Meeting Announcement and Agenda

City Council Workshop
Date: Monday, March 23, 2026
Time: 5:00 PM

1. **Call to Order**
2. **Workshop Items**
   - *2.A.* Educational Session on the Responsibility of the City Council when an Emergency Declaration has been Declared.
     Staff and a representative from the State will present an educational session on Emergency Declarations. This included the requirements of the City Council and Mayor, as well as a discussion on the need for a declaration.
   - *2.B.* Discussion on Retaining Wall Failures.
     The purpose of this report is to inform the City Council of the scope and characteristics of retaining walls located adjacent to public right-of-way based on the recently completed staff inventory. This information is being presented to provide situational awareness, support future policy discussions, and begin considering potential long-term infrastructure and financial implications associated with retaining walls near public streets and sidewalks.
3. **Adjournment**

Accommodations for signing interpreter, Braille, large print, etc. can be made. Call City Hall at 385.3600 seven days prior to the need. Hearing assistance devices are available during meetings.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING STAFF REPORT

To: City Council Members and Mayor
From: Mike Warner, Fire Chief, Grady Nelson, Assistant Fire Chief
Meeting Date: March 23, 2026
Agenda Item Number: 2.A.

Title and Purpose

Educational Session on the Responsibility of the City Council when an Emergency Declaration has been Declared.
Staff and a representative from the State will present an educational session on Emergency Declarations. This included the requirements of the City Council and Mayor, as well as a discussion on the need for a declaration.

Attachments

None

Background

The City of Red Wing has the authority to declare a local emergency in accordance with Minnesota Statutes Chapter 12, Emergency Management, specifically Minnesota Statute §12.29. Under this statute, a local emergency may be declared by the mayor of a municipality or the chair of a county board of commissioners, or their legally authorized successor. Once declared, the emergency may remain in effect for up to three days, unless the governing body of the political subdivision approves an extension. The declaration must also be publicly announced and properly filed with the local record-keeping authority.

Minnesota law defines a disaster as a situation that creates an actual or imminent threat to the health and safety of persons or that may result in significant loss of property or environmental damage, where local resources alone are insufficient to adequately respond.

The purpose of declaring a local emergency is to enable the municipality to respond quickly and effectively to a significant incident. In many circumstances, government entities must follow specific procedural requirements such as competitive bidding, procurement timelines, or other administrative formalities. During an emergency declaration, certain statutory and procedural requirements may be temporarily streamlined or suspended to allow the local government to take immediate action necessary to protect life, property, and public safety.

In addition, a declaration of a local emergency activates applicable portions of the jurisdiction's emergency operations plan and may authorize the use of mutual aid and assistance agreements with neighboring jurisdictions. This allows local governments to rapidly mobilize personnel, equipment, and other resources needed for response and recovery efforts.

Another important purpose of an emergency declaration is to establish the legal framework necessary to request assistance from higher levels of government. Emergency management in the United States follows a tiered response system, beginning at the local level and escalating as necessary. If the magnitude of an incident exceeds the capacity of a city to manage effectively, the city may seek assistance from the county. If county resources are insufficient, the county or city may request assistance from the State of Minnesota. When state resources are overwhelmed or the disaster is particularly severe, the governor may request a federal disaster declaration from the President of the United States, which can make federal funding, personnel, and resources available.

A common example of this process is a major flooding event affecting a community. Initially, the city may declare a local emergency to mobilize local resources and activate emergency response plans. If damages exceed the city's capabilities, assistance may be requested from Goodhue County and the State of Minnesota. Ultimately, if the disaster is significant enough, the state may request federal assistance through programs administered by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA), which can provide financial assistance, technical support, and recovery resources to affected communities.

