

CITY OF MARINE ON ST. CROIX CITY COUNCIL MEETING
Thursday, September 11, 2025

The meeting was called to order by Mayor Nyenhuis at 7:00pm. Willenbring, Goodfellow, Ward and Miller present.

Citizens Present: Jake White, Bob White, Glen Mills, Tammy Newcomb, Isiah Bubany, Tom Warth, Brian Jemelka, Pat and Sheri Broshar, Kitz Vadheim, Julie Warren, Troy Gabler, Mary Whitaker, Matt Anderson, Lisa White, Anna Hagstrom, Gayle Knutson, Janice White, Charlie Borden, Roger Lyle, Jim Maher, Bill Ries, David Snyder, Jennifer Johnson, Kristina Smitten, Annie Minich, Jennifer Henry, Mary Burke.

Approval of the Agenda – Nyenhuis will add Jason Mulden under Citizen considerations. *Nyenhuis moved and Miller seconded to approve the agenda as amended. All in favor, motion passed.*

Nyenhuis opened the public hearing at 7:02pm.

Alley Vacation Request – Patrick Broshar owns the property at 450 Chestnut Street and was in attendance to request the City vacate the alley which runs through the center of the property. He submitted a site plan showing the preferred location of the home to be built right where the alley sits. The Planning Commission has reviewed the request and their recommendation was to deny the request due to lack of proof that there is not a secondary location available to build the home and also failure to demonstrate a benefit to the public. A staff report was also submitted by the City Administrator recommending denial due to the reasons listed above, along with siting past precedent and the ongoing discussions of creating a CIP for all City properties, including platted but undeveloped streets and alleys. Willenbring questioned the thought process for the location presented. Mr. Broshar stated there is no room to place a home on the west side due to the water levels and there is a location further on the east, however there would need to be significant grading.

Goodfellow noted the Council has had discussions regarding the amount of property the City owns and believes this is a bigger discussion. He also believes precedent is important and does not want the Council to make a one-off discussion. Miller believes the staff report and PC recommendation all say that the City should not approve the request for various reasons. Nyenhuis stated there is liability to the City due to trees, which will be discussed later in the agenda. He also believes it is the Council's job to steward for the long term and believes this needs to be looked at as a bigger picture topic. Willenbring noted that when he was Chairman of the Planning Commission, streets and alleys were not vacated. He believes there is a way to reposition the home east of the alley and would like to see another variation of the site plan. Ward agrees with Willenbring that there is room to the east to place a home. She believes the Council as a whole needs to look at all City assets and to also create a policy for street and alley vacations. The consensus of the Council was to deny the vacation request.

Bill Ries, 400 Maple Street, believes that Council needs to keep an open mind with these issues. He believes that precedent can be a good thing, but there are situations in which some streets and alleys should be vacated and some that should not.

Nyenhuis moved and Ward seconded to deny the alley vacation request by Pat and Sherri Broshar.

Ward yes

Miller yes

Willenbring yes

Goodfellow yes

Nyenhuis yes

All in favor, motion passed.

Nyenhuis closed the public hearing at 7:21pm.

Citizens Considerations –

Troy Gabler - CLA – Mr. Gabler was in attendance to review the 2024 audit for the City. A power point presentation was shown to the Council with the audit results showing the City was given a clean audit for 2024. The internal control weaknesses noted were limited segregation of duties and internal control. Both of these are very common with small municipalities and it is very difficult to rectify these without adding staff. The audit showed revenues up due to levied taxes and expenditures. Goodfellow questioned if running as a cash basis city that does not incur debit is good practice. Mr. Gabler stated it depends on the philosophy of the City. There are governments of all sizes that run on the idea of not incurring debt. Ward questioned how the City compares with other small cities with public safety income and expenses. Mr. Gabler stated that it varies city by city but that typically public safety departments do not generate much revenue and is an expense typically funded by the tax levy. All fund balances were reviewed to show the comparisons of each fund over the past four years. Mr. Gabler noted that many small cities have significantly more than two internal control recommendations and Marine has done a good job of managing theirs.

