

CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL WORKSESSION
Monday, April 20, 2026

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Worksession Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hastings, Nebraska was conducted at the Hastings Municipal Airport, 3300 W. 12th Street, on April 20, 2026.

The Worksession Meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. by Council President Steve Huntley with the following members present: Michael Anderson, Maggie Esch, Marc Rowan, Brian Hoffman, Matt Fong. Absent: Brad Consbruck, Larry Consbruck.

City Officials Present: Mark Funkey, Jesse Oswald, Lori Vorderstrasse, Adam Story, Troy Vorderstrasse, Erik Nielsen, Roger Nash, Jeff Hassenstab, Lee Vrooman, Teresa Kreutzer-Hodson, Tony Herrman, Lori Hartman, Derek Zeisler, Ember Batelaan, Kevin Kubo, Kirk Layton, Trent Clark, Brandan Lubken.

Pledge of Allegiance.

Moved by Michael Anderson seconded by Maggie Esch to adopt the current agenda for the April 20, 2026 City Council Worksession. Roll Call: Ayes: Steve Huntley, Michael Anderson, Maggie Esch, Marc Rowan, Brian Hoffman, Matt Fong. Nays: None. Absent: Brad Consbruck, Larry Consbruck. The motion carried.

Official Notice of the Worksession was published in the Hastings Tribune on Friday, April 17, 2026. Pursuant to Nebraska Revised Statute Section 84-1412, the public is advised that a copy of today's agenda and all reproducible written material which will be discussed at today's meeting is available for public review and a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act is posted and accessible to members of the public.

Citizen Communications.

Lake Hastings Water Plan: Howard Sheley, 518 South Shore Drive, Nate Karl, 415 North Shore Drive, Doug Zarek, 107 E. 5th, Juniata, Dave Cure, 405 North Shore Drive, Willis Hunt, 616 Madden Road

Proposed zoning changes: Kara Jacobsen, 2019 N. 7th Avenue, Doug Zarek, 107 E. 5th, Juniata, Edward Krantz, 1203 East 6th Street

Discussion of Lake Hastings Water Plan.

Brandan Lubken, Director of Underground Operations, began discussion on the Lake Hastings water level. He indicated that Lake Hastings hit a historically low level this spring (30" below dam spillway), property owners around the lake have concerns about lake safety, property values, aesthetics, and long-term lake use/health and that has caused Utility staff conversations regarding the four options before the Council tonight.

Option 1: Fill the lake utilizing Units 4 & 5 plant wells

- groundwater resources utilized to fill surface water basin (groundwater levels have dropped 4.5 ft. in 5 years)
- plant wells currently under Little Blue Natural Resource District (LBNRD) allocations (5 years, limit 3-year average) and any water used by these wells to fill the lake will count against plant well allocations

- west plant wells are likely Aquafir Storage Restoration (ASR) influenced and water treated to drink will be used to fill the lake (about \$1,000,000 per year ASR O&M)
- costs about \$2,500 per ft. for pump power with pump runtime about 400 hours per ft. (pump wear)
- sets precedence to keep lake full and with the drought, the game has changed with the LBNRD

Option 2: Fill the lake utilizing municipal wells

- groundwater resources utilized to fill surface water basin (groundwater levels have dropped 4.5 ft. in 5 years)
- municipal water system currently under mandate by LBNRD to construct and enact water conservation plan with current plan estimated to conserve about 24.5 million gallons per year
- filling lake about one foot would be equivalent to one full year conservation efforts and equivalent to 3-4 full days of water system use
- if LBNRD and State determine groundwater resources are fully or over appropriated, 3-year average allocation will go into effect with filling the lake being counting against this allocation
- west municipal wells ASR influenced and water treated to drink used to fill the lake (about \$1,000,000 per year ASR O&M)
- costs about \$2,500 per ft. for pump power with pump runtime about 400 hours per ft. (pump wear)
- sets precedence to keep lake full

Scott Nelson, LBNRD General Manager, stated: “As you are aware, much of Nebraska has been in some sort of drought the past 5 years or so. Currently, all irrigated acres, except a few sections in southeast Jefferson County are in a stay and 5-year allocation period. Due to declining groundwater levels, our board has advised staff to highly discourage the use of groundwater for surface water uses, especially those involving recreational purposes.”

Option 3: Construct well devoted to filling lake

- Upper Big Blue Natural Resource District (UBBNRD) has had no historic water use curtailment/allocation mandates
- capital estimate for construction about \$150,000
- costs about \$2,500 per ft. for pump power with pump runtime about 400 hours per ft (pump wear)

Option 4: Do not fill lake

- LBNRD has historically only had to curtail/allocate water usage once in its existence (now)
- Unit 4 usage has increased as the electric market continues to volatilize, filling the lake more often