Discussion

Within the City of Red Wing, one potential situation that could necessitate the declaration of a local emergency is an incident involving the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant (PINGP). The plant, located near Red Wing, is regulated by the U.S. Nuclear Regulatory Commission (NRC) and operates under extensive federal, state, county, and local emergency preparedness requirements. While the likelihood of a major incident is low, the potential consequences of a radiological emergency require significant planning and coordination among all levels of government.

The City of Red Wing, Goodhue County, the State of Minnesota, and federal agencies maintain detailed radiological emergency response plans that outline procedures for protecting public health and safety in the event of an incident at the plant. These plans define emergency classifications, response actions, protective measures, and coordination protocols among agencies. Although the plans clearly establish when and how emergency actions are implemented, the possibility still exists that the City of Red Wing may need to declare a local emergency to ensure rapid mobilization of resources and coordination with county, state, and federal partners.

Declaring a local emergency in response to a radiological incident would allow the city to activate its emergency operations structure, streamline administrative processes, and fully coordinate with the broader emergency management system. Such a declaration could also support requests for assistance from Goodhue County Emergency Management, the Minnesota Division of Homeland Security and Emergency Management (HSEM), and federal partners if additional resources are required.

To ensure preparedness for such scenarios, emergency response agencies regularly participate in training, exercises, and coordinated planning activities related to the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant. In accordance with federal nuclear preparedness requirements, large-scale emergency response exercises are conducted periodically and evaluated by the Federal Emergency Management Agency (FEMA). These exercises simulate realistic

emergency conditions and test the ability of local, county, state, and federal agencies to respond effectively to a radiological incident.

During the current year, a major emergency preparedness exercise involving the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant is scheduled for July. This exercise represents a significant coordinated effort among multiple response agencies, including local law enforcement, fire departments, emergency medical services, emergency management personnel, public works, various city staff, and public safety officials. In preparation for the exercise, emergency responders throughout the region have been participating in planning meetings, training sessions, and practice scenarios designed to ensure that all response procedures are clearly understood and effectively implemented.

As part of this exercise, FEMA evaluators will assess the performance of participating agencies, including local emergency responders. The evaluation focuses on areas such as emergency notification procedures, incident command coordination, public protective actions, communication systems, and overall response effectiveness. These federally evaluated exercises are an essential component of maintaining compliance with national radiological emergency preparedness standards and ensuring that communities surrounding nuclear facilities remain ready to respond in the unlikely event of an emergency.

Through ongoing training, coordination, and evaluation, the City of Red Wing and its partner agencies work to maintain a high level of preparedness for any potential incident involving the Prairie Island Nuclear Generating Plant, ensuring the continued protection of residents, responders, and the surrounding region.

Red Wing Specific,

A local emergency may only be declared by the Mayor of a municipality. Minn. Stat. § 12.29, subd. 1. An emergency, for the purposes of declaring a local emergency, is an “unforeseen combination of circumstances that calls for immediate action to prevent a disaster from developing or occurring.” *Id.* at § 12.03, subd. 3. The Mayor’s declaration of local emergency can only last for three days, unless the declaration of local emergency is continued by or with the consent of the City Council. *Id.* at § 12.29, subd. 1. Any order or proclamation declaring, continuing, or terminating a local emergency must be given “prompt and general publicity” and “filed promptly by the chief of the local record-keeping agency” of the City. *Id.*

A declaration of local emergency by the Mayor invokes the necessary portions of the response and recovery aspects of the City’s disaster plan and emergency management functions. *See* Minn. Stat. § 12.29, subd. 2. By statute, the City is required to establish a local organization to perform emergency management functions. *Id.* at §12.25, subd. 1. Presently, City Code Section 2.07 contains the City’s emergency management authorization, which provides for the creation and establishment of a local emergency management plan. Thus, whenever the Mayor declares a local emergency, the Mayor can utilize the resources available under the City’s emergency management plan to respond to the present emergency.

