



City of Saint Paul

15 West Kellogg Blvd.
Saint Paul, MN 55102

Minutes - Final

Legislative Hearings

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Tuesday, April 28, 2026

9:00 AM

Room 330 City Hall & Court House/Remote

9:00 a.m. Hearings

Remove/Repair Orders

- 1 [RLH RR 26-7](#) Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of the structures at 633 CAPITOL BOULEVARD within fifteen (15) days after the May 20, 2026, City Council Public Hearing.

Sponsors: Bowie

Layover to May 12, 2026 at 9am for further discussion. (CPH 5/20/26)

Laid Over to the Legislative Hearings due back on 5/12/2026

- 2 [RLH RR 26-3](#) Ordering the rehabilitation or razing and removal of the structures at 118 MANITOBA AVENUE within fifteen (15) days after the March 18, 2026, City Council Public Hearing. (Amend to grant 180 days)

Sponsors: Bowie

Grant 180 days pending timelines and bank statement are submitted no later than May 4th.

Referred to the City Council due back on 5/6/2026

3:00 p.m. Hearings

Water Bill Appeals

- 3 **RLH WB 26-3** Appeal of Sunn Sunn Thaw to a Water Service Bill at 398 MISSISSIPPI RIVER BOULEVARD SOUTH.

Deny the appeal.

Sunn Sunn Thaw, owner, appeared

[Moermond gives background of appeals process]

Staff report by Supervisor Derek Olson: this is a single-family home possibly vacant as back as 2023. February 24 2026 we took a meter reading and it was extremely high. The next day our field staff went out and shut the water off to the property at the curb. While there, they noticed frost on the inside of the windows. I believe the water was requested to be left on but when Joe Tronson got there he could hear the water running at the curb stop, going through the service into the home. It was vacant at that time and shouldn't have been heard. He made the decision to shut the water off until repairs were made. They have a formula they identify the properties as the readings come in and try to get to them the next day. March 2 we created the bill. They are on automatic payments, the balance was 6758.71 and it was automatically drawn from their account March 27th. On the 19th we received a call from the owner and asking for forgiveness for a pipe that broke, sounds like by the boiler. We can't forgive water charges. They requested to have the meter removed. We did that March 23rd. We sent you a picture of the frozen meter, so that charge was added to their account. March 25 the owner talked to Public Works and they issued a credit because they had a certified signed letter saying all the water didn't go down the drain, so they did give a \$3,713.14 credit. We created the last bill since the meter was taken out. That was an additional \$847. Due to the payment and credit that left a balance of a \$2,646 credit.

Moermond: walk me through the logic here on the credit as it shows on the bill? When I was looking at the sanitary sewer charges I read them to be 673, plus the base charge.

Olson: that is the final bill after taking the meter out. The high bill was before this, dated March 2, 2026. That's where the high charge usage occurred. 3,682 is the sewer charge. Public Works gave a credit for both bills, the March bill and the next one.

Moermond: where did the water go?

Olson: we're assuming someone came and pumped the water out. Unless it has a dirt floor and it absorbed in. That was the explanation from Phi Pham in Public Works. I can forward you his email about that reduction.

Moermond: did he remove all but 6 gallons?

Olson: yes, because they weren't using water. Their logic was an ordinary bill, they weren't using hardly anything at all. I don't know how he got to that number. They just sent that email saying please issue the credit. We don't usually investigate them, they are in a spreadsheet and we just apply. I don't know how he came up with that amount.

Moermond: no usage takes us back to 2023.

Olson: yes, we went back to April 2023.

Moermond: even a couple of bills in 2017 and 2018 that are \$0. You own one property, and this is the house next door?

Thaw: yes, we bought it in 2017 or 2018 and lived there a few years, and then moved next door because the neighbors sold. They're basically side by side. It is vacant and we check it time to time but no one lives there. We didn't shut off any facilities. We didn't know about the plumbing failure, I thought it was in decent condition and had been doing it for many years.

Moermond: you didn't winterize the house.

Thaw: we always keep it at 57 degrees in the winter. Then in the spring we go and check. Sometimes we run the sprinkler system, we didn't last year.

Moermond: the water passed through the meter and the code is crystal clear on this. For water charges, there's the base charge around \$47, then there is the actual water charge and the charge is based on the volume of water registered by the meter. Before I come to a conclusion I want to ask about when the meter broke and how that affects readings and water passing through. What can you tell me about that?

Olson: we don't know when it happened. There was no water up until this point. What we think happened, and based on the email I got from Public Works, the certified letter said there was a pipe that broke near boiler, we think it got really cold and there was probably enough water that it froze the meter. Once that happens it only registers water going straight through. Anything dumping through the bottom doesn't register.

Moermond: the water we're talking about is water passing through the meter, when it broke water continued to run but it didn't get billed because it didn't pass through the meter.

Olson: I can't say NONE of it did. Some may have registered depending on what point it went through. There's a gear in the meter that turns the dials, if water makes that fan go around it registers whether its through or down, so it is difficult to figure out what portion of the 577 went through the meter and around it.

Moermond: what I learned from Jerry Ludden is that when a meter breaks it doesn't register readings, but you are saying it does.

Olson: what I am saying is I cannot tell you for sure that it NEVER triggers a reading. Moermond: it would be unusual.

Olson: correct.

Moermond: we don't know in this billing time period when the water started running because of a break in the line near the boiler vs. when the meter itself broke.

Olson: my logic would say it was simultaneous. I think the pipe iced up, got cold, and meter got cold too, and then it got cold enough everything kind of broke. When we read it in November we would have seen something I think. We do have customers that have a meter break and still show usage and we say even though the meter was broken, we don't add additional usage to their account. In this case with it being zero's and the pipe breaking I feel like it all just wore out and broke.

