City of Fort Atkinson and the City of Whitewater and authorize the City Manager to execute. Motion carried.

- e. *Review and possible action relating to a **contract for annual Brush Grinding Services** for the Department of Public Works Operations Division (Williamson, Superintendent of Public Works)*

Superintendent Williamson referenced the eight-acre+/- compost site located at the end of Bark River Road that the City owns, operates and maintains. Residents can drop off standard residential yard waste for composting and tree and woody plant trimmings for proper environmental management at the compost site. The long-term management plan for all woody materials received at the compost site is to process and grind them using a large tub or horizontal grinding machine. This reduces the volume of material to a more manageable size for transport off-site to a proper Wisconsin DNR permitted end user. The City contracts for grinding services on an annual basis. Staff distributed a request for proposals for brush grinding services, base bid and an optional bid for final hauling and disposal of the ground materials, to four properly licensed and insured providers. The providers are as follows: TLB Wood Products LLC, of Seymore WI, Ener-con Inc, of Hartford WI, Atlas Custom Grinding LLC, of Hortonville WI, and Bucklin's Tree Service LLC. The adopted 2026 budget includes \$46,700 of expenditures to support the compost site. The cost of the proposal from Bucklin's Tree Service will be paid for using these funds (account 01- 54-5471-0500).

Lescohier moved, seconded by Johnson to approve the proposal for brush grinding services from Bucklin's Tree Service in the amount of \$7,925.00 and authorize the City Manager to execute the contract. Motion carried.

12. Miscellaneous

None.

13. Public Comment for Matters Not on the Agenda

None.

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)*

Huckabee moved, seconded by Johnson to approve the list of Verified Claims as presented and authorize payment. Motion carried.

15. Closed Session

- a. *The City Council may consider a motion to convene in closed session pursuant to State Stat. §19.85(1)(c) to consider employment, promotion, compensation, or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility [annual performance review of the City Manager]*

Huckabee moved, seconded by Johnson to convene in closed session pursuant to State

Stat. §19.85(1)(c) to consider employment, promotion, compensation, or performance evaluation data of any public employee over which the governmental body has jurisdiction or exercises responsibility [annual performance review of the City Manager]. Motion carried on a roll call vote. 8:17 pm.

16. Adjournment

Johnson moved, seconded Huckabee by to adjourn. Meeting adjourned at 9:47 pm.

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