The law does not specifically require an emergency ordinance or a resolution to be used to declare an emergency, but rather refers to an “order or proclamation
Section 5.08 of the Red Wing City Charter refers to emergency ordinances and states that an “emergency ordinance is an ordinance necessary for the immediate preservation of the public peace, health, morals, safety, or welfare in the emergency as defined and declared in a

preamble thereto, and is adopted by a majority of the Council Members holding office."

To help facilitate the conversation, Greg Hayes and Assistant Chief Grady Nelson will provide a brief presentation. Grady Nelson serves as the City of Red Wing's Emergency Manager, dedicating approximately 50% of his time to emergency management responsibilities, including preparation for the major FEMA drill at PINGP. In addition to these duties, he serves in a leadership role within the fire department, overseeing a variety of operational tasks and responding to emergency calls.

Greg Hayes is a public safety professional with 33 years of service, including his tenure as Director of Public Safety for a Tribal Nation, where he also helped establish a Public Health Department and led key policy and operational efforts during the COVID-19 response. He holds a Bachelor's degree in Criminal Justice and Homeland Security and has taught emergency management policy and operational concepts at the highest levels. Greg now serves as an Emergency Medical Services Coordinator for the Metropolitan Emergency Services Board, continuing to strengthen regional preparedness. Throughout his career, he has held senior command roles in numerous local and national disasters, consistently demonstrating strong leadership and a commitment to community resilience.

Financial Plan and Impact

There are currently no costs associated with this educational session.

Alternatives

Recommended Action

This is an educational presentation only.

CITY COUNCIL MEETING STAFF REPORT

To: City Council Members and Mayor
From: Patrick Ramaker, Deputy Director of Buildings & Grounds
Meeting Date: March 23, 2026
Agenda Item Number: 2.B.

Title and Purpose

Discussion on Retaining Wall Failures.
The purpose of this report is to inform the City Council of the scope and characteristics of retaining walls located adjacent to public right-of-way based on the recently completed staff inventory. This information is being presented to provide situational awareness, support future policy discussions, and begin considering potential long-term infrastructure and financial implications associated with retaining walls near public streets and sidewalks.

Attachments

1. Retaining Walls Around Red Wing - 03.23.2023

Background

Throughout the community, numerous retaining walls are located near or adjacent to public rights-of-way. These walls may be constructed of various materials, including concrete, masonry block, timber, or stone, and may serve a variety of functions, such as supporting slopes, separating grade changes, or stabilizing soil conditions between public infrastructure and private property.

In many older areas of the City, grade differences between streets and adjoining properties were created during roadway construction, sidewalk initiatives, or reconstruction projects. Additionally, some of the retaining walls in certain developments may have been constructed by the developer to create buildable lots. As a result, the origin, ownership, and purpose of retaining walls adjacent to public rights-of-way can vary significantly.

Over time, many retaining walls have deteriorated due to age, weather exposure, drainage conditions, or structural fatigue. When deterioration occurs, questions sometimes arise regarding responsibility for repair, replacement, or ongoing maintenance. Because retaining walls can affect both public safety and the stability of adjacent land, their deterioration must be addressed. Currently, several locations have retaining walls that have failed or are showing signs of significant degradation.

Retaining walls along streets or sidewalks often stabilize soil where there is a difference in elevation between the public right-of-way and adjacent private property. The structural function of these walls can vary depending on how and why the grade difference was created. Some

walls primarily stabilize slopes related to roadway construction, while others retain soil associated with private landscaping or property improvements by the developer to make lots buildable.

Discussion

Due to the varied history of street construction and private property development across the City, determining the origin and function of individual retaining walls can be complex. In many cases, available documentation may be limited, particularly for walls constructed decades ago.

As a result, when structural concerns arise, the key questions typically involve:

- The original purpose of the retaining wall
- When the wall was constructed
- Whether the wall primarily supports public infrastructure or private property conditions
- Whether site conditions have changed over time through public or private improvements
- What factors may have contributed to the current condition of the structure

These factors are important because they help determine appropriate maintenance approaches and potential responsibilities.

