

# **ALBERT LEA PORT AUTHORITY**

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## **MINUTES**

**Wednesday, January 7, 2025 – 7:30 a.m.**

**Regular Meeting**

**132 N Broadway Ave**

### CALL TO ORDER & NOTATION OF ROLL

The Regular Meeting of the Albert Lea Port Authority was called to order on Wednesday, January 7, 2026 at 7:30 a.m. by President Murray. Roll was noted by the Board Secretary.

COMMISSIONERS PRESENT: Mark Heinemann, Rich Murray, Sarah Nelson, Tricia Dahl, Larry Baker, Nate Jansen

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: Bryan Skogheim

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS PRESENT: Val Lockhart, Business Community Representative; Ian Rigg, City of Albert Lea Representative;

EX-OFFICIO MEMBERS ABSENT: Janelle Koepke, Riverland Community College Representative; Melanie Aeschliman, Freeborn County Representative; Konrad Hawkinson, Tourism Representative; Brad Edwin, Freeborn County Representative

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Phillip Johnson, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Projects; Noelle Viktora, Operations and Finance Director

### ELECTION OF OFFICERS FOR 2026

- a. President: Rich Murray
- b. Vice President: Nate Jansen
- c. Treasurer: Mark Heinemann

Commissioner Baker made a motion to approve the appointments as presented, seconded by Commissioner Dahl. President Skogheim asked for any discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

### APPOINTMENT OF OFFICERS FOR 2026

- a. Board Secretary: Noelle Viktora
- b. Assistant Treasurer: Mardy Oyer (Honstad, Dieser & Mangskau)

Commissioner Baker made a motion to approve the nominations as presented, seconded by Commissioner Dahl. President Murray asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

#### ALEDA MISSION STATEMENT

*“To provide and promote services and resources to retain, expand, create and attract businesses, increase tax base and quality employment opportunities in Freeborn County.”*

APPOINTMENT OF EX-OFFICIO BOARD MEMBERS FOR 2026

- a. City Representative: Ian Rigg
- b. County Representative: Brad Edwin, Melanie Aeschliman
- c. Business Community Representative: Val Lockhart
- d. Tourism Representative: Konrad Hawkinson
- e. Riverland Community College Representative: Janelle Koepke

Commissioner Dahl made a motion to approve the appointment of ex-officio members as presented, seconded by Commissioner Jansen. President Murray asked for any discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM DECEMBER 3, 2025 REGULAR MEETING

The minutes from Wednesday, December 3<sup>rd</sup>, regular meeting were reviewed. Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Baker. President Murray asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

RESOLUTION PA-26-01 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF CLAIMS

Commissioner Dahl made a motion to accept the claims as presented in the amount of \$103,811.48 seconded by Commissioner Heinemann. President Murray asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

RESOLUTION PA-26-02 DESIGNATING DEPOSITORIES AND SIGNATORIES FOR WITHDRAWAL OF FUNDS

- a. Depositories: Arcadian Bank, Alerus (formerly Home Federal Savings Bank), Produce State Bank, Security Bank MN, US Bank, Wells Fargo Bank, Citizens Community Federal Bank, 4M Fund
- b. Signatories: President, Treasurer and Operations and Finance Director

Commissioner Baker made a motion to approve depositories and signatories as presented, seconded by Commissioner Dahl. President Murray asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 5 in favor; 0 opposed. Commissioner Heinemann abstained.

RESOLUTION PA-26-03 SETTING MEETING DATES, TIMES AND LOCATION FOR THE PORT AUTHORITY

- a. First Wednesday of the month at 7:30 a.m. to be held at 132 N Broadway Ave, Albert Lea

Commissioner Baker made a motion to approve meeting dates, times and location as presented, seconded by Commissioner Jansen. President Murray asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

RESOLUTION PA-26-04 AUTHORIZING ROUTINE CLAIMS TO BE PAID MID-MONTH

Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to approve as presented, seconded by Commissioner Dahl. President Murray asked for any discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

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RESOLUTION PA-26-05 RULES FOR ADDRESSING THE PORT AUTHORITY/RULES OF DECORUM

Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to approve as presented, seconded by Commissioner Dahl. President Murray asked for any discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 6 in favor; 0 opposed.