Jake White – Sanitary Sewer Request – Miller stated that Mr. White has purchased a vacant lot on Robert Street and is hoping to construct a home in the near future. However, the lot cannot hold an individual sewer system and his only option is to connect to City sewer. There is currently no infrastructure to support septic along Robert St and there are no plans for the City to install sanitary sewer in that area until 2028 when the capital road project is scheduled. Mr. White would like to build a house this fall and is requesting to enter into an agreement with the City to allow him to install and pay for the infrastructure to be built this year. The City Engineer and City Attorney have both reviewed the request and have no reservations as long as a Development agreement is drafted outlining some type of bond or escrow and oversight by the City throughout the entire project. Isiah Bubany, City engineer, has reviewed the plans submitted by Mr. White's engineer. The line from the structure to the home will be a directionally bore to prevent major disruption. He believes the plan is fairly simple and the lines being proposed would carry the impact of all of the homes on Robert should they all connect to City sewer down the road. He believes this project would be an asset to the City as well. Nyenhuis believes this issue is moving to quickly and has not given the residents of Robert St an option to speak. Mr. White is looking for approval to move forward with the project and not to construct. Ward questioned why the City would not do the

work and invoice Jake rather than allowing him to hire the contractors and pay for the project. Jake stated it has to do with cost and that it would be substantially more expensive if the city hired it out. Miller also stated the City does not have the funds to perform this project at this time. Goodfellow questioned if this is essentially mimicking how a developer would operate. The answer is yes, and there will be a development agreement turning the system over to the City once the project is complete. Willenbring believes this project is a large benefit to the City and noted that public works is behind this project as well. Jake would love to have his foundation in the ground before snowfall so he would like to move on the project as soon as possible. Dave Snyder stated it is common to have a developer install private utilities, however there should be a development agreement in place stating oversight by the City and financial security to make sure the City is covered. The development agreement would also include reimbursement to the City for all attorney and engineering costs incurred by the City.

Jim Maher, 371 Robert Street, is a neighbor of the property owned by Jake White. He stated the neighbors are concerned that there was no advanced notification by the City. Mr. Maher is located at the end of Robert Street and questioned if the line will run all the way to the end of the street if Mr. White does this project. Isiah stated this project would not run the line that far, however it could be extended as originally planned in the 2028 road project. Ward suggested having a neighborhood meeting with the water/wastewater liaisons and the residents on Robert Street.

Gayle Knutson, 37 Robert Street, questioned if the City could pay for the additional line extension to their house. That is something the City would have to look at when the plans and specifications are draw up for the 2028 project.

Nyenhuis would like to see a consensus by Council to move forward with the conversation and bring a more complete proposal back to Council for consideration. After further discussion, members of the Council agreed that they would like to give Mr. White initial support for the project to avoid unnecessary additional costs if there is not going to be support to move forward by Council.

Nyenhuis moved and seconded by that the City representatives of the water and wastewater committee along with public works, city attorney, city engineer meet with neighbors within a three-week timeline to review the project details.

Discussion by Ward who believes the Council should act on the whether or not to move forward with Mr. White's proposal to avoid Mr. White accruing additional expenses only to have the project shut down. Council agreed.

Tammy Newcomb, 301 Robert Street, questioned if the motion is allowing a meeting with the neighbors along Robert Street to gather input. Council advised it does.

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Goodfellow moved and Miller seconded to approve, in principle, the concept presented by Mr. White to install a manhole structure and install a service line to his property on Robert Street.

All in favor, motion passed unanimously.

Marine Mills Folk School – Julie McGarvie introduced herself as the new director of the Marine Mills Folk School. She reviewed the philosophy of the folk school and stated they are moving to a seasonal approach with their classes. They are also introducing open call classes, which will allow outside students to propose class topics. The fall festival will be occurring next week. She thanked the Council for their long-term support of the folk school.

Brian Jemelka – 15290 Ostrum Trail. Mr. Jemelka requested the City change the garbage ordinance to allow residents to opt out of garbage collection. The current City code requires all resident to be part of the garbage collection contract in order to control the number of garbage trucks using City streets. Nyenhuis noted that there is a new contract beginning in 2026 and the cost will be reduced slightly and encourage Mr. Jemelka to use the smallest container possible to help keep the cost down.

Jason Molden – Mr. Molden is the new owner of the St. Croix Chocolate company. There will be an open house this coming Thursday and he encouraged residents to stop by.

Planning Commission - The commissioner has submitted a written report. No additional report.

Fire and Rescue – Chief Mills reviewed his monthly report. Fire Prevention week is October 6th through the 11th. Marine sent a truck to the Twin Cities for the 911 tribute. Miller submitted a written summary regarding City enforcement and wanted to reiterate that Council members are not enforcement personnel and should contact Washington County or the City Administrator. Miller is still working on the gathering information for the discussion of emergency response.

