ALBERT LEA PORT AUTHORITY
MINUTES
Wednesday, September 2, 2026 – 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, September 2, 2026 at 7:30 a.m. by President Murray. Roll was noted by Kendall Johnson.

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

COMMISSIONERS ABSENT: None

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

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

STAFF MEMBERS PRESENT: Phillip Johnson, Director of Strategic Initiatives and Projects; Kendall Johnson, Assistant Executive Director

STAFF MEMBERS ABSENT: Noelle Viktora, Operations and Finance Director

APPROVAL OF MINUTES FROM AUGUST 5, 2026 REGULAR MEETING

The minutes from Wednesday, August 5th, regular meeting were reviewed. Commissioner Heinemann made a motion to approve the minutes as presented, seconded by Commissioner Dahl. President Murray asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 7 in favor; 0 opposed.

RESOLUTION PA-26-16 AUTHORIZING PAYMENT OF CLAIMS

Commissioner Baker made a motion to accept the claims as presented in the amount of $47,679.79 seconded by Commissioner Heinemann. President Murray asked for any further discussion and hearing none, the motion carried 7 in favor; 0 opposed.

STAFF REPORT

Child Care

- Noelle is continuing to work on the survey.

- Staff will begin to loop Kendall in on this project.
- Phillip is brainstorming ideas of what can be done in addition to the successful start-up grant program. It is noted that limited funds are available to grow resources.

Project Cascade

- Resolution for the MFF passed during the August 24th City Council meeting. This was the final piece for them to pursue state funding, which is estimated at $5 million. These funds should be awarded soon.
- There will be approximately 90 days until the land transfer can occur. During that time, we will be working on decertifying the two parcels from the Vortex TIF so they can become TIF eligible for this project. TIF package expected at the beginning of 2027.
- Must continue to call this a potential project for accurate wording.

**Note: City of Alber Lea – Ian Rigg enters room at 7:39am.

Conferences/Meetings to Note

- Kendall has started and staff will be working towards getting her integrated.
- Staff was interviewed by the AL Tribune regarding Kendall's hire. The article came out on August 29th.
- The Impact article will be coming out in late September. It will be about the staff transition, current projects, and the new industrial park.
- Phillip met with Kirk Brown of Recharge on their work and potential partnership
- Phillip met with the St. Paul Port Authority to discuss industrial park expansion projects.
- Staff are working with Green Acres Milling on another letter of support for future phases.
- EDA/HRA/Port Authority meeting occurred, was successful.

EX-OFFICIO UPDATES

Freeborn County – Brad Edwin

No update provided.

City of Albert Lea – Ian Rigg:

- EDA/HRA/PA meeting occurred. City EDA will focus on downtown redevelopment.
- Staff are still working on the budget and are in negotiations on that subject.
- The strategic plan is working on getting wrapped up. The city is working with Port Authority on housing and a new industrial park.
- There is excitement about potential Project Cascade.
- Staff are wrapping up things on the Blazing Star project, and are hoping to be officially wrapped up by mid-September.
- Staff has not heard back from Tapestry regarding investor interest in purchasing housing credits.
- City has received grant money to clean up the Blazing Star site. It will be a lengthy process.
- Purchase Agreement is out to Astra Commons for the 5 lots on the 300 block.

Albert Lea-Freeborn County Chamber of Commerce – Val Lockhart

- The 2026-27 Leadership Cohort launches next Tuesday, with 15 participants. They will focus on building leadership and entrepreneurial skills.

- Hosting a Community Forum titled "Future of Freeborn" at Wedgewood Cove on Tuesday the 15th at 6:30pm. City, HRA, and SMIF will have panelists. They have invited local organizations and candidates to have tables at the event.
- Ribbon cuttings for Althing Clinic and CW Moline Insurance will happen on September 16th.
- Planning candidate forums for October – one for City races and one for State races.
- Co-planning Momentum 2026-Startup and Small Business Summit for November 16th with SMIF and regional partners. It will be at Wedgewood Cove.
- Received a grant for a series of three workshops at the Freeborn Innovation Lab. Will be hosting design and thinking workshops to encourage entrepreneurship in the county and then showcasing them at a later event. Encouraged leadership cohort to attend.

Albert Lea Convention and Visitors Bureau – Konrad Hawkinson

- Wind Down Wednesday have successfully concluded.
- Tomorrow is the last Thursdays on Broadway event.
- Working on planning Viva La Indepencia.
- Dalton and Konrad will be part of the Chamber leadership cohort. Both have been successful in acquiring partnerships for event to keep budget costs down.
- Received a new sidewalk art statue, a small duck, from the Bucket of Junk.
- There will be a doodle event for the new mural on Sept 12th
- Daisy Fest will be happening on Sept 5th
- Planning for upcoming Octoberween event.
- Sip n Stroll planning.
- 1 month before the deadline to switch taxing from City to State, will connect with City on that.

Riverland Community College – Janelle Koepke

No update provided.

COMMISSIONER/OTHER ITEMS

- Commissioner Baker updated us on the HRA house. The house was delivered a few days ago and is waiting for the foundation to be complete before it is set. Digging for the foundation began yesterday, and they are hoping to finish the foundation work in about two weeks. He requested Janelle's number, and Phillip shared, to inquire about having the community college's construction program build a single stall garage. Commissioner Baker noted it would be good real-world experience for the students and be a low-cost option. The garage will not need to be constructed until October.
- President Murray provided an update on his recent work. He met with recently appointed USDA Under Secretary for Rural Development Glen Smith at the Green Acres milling project, and they expect to start processing some samples in the coming weeks. He also toured Winnebago Cooperative Telecom Association's fiber optic project in rural Freeborn County. This is a part of a $25 million federal project to increase broadband access.

ADJOURNMENT

Commissioner Jansen made a motion to adjourn the meeting, seconded by Commissioner Dahl. The motion carried 7 in favor, 0 opposed. The meeting adjourned at 7:57 a.m.

Filed and attested September 2, 2026.

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President Secretary