Moermond: when Public Works went into the business of abating their charge for the sewer, is that a charge that water utility would collect and then send to Public Works? The dollars you collect go to them?

Olson: everything we bill in a month, we pay them at the end of the month whether we collect it or not. Come March 31, books close, first week of April Public Works gets paid for everything we billed for, regardless of what the collections were. That goes for Maplewood, Oakdale, everyone. The debt then becomes ours. That's why we certify the whole amount to taxes. As of today, we pay up front, we are basically a credit card company to the other departments.

Moermond: who ate the cost of this?

Olson: Public Works. The credit they issue comes off the total at the end of the month. The difference between the two is what we owe them.

Moermond: so Public Works took a hit when they decided to abate this. What would you do with the credit in the normal course of events?

Olson: I asked her to sign the letter to get her back what she is owed, \$2,646.09. We want to get that back to her. If something different happens today, we'd deal with that separately.

Moermond: for the water piece of this, the code is very clear on it that there will be a charge for any water passing through the meter. I can't take into the account keeping the heat running, you're next door, I get it. It is also Minnesota. I'm going to have to recommend to the water board you do owe the remaining money. I can tell you 55% of the bill is already gone, the City ate the cost of it, which is quite something. If you don't pay this, then all us other water users/ tax payers are responsible for the cost of that. I'm happy to look at a payment plan, but it is already paid so it isn't even helpful.

Thaw: is the water meter broken? I requested it to be removed because I didn't want another water bill.

Olson: when you requested it, the bottom portion of the meter had a crack and it was because of the cold. It is considered a frozen or damaged meter.

Thaw: if it wasn't removed, the meter would have kept running, right?

Olson: there was no service after we shut it off.

Thaw: that was the 25th. We still saw 31 units on the 24 to 25th.

Olson: that 31 units ran in one day.

Thaw: was the meter broken though?

Olson: even though it was broken, water was still running through it. Even if it was coming out the bottom of the meter, water still goes through the meter and turns the dial. I'm going by the certified letter that was notarized. Even though a meter is damaged, if more water is going through it, the pressure may be lower, but water can still register.

Moermond: that's the part I want confirmation on.

Olson: we can do that.

Moermond: I'd like that. It doesn't really make a difference; the only direction this would go is down, because if the meter stopped registering then that means more water passed through that wasn't billed. Meter failure stops in part or in whole volume for a bill. The units registered are probably not all the units of water lost. They registered 577 units before the meter broke. I'm thinking it could be 600-800 units that passed through that wasn't billed. And that's fine, the meter broke. It is designed to default in favor of the customer.

Thaw: so it wouldn't have been discovered if you didn't remove the meter?

Olson: *the broken part was discovered when we removed the mater, yes. You have those leaks and then you'd call us to turn the water back on, we're going to insist on inspecting the meter first. At that time we'd have found the damaged meter anyway. We would have eventually found it, it isn't because you called us or anything other than the meter broke from likely being too cold. That last bill had that damaged meter charge.*

Moermond: *the reason Tronson was out there was because there was a high usage alert on the property. He goes to check and can hear the water running from the curb. He shuts it off, reaches out to you, the property owner, you say I want to have the meter removed, it was removed. There is a charge for its removal, but otherwise it doesn't impact your bill. You're asking in the future if you will have a charge if you have no meter. That I'm not sure about. The other part you normally pay over time, the \$47, is simply for access to the water system. I'm not sure if they charge you because you have a meter, or because you have a pipe. It is for the infrastructure.*

Olson: *we charge any time there's a meter in the property. Once it is pulled, the bill you got at the end of March was just from your last reading until we pulled the meter out. Going forward you won't receive a bill.*

Thaw: *we shut off the water the day after the City worker came, and then the next day I questioned whether a bill would keep coming since we aren't using it anymore. They said yes you will still have to pay the minimum bill. I said I'm not using it since the water is shut off, how can I remove this basic fee? They said the only way was to remove the meter, that's why I requested the removal.*

Olson: *absolutely, you did the right thing. If they wouldn't have just showed up at your property you'd have received that bill sometime in March, you would have hit with a bigger charge and called me. That would have been 17 to 20 more days with a leak. Because we shut it off and had the meter removed all the charges were stopped and it didn't get worse.*

Thaw: *I was truly hoping to get partial relief. Also, frozen or damaged, how can it be damaged, I purposely requested the removal. I saw the bill of \$220 in there too.*

Moermond: *when it gets put back in again, what is the charge?*

Olson: *I think it is \$75. The \$220 only happened due to the damaged. If it was good, it is \$50. That \$50 was waived in this instance because we went and shut it off on our own.*

Moermond: *I'm still not in a place where I'd recommend a decrease. I see already that 55% of the bill was already forgiven. Honestly, from a Public Works perspective, I don't understand why they did it. Especially for this amount of money. I don't understand what they think happened to the water. This many units, which is 748 gallons a unit, the volume of your house—*

Thaw: *I would never do this intentionally.*

Moermond: *of course you wouldn't; it is a nightmare.*

Olson: *it is just an accident. Nothing intentional.*

Moermond: the Water Board has more discretion than I do, so they may look a this differently. I'm going to recommend denying your appeal, but it will be scheduled to go to a Water Board meeting and they can review it and they have more authority than I do. They meet at noon on Tuesdays.

Moermond: that would be the 12th.

Olson: 11:30 to 1:30 room 40 City Hall.

Referred to the Board of Water Commissioners due back on 5/12/2026