Councilmember Anderson questioned if it is feasible to run Unit 4 more to get water. Derek Zeisler explained that Unit 4 is one of the most expensive units to run, used for high demand times and they have kept it around to sell capacity. He spoke about the unprecedented challenge if they use the allocation amount up and don't have it if they need the allocation later on and how it could have an effect on electric rates long term. He stated that a recreational decision is impacting a natural resource decision which is impacting an electric generation and electric rate decision. Mr. Lubken stated in his conversations with the LBNRD, they are more interested in helping out power generation plants and less interested in helping out golf courses even though they are in the same category as far as allocation. Councilmember Huntley asked about the dredging of the lake and where the City was at with that. Lee Vrooman, Director of Engineering, stated it is a long term plan and they are years off of any dredging being done at the lake and there is \$6 to \$8 million of funding that would be needed and with the struggles of the general fund, they have held off because they felt it was prudent not to spend general fund

money at this time when there are other things more pressing. Mr. Lubken stated that Lake Hastings is already an impaired lake with high nitrates and high phosphorus. Councilmember Fong asked about the timeline associated with creating a well or some of the other options. Mr. Lubken stated that with Option 1 or 2 it would be flipping a switch, Option 3 could be a next year issue. Councilmember Hoffman asked about Marty Stange input regarding the issue and asked about some type of fee structure to assess a fee to people that live on the lake for the usage of the water/lake. He stated that he agreed something had to be done but didn't agree with Option 4. Councilmember Rowan asked how quickly they could complete Option 3. Mr. Lubken indicated that the funds were currently not budgeted. Mr. Funkey, City Administrator, indicated Council would need to approve the funding and Mr. Lubken indicated that the well could be done this cycle. Mr. Lubken stated it is a complicated issue with the conservation component and the lake condition component. Mr. Zeisler stated that Option 3 takes care of all the Utility concerns except the conservation and cost aspects since they wouldn't be using treated water to fill the lake and not dealing with the allocation limits since it is in the UBBNRD. Councilmember Esch asked the Utility team's recommendation. Mr. Zeisler indicated that the real challenge is the unprecedented situation that the LBNRD has put on them. He stated that Options 1 or 2 have implications for water and electricity down the road. Councilmember Fong stated that the conservation element is significant and in the long term there could be more cautions, more limits and additional decisions may have to be made. Councilmember Hoffman indicated that water is our most expensive resource. Mr. Zeisler stated that was correct. Jeff Hassenstab, Director of Parks and Recreation, stated that the current level of Lake Hastings is two feet low so the challenge until they solve the issue is that they are going to need to shut down use of boats on the lake and he just wanted Council to know that. Mr. Zeisler stated that if we use allocations, it doesn't mean we will have an issue that half the town is without electricity but it would cause some economic challenges. He said that this issue impacts all of our citizens in different ways. Councilmember Huntley asked if the Utility Advisory Board should look at this issue and make a recommendation. Mr. Funkey suggested bringing this back before the Council at the first meeting in May to make a decision. Councilmember Hoffman also suggested setting parameters for when filling of the lake occurs and asked for public feedback. It was the consensus of Council to move Option 3 and 4 forward with more information from staff for a vote at the May 11th City Council Meeting.

Discussion of proposed zoning changes.

Ember Batelaan, City Planner, began her presentation and indicated that they have a public meeting scheduled on May 14th at the Library for a conversation with the public and they are always open to having one on one meetings as well. She started with a background on what they have been doing with State Statutes, Comparable Communities, Comprehensive Plan and a Neighborhood Character Survey

State Statute

- State Statute 19-5504 - Affordable Housing Report, Hastings' Affordable Housing Action Plan (2023)
- Fair Housing Act: prohibits discrimination in housing, financing, and rentals based on race, color, religion, sex, national origin, familial status, or disability
- other State Statutes as applicable

Comprehensive Plan - a vision for future growth of the City with a 20 year time frame. Ms. Batelaan reviewed density for future land use categories.

Comparable Communities (Grand Island, NE; Kearney, NE; Fremont, NE; Norfolk, NE; Missoula, MT; Salina, KS). Ms. Batelaan reviewed R-0, R-1, R-2, R-3 and R-4 density in Hastings currently, proposed in Hastings and in comparison to other communities.

Neighborhood Character Survey - Ms. Batelaan reviewed preferences of the survey conducted November 17, 2025 through December 31, 2025 with 33 participants and four public meetings in each of the four wards. She indicated they are here before Council to get their thoughts and feelings on what is proposed so far.

Kevin Kubo, Director of Development Services, reminded Council that this is the first draft. He stated the main purpose of rebuilding the zoning code is the three building blocks of planning - address legal issues, consistency, clarity.

He reviewed the proposed districts and existing districts. Mr. Kubo spoke regarding the timeline and the background research, public engagement, proposed draft, public engagement, adoption (Planning Commission), and adoption (City Council). Councilmember Huntley asked about the timeframe for getting this finished. Mr. Kubo stated he would like to complete the whole project by October or November. Councilmember Hoffman suggested knocking on doors to get the information out. Councilmember Hoffman talked about the process in place with the Board of Adjustment. Councilmember Huntley asked about planned districts. Ms. Batelaan stated they still have them but haven't drafted them yet. Mr. Kubo indicated this is the first step in a long process. Mr. Kubo told Council they would be seeing this again two or three more times.

Council President Huntley stated there being no further business to come before the Council, the meeting was adjourned at 8:20 p.m.