Roads – Isiah reported there is no final payment request for the 2025 street project as there are still a few minor items that needs to be addressed.

Isiah sent a summary of the 2026 road improvement project. There are questions as to whether the Council would like to increase the street width on Chestnut St from 8 ft wide to 12 ft and also whether to pave the entire length of Chestnut, whereas right now there is a section on the west end that is gravel. There is also a proposal to increase the width of the southern portion of 5th street from Elm to the end of the two serviced driveways to 12ft, with the remaining portion of 5th street to Chestnut to 8 ft. Currently there is no policy for minimum street width, however City staff, the City engineer and Fire Chief would like to see a 12ft minimum for maintenance and public safety purposes. Because 12ft is not wide enough for two cars to pass, there will be passing areas included along Chestnut for that purpose. As part of this project, the gravel road from Elm Street through the school forest will be removed and converted to green space. The consensus of Council was a 12 ft street width should not be set as a minimum for all streets given the inability for cars to pass.

Personnel - Ward would like to recommend the City Council grant the assistant clerk one week of paid maternity leave as the City does not offer this often however asked for Council opinion. Miller questioned how much time the assistant will be off. Suzanne will be taking 6 weeks, of which three will be PTO and three unpaid. It was suggested that PTO should not be used for maternity leave and the City should reconsider their decision. Further discussion was that the Council can review this issue at a later date. Willenbring requested the Clerk look into whether long term disability could also be used.

Nyenhuis moved and Miller seconded to grant the assistant Clerk two weeks of paid maternity leave time off. All in favor, motion passed.

Parks & Rec – The DNR grant application summary was presented to Council for review. This proposal is significantly larger than the previous request and Goodfellow suggested the City should be prepared in case the entire grant amount is not approved.

Watershed – No report.

Cemetery – No report.

City Properties– Nyenhuis is proposing a task force with himself, Willenbring and two planning commission members to review the 40 acres around the maintenance shop. Miller would like to see a project scope and charge. Ward does not see a need for this given the CIP asset list of all city assets and does not believe this property should be singled out. Miller noted that Mayor Nyenhuis has stated in the past that if there are City properties that are not used, they should be disposed of. He agrees with Ward and does see a need. Nyenhuis believes the City 40 has diminished over the years, is in a dangerous state and needs attention. Miller questioned the facts to support the Mayors statement and the need for a task force at this time. Willenbring does not believe there is any harm in just looking at the property and to bring ideas back to the Council. Goodfellow stated the City has not set values for the property. Ward noted that there have been multiple conversations during this meeting where the Council has agreed that all assets need reviewing and assessed as a CIP. Goodfellow does not see any urgency with this property and believes there should be an assessment of all assets before a task force is created. Nyenhuis believes the City has separated out many assets such as the Hollow, North Meadow and Millstream and believes this should also be separated. Miller stated that the properties named by the Mayor were separated out was due to grant opportunities that presented themselves, which is not the case with this property. Goodfellow suggested a task force be formed to scope out all City properties. No action was taken.

Water Systems -No report.

Community Events - No report.

EDA – A written summary was submitted by Willenbring. There will most likely be a meeting in October.

Citizen Committee Reports

Forest Advisory – A written summary was submitted. No additional report.

Mill Site Committee – No report.

Multi-generational – Willenbring reported there was a meeting last Tuesday evening. A survey is being sent to all residents and there will be an open house on October 25th from 1pm – 3pm.

Millstream – There will be a walkthrough of the Millstream Plan on September 25th.

Consent Calendar – Miller moved and Ward seconded to approve the Minutes of 8/14/25, Treasurer's Report of 8/25, List of Bills for 9/11/25, Administrators Report, Public Works Maintenance Report and Planning Commission Minutes, bow hunting permit for William O'Brien with exemption and contract with the Washington County Conservation District. Motion passed unanimously.

Old/New Business – Miller moved and Ward seconded to accept the maximum levy at \$1,179,987.39 which represents a 4.7% increase over 2025. All in favor, motion passed.

Mayor Notes/Clerk's Report – Clerk Peterson advised that the cell tower construction is set to begin on Monday, September 15, 2025 with a completion date of early October.

Adjournment. Nyenhuis moved and Willenbring seconded to adjourn at 9:17pm.

Minutes taken by Lynette Peterson, City Clerk