

CITY OF HASTINGS, NEBRASKA
MINUTES OF CITY COUNCIL SPECIAL MEETING
Tuesday, July 28, 2026

Pursuant to due call and notice thereof, a Special Meeting of the City Council of the City of Hastings, Nebraska was conducted at the Hastings Municipal Airport, 3300 W. 12th Street, on July 28, 2026.

The meeting was called to order at 6:00 p.m. in Special Session by Mayor Beckby with the following members present Steve Huntley, Michael Anderson, Brad Consbruck, Larry Consbruck, Matt Fong, Brian Hoffman, Marc Rowan, Maggie Esch. Absent: None.

The Pledge of Allegiance to the Flag of the United States of America was recited.

Moved by Michael Anderson seconded by Larry Consbruck to approve the current agenda. Roll Call: Ayes: Steve Huntley, Michael Anderson, Brad Consbruck, Larry Consbruck, Maggie Esch, Marc Rowan, Brian Hoffman, Matt Fong. Nays: None. Absent: None. The motion carried.

Official Notice of the Special Meeting was published in the Hastings Tribune on Friday, July 24, 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 to be discussed at today's meeting is available for public review and a current copy of the Nebraska Open Meetings Act is in the meeting room and accessible to members of the public.

CITIZEN COMMUNICATIONS:

Diane Dube, Tammy Craig, Lee Hogan, Chuck Newman and Craig Hubbard spoke on item 1.

AGENDA ITEMS:

Discussion of the current situation and discussions with Heartland Pet Connection and possible vote. (Requested by Councilmembers Mike Anderson, Brad Consbruck, Larry Consbruck and Marc Rowan.) City Administrator Mark Funkey provided a timeline of events regarding Heartland Pet Connection and invited questions from the Mayor and Council. Councilmember Anderson inquired about the financial aspects of Heartland Pet Connection and discussed future budget considerations for the contract with City Administrator Funkey. Police Chief Adam Story presented a historical overview of the program, indicating that animal control is essential for a community the size of Hastings. He noted that the service contract was obtained through competitive bidding and clarified that the Hastings Police Department does not manage the facility; contracting for the service is a common practice in Nebraska. Chief Story mentioned that, in addition to the contracted service amount, Heartland Pet Connection also receives proceeds from the City's fee schedule, resulting in total revenue of approximately \$86,000. The average income per animal in 2024 was \$169, while in 2025 it was \$144. In 2026, with approximately 170 animals reported, the projected average income per animal could

amount to \$268. Chief Story participated in meetings addressing the shortfall for Heartland Pet Connection, during which potential revenue generation options, such as a free food program and pet licensing, were discussed. Councilmember Fong confirmed with Police Chief Story that it is not common for communities to allow the shelter service to keep fine proceeds. Councilmember Esch confirmed with Police Chief Story that the \$86,000 figure includes both the fee paid by the City to Heartland Pet Connection and fines collected. Chief Story added that Heartland Pet Connection collects additional charges for services such as vaccinations or adoption. Councilmember Hoffman and Police Chief Story discussed the tracking of animal numbers generated by the Police Department, which is recorded by the Police, while Heartland Pet Connection tracks the numbers of animals dropped off directly by citizens. Chief Story stated that the number of animals provided by the Police Department to Heartland Pet Connection remains consistent, although the cost per animal has varied. Councilmember Rowan inquired whether animals are taken to other locations, and Chief Story responded that animals are taken to Heartland Pet Connection if received by the Police Department. He estimated that the total number of animals at the end of the year will be 350. Mayor Beckby discussed the contract provided to the Council and inquired about its authorship. Councilmember Huntley noted that the contract was distributed by the Heartland Pet Connection president. Heartland Pet Connection Board President Tara McDaneld stated that the contract was written by the Heartland Pet Connection attorney and provided at the request of a City Council member. Councilmember Hoffman indicated that the City staff were directed to negotiate the contract by the City Council and emphasized the importance of good faith negotiations. Mayor Beckby questioned the purpose of the meeting, to which Councilmember Anderson responded that he aimed to update the City Council. Councilmember Huntley questioned whether the contract could be extended without going out for bid and stated that it is the Council's decision under Robert's Rules of Order. City Attorney Oswald confirmed that the issue was brought before the Council, which directed staff to negotiate the contract with stipulations that have not been met due to the rejection of the last offer. City Administrator Funkey noted that neither Heartland Pet Connection nor Start Over Rover agreed to meet, indicating that the stipulation was unfulfilled. Councilmember Huntley expressed the belief that the stipulations had been met, to which City Administrator Funkey responded that they were met only up to the rejection of the contract. Councilmember L. Consbruck confirmed with City Administrator Funkey that the last contract did not include critical points and received support from the Heartland Pet Connection attorney. Councilmember B. Consbruck expressed disappointment with Mayor Beckby regarding four Council members in connection with the mystery contract and clarified that his intent was merely to discuss and update. Mayor Beckby stated that the contract was rejected, emphasizing that a contract is necessary for further Council discussion. Councilmember Fong stated that the City has a fiduciary responsibility to utilize tax dollars wisely and that negotiations should continue to allow Heartland Pet Connection to operate while protecting City resources, suggesting potential additions to the negotiating team. Mayor Beckby reiterated that the contract as proposed is satisfactory and sought clarification on its rejection. Heartland Pet Connection Board President Tara McDaneld indicated that the contract was rejected due to the extension and that Heartland Pet Connection had not been deemed the sole source. Mayor Beckby inquired if the rejection stemmed from concerns about

additional funding needs in two years. City Attorney Oswald stated that the contract had been rejected and that the sole source issue had not been communicated to City staff. Councilmember Huntley proposed removing the extension through an amendment, to which Tara McDaneld agreed, stating that its removal would make her more comfortable. City Attorney Oswald advised that the City Council has the right to remove the extension but cautioned that it would essentially constitute a \$90,000 gift to Heartland Pet Connection without benefit to the City. Councilmember Huntley asked if the contract could be voided and re-bid, but City Attorney Oswald responded that a legally binding contract is currently in place. Police Chief Story expressed concerns regarding the provision of additional funding without a service tie-in and the potential precedent it could set for other City vendors, suggesting that further discussions and negotiations are necessary. Councilmember Rowan agreed that eliminating the additional years is prudent, noting that if the City manages the program, costs will increase. Councilmember Huntley discussed the potential for a City liaison to the board. Councilmember Hoffman requested staff to discuss and review the contract further with Heartland Pet Connection. Councilmember Esch reiterated that there remains a contract in place until 2028, pending renegotiation, and highlighted the City's tight budget. She expressed regret that the reasons for the rejection of the contract were not effectively communicated. Steps moving forward were discussed and Mayor Beckby implored that those making the decisions for Heartland Pet Connection be involved in the negotiation. Patricia Pratt stated that she did not agree to the contract and it had become emotional and discussed her perspective on the negotiations. Councilmember Huntley stated that he believes there needs to be a cooling down period. Councilmember Huntley moved, seconded by Councilmember Anderson to postpone negotiations until January 1, 2027. Roll Call: Ayes: Steve Huntley, Michael Anderson, Larry Consbruck, Maggie Esch, Brian Hoffman. Nays: Brad Consbruck, Marc Rowan, Matt Fong. Absent: None. The motion carried.

There being no further business before the Council, Mayor Beckby adjourned the meeting at 7:50 p.m.

APPROVED:

George J.J. Beckby, Mayor

ATTEST:

Tyler Ficken, City Clerk

(S E A L)