STAFF REPORT

- **Child Care**
  - Staff reported that the child care program continues to be effective in supporting new daycare providers: four in rural Freeborn County and one within the Albert Lea city limits.
  - Efforts will continue to promote the program and coordinate with the county licensor regarding upcoming provider applications.
  - Staff is exploring a countywide childcare needs survey to gather input from providers and families. Updated data will help identify workforce-related gaps, guide future planning, and anticipate growth in demand.
  - Once the survey is complete, staff will review the results and may follow up with providers, employers, or other partners to explore opportunities and challenges.
- **Vortex Cold Storage**
  - All project approvals have been obtained.
  - Staff is awaiting a finalized vacation of the land draft for the new legal description.
  - Once received, the parcels can be combined and prepared for sale.
- **Conferences/Meetings to Note**
  - Noelle will participate in an upcoming radio show.
  - Staff attended a Planning Commission meeting regarding the rezoning of the outlot behind the co-op from residential to industrial; the topic was also covered in a KAAL news story.
  - Weekly and remote staff meetings have been established to support ongoing coordination and transitional items.

EX-OFFICIO UPDATE

- **Freeborn County – Brad Edwin**
  - No update provided.
- **City of Albert Lea – Ian Rigg**
  - **300 Block / Broadway Building:** The Broadway building is scheduled for demolition. City staff are exploring potential reuse options, This situation highlights the importance of the Broadway Ridge Grant and earlier interventions, as previous investment could have reduced current costs.
  - **Alternative Uses for Nearby Properties:** The Rebound project is no longer being pursued. City staff are reviewing options for properties at 310 and 314 Broadway to determine feasible redevelopment approaches.
  - **Blazing Star Housing Project:** The project required a federal archaeological survey, which returned no findings. The state requested a second survey for confirmation. Staff are also preparing a report to ensure the new housing project will not negatively impact the historical sightlines of downtown Albert Lea, as request by the state.
  - **Grant Funding:** The city applied for a \$400,000 grant and was awarded \$265,000 to support housing and redevelopment initiatives.
- **Chamber of Commerce – Val Lockhart**

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- Mailing campaign underway to reconnect with active businesses and highlight current Chamber benefits, including encouraging former members to opt back in.
- Upcoming programs and initiatives include:
  - Monthly webinars covering topics such as AI in marketing and strategies for retaining staff
  - Launch of a podcast to spotlight Chamber members and their contributions to the community
  - One-on-one coaching for businesses, including guidance on overcoming barriers, applying for funding, and preparing business pitches
  - Leadership program in partnership with ALEDA next month, focusing on local business engagement and community collaboration
- **Convention and Visitors Bureau – Konrad Hawkinson**
  - Highlights of current initiatives:
    - Reviewing Placer AI alpha maps to better understand visitor patterns
    - Refreshing the ExploreAlbertLea.com website to improve usability and engagement
    - Conducting a year-in-review to identify areas for improvement, adjust priorities, and add or remove programs as needed
    - Securing additional sponsorships to support upcoming events
    - Continuing development of downtown and art walk initiatives
    - Strengthening relationships with local community partners to build collaboration and engagement
- **Riverland Community College – Janelle Koepke**
  - No updates were provided.

COMMISSIONER/OTHER ITEMS

Liza from David Drown Associates (DDA) addressed the board to review the candidates for the Port Authority position. After discussion, the board selected the semifinalists who will advance to the next phase of the hiring process. This phase will include video interviews facilitated by DDA, personality assessments, and other evaluations. Following this, the board will narrow the pool to three to five finalists for final interviews.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Jansen. The motion carried 6 in favor, 0 opposed. The meeting adjourned at 8:30 a.m.

Filed and attested January 7, 2026.

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President

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Secretary

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