Regardless of ownership or maintenance responsibility, retaining walls near public rights-of-way can affect public infrastructure and safety. Wall failure can potentially impact sidewalks, streets, drainage systems, or adjacent structures.

Retaining Wall Inventory

City staff completed a field-based inventory to identify retaining walls that directly abut the public right-of-way but are located on property not owned by the City. For the purposes of this inventory, a “segment” was defined as a continuous retaining wall located adjacent to the road right-of-way. A segment may cross property lines or extend farther onto private property. As a result, a single property may contain multiple retaining wall segments.

Through this process, staff identified 415 individual retaining wall segments that abut the public right-of-way and are not located on City-owned property.

The inventory also documented the general wall materials and the approximate dimensions for these segments.

Material	Linear Feet	Approximate Square Feet
Concrete	3263	7418
Combination	220	719
CMU Block	73	226
Limestone Boulders	105	405

Limestone Block	3012	8636
Limestone Stacked Rock	610	1576
Retaining Wall Block	10750	30796
Wood Timbers	2153	5783
Total	**20186**	**55559**

Overall, staff documented approximately **20,186 linear feet** of retaining walls, representing roughly **55,559 square feet** of retaining wall surface area adjacent to public right-of-way.

Complexity of Determining Responsibility
Determining responsibility for retaining walls adjacent to public rights-of-way can involve a variety of historical, engineering, and property-related factors. These may include:

- Historical roadway grading and construction plan
- Developer's agreements
- Original subdivision design and grading plans
- Changes in private property grading or landscaping over time, building permits
- Drainage patterns or soil conditions

Because these variables can differ from property to property, many municipalities approach retaining wall issues on a case-by-case basis while also considering whether broader policy guidance may be helpful. Many of the retaining walls around town are of significant age, and information on when and why they were installed, and by whom, may not be readily available.

To reduce future financial exposure and long-term maintenance obligations, the City of Red Wing should consider limiting the inclusion of retaining walls within development plans and associated developer agreements when those walls would ultimately abut or rely upon the public right-of-way. Where feasible, development proposals should instead utilize grading, slope stabilization, or terracing to achieve grade transitions.

Many municipalities encourage the use of natural or manufactured slopes rather than structural retaining walls along the edges of developments because graded slopes generally reduce long-term maintenance and ownership issues. In some existing locations with retaining walls, it may be possible to assess whether regrading or slope reconstruction could achieve acceptable grade transitions without requiring structural walls. Future development reviews should prioritize designs that place retaining walls outside of public right-of-way areas and ensure that any necessary walls remain the responsibility of the adjacent property owner.

Financial Plan and Impact

Looking at all retaining walls through a broad lens and assuming that replacing every wall would be the City of Red Wing's responsibility, the total cost could be significant. Using a commonly cited average replacement cost of approximately $40 to $60 per square foot, the estimated cost to replace all identified retaining walls could range between $2.25 million and $3.5 million. This estimate is highly preliminary and subject to change, as actual costs will vary depending on wall materials, design requirements, access, and existing site conditions.

Financing the repair and replacement would be scheduled utilizing the City's Capital Improvement Planning process. It is reasonably anticipated that, similarly to streets, an annual apportionment would be scheduled for retaining walls within the CIP. The financing sources would primarily consist of property taxes and, where feasible, general obligation bonds. More information will be forthcoming as plans are developed and better cost estimates are available.

Alternatives

N/A

Recommended Action

Staff are not requesting action currently. However, the results of this conversation will be used to guide staff's direction and further evaluation. Additional information will be brought back to the City Council at a future meeting with potential policy options, recommendations, and any associated Capital Improvement Plans for Council review and direction.

W Maple Ave

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ELECTRIC

Bush St
STOP

HAL LEONARD
USA

NO
PARKING

City of RED WING
Bay Point Park
Downtown
NOW LEASING
651-571-5422
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NO